

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### HARD COURTS

Description—Faults Connected with Hard Courts—A Perfect Surfacing Material—The Way to Make a Court.

#### Description

This subject was bound to creep in sooner or later, and as a book devoted to Sports Grounds would hardly be complete without it, a few remarks now may not be out of place.

The surface of a perfect Hard Court should be firm, true, dustless, and so porous that the rain will go straight through it as it falls, and be fit for play at all times excepting when it is actually raining.

#### Faults Connected with Hard Courts

There are two outstanding faults connected with Hard Courts, one being that they frequently hold water, and the other their dusty nature when dry, this undoubtedly being due to the material used and the method of construction. The red rubble used is so hard that it will not key together and bind unless it is separated and put in layers, the coarse at the bottom, and the very fine dust on the top, and even then it takes some months for the surface to become sufficiently stable to stand the play without cutting up.

When the court is in use and dry it is natural for it to be dusty, it cannot very well be anything else, and as it ages and becomes bound and hard the fine particles are so close together that they will not let the water pass freely, and one often sees puddles of water on them yards in diameter, which go so slowly that it is often necessary to perforate the surface with a crowbar.

#### A Perfect Surfacing Material

A perfect surfacing material does not exist, or rather one is not known, but in my opinion the best results are

obtained by using old bricks graded to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch, and should the brick prove to be too hard to key together and bind quickly, it should be dressed with just sufficient brick dust to fill up the interstices, putting it on in two or three dressings if necessary so as to avoid using too much and so make a dusty surface, or one that will not pass the water rapidly.

### The Way to Make a Court

The actual construction, as far as the foundation and drainage are concerned, is exactly the same as that recommended for a grass court on a cinder foundation (see Chapter VIII). When dealing with a level site or one on heavy, wet ground likely to be difficult to drain, the whole court should be made above the level of the ground in the following way :—Dig a trench round the boundaries of the court 9 inches wide and 6 inches deep, and fill the same with concrete made of graded breeze and cement.

On top of the foundation lay a course of bricks lengthways, allowing a gap of 2 inches between bricks, and finish off with another course with the bricks laid end to end. This will make a little retaining wall, the top of which will be 6 inches above the mean level of the ground. Put the net pole sockets in position, fill in with 4 inches of coarse cinders and 1 inch of fine, and ram, roll and water the whole mass until the surface becomes quite hard and level. Finish off with the red rubble, using only as much dust as is necessary to bind the larger particles.

Harrow, roll and water until the surface becomes quite firm and level, then fix the tape lines.

It must be distinctly understood that the success of the court depends on the strength of the material used ; if it is reasonably soft, the larger particles will crush to a certain extent under the roller, and key together with the use of but a little of the fine dust, but if it is so hard that it will not break under the roller it will not key together, consequently a larger quantity of the fine dust will be required to make it bind.

Have a little patience with it, and remember that the more dust that is used the more dust there will be, and the surface will sooner or later hold water.

If a court is made above the ground there will be no excavation of soil, nor will it be necessary to drain it with pipes, because the rain as soon as it penetrates the red rubble

and reaches the cinders will be free to travel in any direction it likes.

If it is decided to put in a thicker or thinner foundation, and this should be regulated by the nature of the soil, using 6 inches on clay and 3 or 4 inches on light to medium soils, it can easily be managed by increasing or decreasing the finished height of the retaining wall.

