

COURSE BLIGHT — THE MEMBERS

by JIM MURRAY

West Coast Sportswriter

If you think "Poa annua" is a small South American python, or that "blue fescue" is a period in Picasso's development as a painter, you have never been exposed to that forlorn community of men who have to go out and try to par a golf course with a collection of rakes, hoes, tractors, aerators, blowers, tubs of manure, hose, sprinkler heads and tears.

The golf course superintendent's natural enemies are winds, sun, rain, ferrets, moles, skunks, crows, seagulls, deer, salt, drought, flood, weeds, rocks, and locusts, but his really implacable foe is that all season insect, the full-sweated, red-eyed MEMBER who may be further identified by the froth around his mouth, the mud in his hand and the triple-figure score in his pocket.

"Call that a golf course?" he will scream. "Goats wouldn't graze on it!"

In every tournament of 200 players, there is one winner—and 199 critics of the golf course. "Unfair test of golf!" screams the guy who put it behind a tree with his built-in slice. "Who's the course superintendent around here, Dracula?" "Who cut these greens—sheep?"

In California, there are more than 660 golf courses. In Southern California alone, the golf superintendents' chapter numbers 168. For all of them, this time of the year is their moment of truth. The big boys, the big tournaments, come through, from the Southern California Open at Los Coyotes to the L. A. Open, the Crosby, and the Andy Williams and the Bob Hope.

Golf superintendency is part agronomy, part aggravation. A member comes howling in to have a barranca,

which has been there since the glaciers, filled in so his topped shot will keep rolling and won't cost him a stroke. It would cost the course owner a real stroke to fill, as the soil cost for such a mammoth fill would run into hundreds of thousands.

At this time of the year, Santa Ana winds can dehydrate a course overnight. Sudden rains can make it playable only by canoe. On the golf course here, a neighbouring oil tank buckled, and put 500,000 barrels of high-gravity crude on to the fairways. The oil company re-sodded the course. Trouble was, the soil had so much saline content that the players referred to one hole as "Lot's Wife"—pillar of salt.

At Los Coyotes, the superintendent sprayed a green with a chemical to kill devil grass. Unfortunately, it had a foreign substance in it which killed everything. The members wanted to fire the superintendent, the superintendent sued the chemical company, the chemical company sued the outfit that sold them the preparation, and, when last seen, the buck had been passed clear down to a Chilean nitrate company.

Mrs Suzy Frederickson, who is married to one of them, reports that you can always tell a golf superintendent's home lawn. It's the worst one on the block. She is thinking of forming a greens committee.

One course superintendent, fed up with the members' complaints, which were as inaccurate as their tee shots, finally posted this notice. "As you are aware, the undersigned is only the

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SITUATIONS VACANT

LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY
PARKS DEPARTMENT

HEAD GREENKEEPER, HIGH ELMS AND BROMLEY COMMON GOLF COURSES

Applications are invited for the above appointment on Miscellaneous Salary Scale 9 — £1,370-£1,480 (including London Weighting) (approval pending).

Housing accommodation will be available if required.

Applicants should be thoroughly trained, and must have an extensive and practical experience of the construction and maintenance of golf courses, and the control and supervision of staff.

Application forms from the Establishment Officer, Town Hall, Bromley, Kent, quoting reference 12/4.

Closing date 30th July 1969.

HEAD GREENKEEPER (Working) required. Must be fully experienced in course maintenance. Salary up to £1,500 per annum. Apply stating age, experience, and references to The Secretary, Verulam Golf Club, 226 London Road, St Albans, Herts.

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RESIDENT course superintendent. The course is really watered, dried, forested, leafed, sanded by an absentee superintendent who is also in charge of rodent control, silicone content of traps, the birds and bees, and sometimes even remote control over putt breaks.

“This superintendent is reachable only in one way. So, if you will all get down on your knees and address him directly—(and DON'T SHOUT, a whisper is all that is necessary)—maybe he'll heed, and will have the course in good shape for the tournament this week.”

With grateful acknowledgements to the “Golf Superintendent.”

SITUATION WANTED

MAN (22½) requires 1st Assistant's job. House or flat essential: first class references. Holds N.A.G. certificate. Write 39 Ferry Bridge Road, Castleford, Yorkshire.

FOR HIRE

SISIS AUTOTURFMAN AERATOR, £25 per week—do it yourself. For contract prices telephone Burnell, Eaglescliffe 3647.

MISCELLANEOUS

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