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GREENKEEPER

HON. EDITOR: F. W. HAWTREE.



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AUGUST 1963

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THE MARQUIS OF EXETER,
May, 1963.

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TEE SHOTS



by the Editor

It looks as though St. Nom la Bretèche will be choosing their Red Course for the Canada Cup in October. The choice is not an easy one to make, because both of the two 18-hole courses are of identical length, but the Red has rather more contour interest. Crowd control should also be more simple. One or two English travel agencies have already offered all-in prices for a round trip to Paris for this event.

* * *

O. P. Jones is getting ready to move his ninth green this autumn. Bramhall looked very green and tidy when we saw it at the end of last month. Mr. Jones had his troubles like everyone else after the winter, but obviously soon had his greens back in shape.

* * *

Harry Monkhouse looks like losing nine holes out of his Marston Green Municipal Course at Birmingham when the Elmdon Airport, which adjoins, is extended to accommodate jet aircraft. Fortunately, more land is likely to be made available, so Birmingham's position as the leading Authority in England in providing municipal golf courses, will not be affected.

* * *

We should have reported this last month. Douglas Pate of the Royal Birkdale had a week off—not for a holiday, much as he needs it—but serving with eleven others on jury service in Liverpool.

* * *

George Wilson has left Finham Park at Coventry and is taking two weeks' holiday in Angus in Scotland before moving on to fresh pastures which, it seems, will be overseas in France.

* * *

Mr. Escritt, Assistant Director of the Sports Turf Research Institute, has been touring the United States on business during July. Just before he went, he visited three courses in Paris. Mr. Clayton, Senior Advisory Officer, was then touring Holland and Germany, advising on routine maintenance and new courses.

"LIFETIME'S SERVICE TO GOLF"

*Our President takes his place in
"The Birmingham Post's"*

"Midland Portrait Gallery"

A GOLF administrator who obtained so much pleasure and satisfaction from playing the game that "I wanted to put something back into it" is Mr. Carl Bretherton, a former Midland Amateur Champion and member of the England team, who has been President of the Warwickshire Union of Golf Clubs since 1936 and of the Handsworth Golf Club since 1951.

His interest in golf began at the Handsworth Club in 1900, when he was only eight years old. He was introduced to the club by Mr. C. A. Palmer, with whom the young Carl lived after his father had died. He was the youngest of four boys who were members of the club at that time, the others being three young members of the Holmes family, Jack, Joe and Don.

"By the time I was 17 I was becoming proficient at the game and was ready to start specialising", Mr. Bretherton says. In the next four years he reduced his handicap from 13 to plus 2, and in 1913 won the Midland Counties' team competition for Handsworth in company with Mr. C. A. Palmer and Mr. F. C. Carr. In that same year he took part in the Amateur Championship for the first time, progressing through four rounds at St. Andrews.

During the 1914-18 War, Mr. Bretherton, engaged in war work in a factory because he had been declared unfit for military service, had no opportunity to play golf. "I hardly touched a club for the four years", he says. "It took me some little time to get going again, for I was not in very good health".

It was in that period immediately after the war that he achieved his greatest successes, however. In 1919 he travelled to Portrush to take part in the Irish Open Amateur Championship and won the event against strong opposition.

With typical modesty, Mr. Bretherton explained: "Of course, I was lucky in the early rounds. The standard of play was not all that high. The third round was the worst from the playing point of view, for I went out in about 42 and was still all square. Then I won the next five holes, which made it look good."

His semi-final victim was Ernest (later Sir Ernest) Holderness, who subsequently won the Amateur Championship twice during the next four years and also represented Great Britain with distinction in several Walker Cup matches. Mr. Bretherton was a convincing winner, by 5 and 4.

In the 36-holes final he met Tommy Armour, who went on to play for Great Britain against the United States in 1921 before turning professional and taking up residence in America in 1924. Armour then represented the United States against Great Britain in a professional match in 1926—the year before the Ryder Cup competition was introduced—and came here to win the Open Championship at Carnoustie in 1931.

* * *

After the first 18 holes, Mr. Bretherton was two up, but when he was bunkered at the 28th Armour drew level for the first time since the start. As so often happens after such a hard tussle, Armour then relaxed slightly, however, and Mr. Bretherton took the next four holes in par figures and went on to win by 4 and 3.

In 1920 and again in 1921 Mr. Bretherton won the Midland Counties' Amateur Championship, and was chosen to represent England against Scotland each year from 1922 to 1925. When the Home International Championships were introduced in 1932, Mr. Bretherton was selected to be the non-playing captain of the English side, and also led the team in each of the next two years.

Long before that time, he had begun to take an interest in the administrative side of the game, becoming Honorary Secretary of the Handsworth Club, and assisting the Midland Counties' Association and the Warwickshire Union.

In 1924 the formation of the English Golf Union took place, and for the next 33 years Mr. Bretherton was one of Warwickshire's representatives on that Union. He has held the presidency of the Warwickshire Union of Golf Clubs since 1936, a year in which he was also President of the Midland Counties' Golf Association. He has been a Vice-President of the Professional Golfers' Association since 1928.

* * *

Meanwhile, he had been taking an increasing interest in the subject of greenkeeping, and in 1929 joined the Board of Greenkeeping Research. In 1945 he was asked to become its Chairman, and held that position for nine years. Since then he has been Vice-Chairman and has also been made a Vice-President. About ten years ago the basis of the greenkeeping research constitution was altered to bring in other games and the name of the organisation was changed to the Sports Turf Research Institute.

Among others, the English Bowling Association asked for advice from this non-profit-making concern. "I would like to pay my own tribute to a Director of the Institute, Mr. R. B. Dawson", Mr. Bretherton says. "Nearly everything I know about turf I have learned from him and his staff".

His work in this connection brought Mr. Bretherton in close touch with groundsmen and with the playing fields movement. Thus it was not surprising that his election to the presidency of the Midland Section of the British Golf Greenkeepers' Association came in 1938. He became President of the Association in 1955 and still holds both offices.

* * *

Having such views, it was natural that he should devote much of his time to the public golf courses in the Midlands, and he has done valuable work as honorary technical adviser to the City of Birmingham, borough of Sutton Coldfield, borough of Smethwick and borough of Solihull for municipal courses.

His comparisons between golf of 40 years ago and now are most interesting and his advice to young players is sound. "I started young, which I think is an

enormous advantage—not only in playing, but in the judging of distances", he says. "I had every encouragement and assistance from the older members of the club with whom I played".

"I was also fortunate as to the course on which I played. Then they were not so uniformly good as they are now, but at Handsworth, Sandwell Park, Little Aston and Hollinwell the ground was always clear, for they are on gravelly subsoil.

"There was nothing like the number of big events, and in my day the game was all learned locally. The club and county matches were the most important part of the training, and all the matches consisted of 18 holes singles played in the afternoons. They did not last the whole day as is the case now.

"Young players should have some tuition to start them along the right lines, but they can be over-coached. They may need a check-up with the professional occasionally, but I don't think they should be constantly coached. It is essential for them to have some individual qualities.

* * *

"Practice should take an intelligent form rather than be in quantity, for I think more people practise too much than too little. It is quite unnecessary to be knocking balls about all the time. If you have the right method, you don't need a lot of practice."

Mr. Bretherton, of course, learned his golf when there were no matched sets of irons with steel shafts. In his day, hickory shafts were in use, and one had to adapt one's strokes to suit the club. It is, therefore, pertinent to recall that the aspect of the game for which he gained the greatest renown was his extraordinary accuracy from positions up to 170 yards from the hole. He was also a consistent putter, and in putting, the state of the player's mind becomes more important than for any other stroke on the course.

A tall, lean, bespectacled man, Mr. Bretherton has thus devoted most of his life to golf and the analysis of turf and the men who work on the preparation of it. These subjects have become more than hobbies—they are his life.

(Reprinted, by kind permission, from "The Birmingham Post", 5th June, 1963.)

AT LAST — GROWTH ON THE GREENS

(Reprinted, by kind permission, from the "Evening Times", Glasgow, of 2nd July, 1963.)

By Jack Robertson

THE overworked and worried greenkeepers of Britain's inland courses are at long last getting some worth-while assistance from the elements.

The grass ailment which hit greens on almost every course in Britain during the severe winter is finally improving with the help of the rain and sun and the big bare patches are gradually receding. And it seems now that the clubs will not require to put out as much expense as had at one time been feared.

The experts, never having come across this condition before, were for a time baffled as to the cause of the "disease", but all are now convinced that it was the ice lying on the greens for weeks on end which killed the grass.

No Light

As it was pointed out to me, the ice acted as effectively as if cement slabs had been laid on the greens, cutting out the light to the grass and, more serious, preventing it from breathing.

This is evident, especially in the West of Scotland, from the fact that coast courses, which had comparatively little ice, have got off much more lightly than those farther inland and have suffered very little damage by comparison.

The belated arrival of spring and the cold east winds prevented the temperature from rising high enough to take the chill out of the ground so little progress was made.

Greenkeepers' attempts to help the recovery by seeding failed when the seeds did not have enough warmth to germinate.

Most courses, however, have shown signs of recovery in the past fortnight, but it will take the high courses, which are wide open to the cold wind, much longer than the others.

According to the experts the most practical thing clubs can do now is to avoid using the affected greens—as

Cathkin Braes, Erskine and Dalmahoy have been forced to do—and re-seed.

Indeed Dalmahoy, where the Senior Service tournament will be played again in September, have used temporary greens at every hole on their West course for the past two months and this move has certainly paid off, for the greens are coming on very well.

Some of the worst-hit clubs, however, may have to wait until autumn before falling back on their turf nurseries and then hope for a mild, ice-free winter to give the turf a chance to knit before next season.



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Messrs. Carters sent out their bulbs, lawns and plants catalogue for 1963 last month. This 48-page catalogue has been re-styled and contains a wealth of information besides profuse illustrations. The central pages are occupied by full colour illustrations of favourite bulbs: and tree, grass-seed and other information make it a useful reference book for the greenkeeper's shelf. Write to Messrs. Carters Tested Seeds Ltd., Raynes Park, London, S.W.20, if you would like a copy of this excellent publication.

COURSES IN PLAY—II

THE OPEN

by John Stobbs

THIS year's Open, in all its excitement up to the tie and play off between Bob Charles and Phil. Rodgers, illustrated two things about how the state of a course can affect play. Both are the sort of thing which can have general application to any club running any event, or even its normal week-end golf.

First was the rough. More than most seaside sandy links-type courses, Royal Lytham and St. Annes tends towards lushness. There are many fairly low places upon the course; and there, where rough is undisturbed on a wet summer like this one, the growth can be not just long but thick, too. Although this only applied in certain places, notably along the 11th, and beside the long 7th, the rough generally had been allowed to grow in, so that the fairways were narrowed to just the right amount for a championship of the stature this one was obviously going to have.

Even where the grass itself was not lush at all, but fine fescue, it grew tall; and the tough seed-bents standing up in it in thick array could have quite an effect upon a club trying to swing through them. Any sort of try at a long shot out of it was often chancy in the extreme, and even a niblick shot could be edged off course by the sheer resistance of the bents to the club. They tended to wrap round the shank. Even some of the top half-dozen players in the final order found shots coming out of rough one side only to fly at an angle into the rough the other.

This illustrated, I thought, two things. First, how very effective psychologically this simplest of all hazards can be. Although its maintenance costs are pretty well nil, its effect upon play, and most of all upon the player before he hits a shot, can be out of all proportion to the actual difficulty he finds if he goes into it. Often, at Lytham, the ball lay

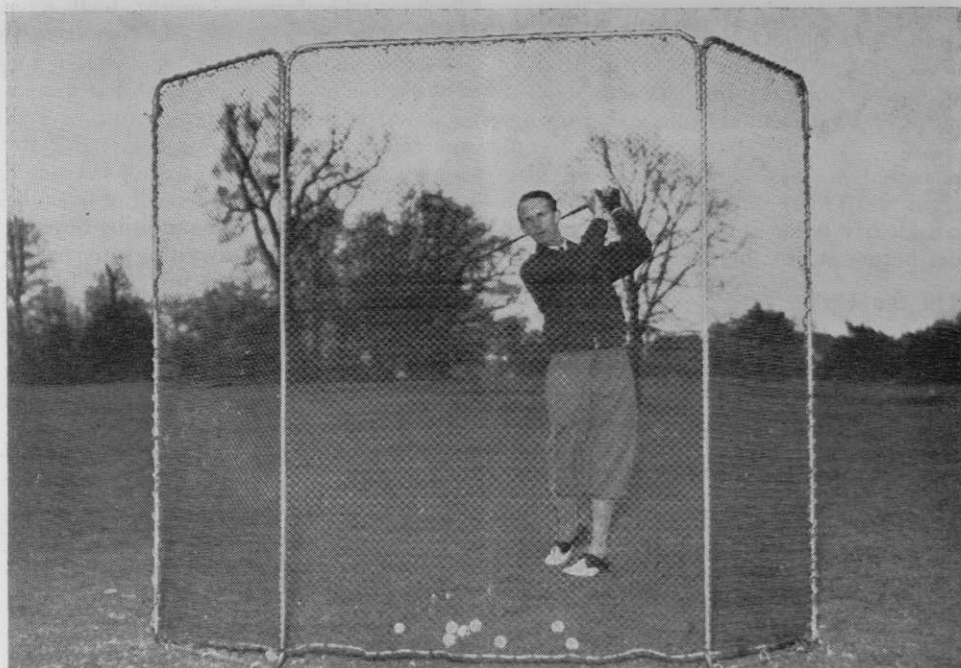
fairly clear and a more or less normal stroke to the green was possible for the class player. But the point was that he didn't know it would be till he got there. 250 paces of anxiety are a hazard in themselves. So the threat of the rough became the threat of the worst lie he was quite likely to find; and the high bents all the way along spared him no reminder of it as he took his last look down the hole before swinging at the ball.

Where courses grow short in summer, and, more often nowadays, where the fairway mower has tended to edge out gradually with the years, widening fairways and often straightening out their edges, a hole may be given new interest and challenge again, simply by reviewing the margin of the mowing pattern, and letting in a curve or corner of rough at a tactical point on the hole. No one will lose a ball there; but everyone will see it and have his play affected, especially if it hazards the evasive line from some permanent hazard of the hole, like a bunker or a clump of trees.

Up to Scratch

The other thing noticeable at Lytham was how well some people can putt on greens not at their best. Lytham had suffered like the rest of the Lancashire coast courses from the foul winter; and there must have been many anxious moments during the spring for Head Greenkeeper Marshall and his men. They had done the very best they could to bring them up to scratch for the Open; and (obviously by looking at them) had given them a slightly lower trim for the occasion. On the whole it worked; but the dank weather and the pounding of many spiked feet did naturally leave some of them a little less than their best smoothness round the holes by the last day. And, of course, nothing much could be done about patches where the grass had not yet fully recovered its natural body and evenness. Pins could avoid these patches; but they still had to be putted over.

Despite all this, the ball did roll rather than merely bumble on them; and the decisive answer to one or two professionals who complained about them



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JOHN STOBBS (continued from page 8)

came from Bob Charles in the play-off at the very end of the week. It is doubtful if any like occasion has seen such a masterly and almost magical putting. Charles had the pace of the greens measured to a tiddle; and again and again that final day you could see the ball clearly going into the hole some six feet before it got there!

"On the Up"

Perhaps it is Charles' manner of striking which did the trick. He uses a stiff-wristed putting stroke; and, I think, hits them slightly "on the up", to start them off in the natural rolling spin. It was perhaps evidence that this counted, when for once—at the 12th on the Saturday afternoon—his tee shot finished beyond the flag against an edge of semi-rough, so that he had to chop down at the ball slightly with his putter. This was the only putt one saw from him that ran unevenly, staying well short from only some 15 feet; it, in fact, cost him three putts.

The other point of major interest at Lytham was the effect of the new tees. The most successful was generally reckoned, I'd say, to be that for the short 12th. It not only lengthened it from a medium iron to a long iron; but it vastly increased the visual challenge of the hole. There are some sharp little pit bunkers before the right hand side of the green. They always menace the shot; but from the new tee, which is angled from considerably further to the right, they positively snarled at the player on the tee—especially with the pin placed arrogantly just behind them as it was.

Entirely Fair

One can hazard the opinion that the new 12th tee would make it one hell of a hole, but still entirely fair, to any reasonable club player. This, though, is something Royal Lytham will no doubt be testing by experience in future.

The lengthening of the 17th is a different matter. This makes it two long hard shots to the best of professionals. Indeed on the Friday I watched Tom Haliburton hit a really sound stroke from the tee—good enough for applause—and only just reach the fairway!

Perhaps the fairway might well have been mown back a bit further than it was; but in any case a hole which had always been a challenge to the nerves was made by the change into a real man's hole in every way. Even for the longest hitters the second shot became a wood or long-iron flighted blind over the Jones country and the sandhills beyond, with a little bunker awaiting any nearly straight shot pitching just left of the stick.

It was this hole—where he hit a long iron on Friday afternoon so perfectly and so straight that it flew past the pin and ran over the bank at the back—that cost Nicklaus the championship. Even to the highest class of player, the longer version of the 17th means that even the best player in the world can no longer simply wham a decisive shot straight at the flag.

Demands Thought

Of course, the 17th always needed to be played with the head; but it can now be said to call forth both the best of striking and the coolest of thinking, and calculation of safety against risk.

The new back tee for the long 11th, rather a dull hole at present running straight up to a bunkered green between long lines of rough on either side—was rejected by the players as just too far back for the fairway available. This does not mean that it should be scrapped. The hole might very easily make a magnificent professional's par-5 if the fairway was widened and dropped back a bit on the right for the tee shot, leaving the huge obstructing bunker still challenging the shortest line; then the second half of the fairway could perhaps be bellied a bit towards the left and the rough brought in a bit from the right to give the hole more shape, tighten the pitch into the green, and tempt the man driving to gain length by playing as near the big bunker as he dares.

Somehow to see Charles playing it cannily in 4, with two woods straight up the middle of the avenue, as it were, and then a chip straight up on to and across the green to the flag, made it look a little less angry and obstructive than perhaps it should be next time the Open goes to Lytham.