



A new 9-hole golf course is being built in this old river bed at Pasadena. The piles are topsoil to cover the sandy bottom

Coast Winter Tournaments Make Greensmen Work Overtime

By ARTHUR LANGTON

MID-WINTER is that time of the year when all good California greenkeepers, and some of the other kind too, are besieged with extra work that is incidental to tournament play of all kinds. Not that they should complain on this score, for December and January are among the best months of the year for holding competitions. The time for brown-patch and sun scald supposedly being over, all the greenkeepers have to worry about outside of their regular work are floods, drought, impaired drainage, heavy play, no play at all, Bermuda grass, worn-out tees, construction work, annual meetings, and preparations for next summer. Therefore, a three-day tournament with several thousand spectators trampling over their handiwork fits in very well with their scheme of things.

Tournaments a Tradition.

But enthusiasm for big money tournaments in California is noticeable because of its absence at the present writing, with the result that only five are being held this season, and even one of the five is being held across the border in Agua Caliente. Valuable though they may be, there

The pros, even with their serious difficulties in making trouping expenses, haven't a monopoly on the worries of tournament golf. The course superintendents have to stand a gaff that is especially painful during these times of restricted greens budgets. The job isn't made any easier when some of the tournament players fail to show consideration for the greenkeeper who is the helpless victim of circumstances.

Arthur Langton tells the greenkeepers' ideas of tournament golf in a plain-speaking way that indicates the greensmen are fairly well fed up on being pushed around.

seems to be no getting around the fact that the annual visits of high powered golfers are not popular among those who have to pay for them; this because the incidental benefit has not become apparent as time goes on and doubt begins to grow that any good ever will be evident. However, they have become a part of the

Golden State and are as much an institution there as poinsettias, cafeterias, the Largest Ocean in the World, Hollywood, Spanish houses, and unusual weather. None of these things are indispensable, but to rid California of them would be like doing away with the unsanitary yet highly romantic canals of Venice, Italy.

So in spite of the depression playing puss-around-the-corner, the destructive trampling of thousands of gallery feet, and the accompanying inconvenience and expense, the San Francisco, Pasadena, Santa Monica, Los Angeles, and Agua Caliente tournaments will be held this winter in the order named and will offer the peripatetic professionals over \$37,000 in prize money, not to speak of side bets and publicity. But gone is the Palos Verdes open, the San Gabriel Pro-Amateur, the Long Beach open, and one or two others, gone where the easy pickings of 1928 have vanished; what's more, they have gone further than just around the corner.

Eleventh Hour Placing.

As far as the California greenkeeping fraternity itself is concerned, it is not at all worried about the current tournament situation except as an indication that times are bad. However, there are one or two course superintendents who are very much concerned, and they are employees of clubs which may be the site of the Los Angeles Open tournament. This annual event is to be played January 9, 10, and 11, and at the time of writing (Nov. 16) nobody knew where it was going to take place; all of which makes it tremendously hard on the greenkeeper who finally has the job of getting his course ready for the big affair. It will mean that his preparations will be rushed, for instead of having months to make ready he only will have a few weeks or a few days if the decision is not made soon. The reason for the delay seems to be that no suitable club desires to have the inconvenience of putting the affair over. As one man expressed the situation, "The one that weakens first will get the tournament."

As matters now stand there are four courses which are qualified and most liable to have the tourney—Wilshire where it was held last year, Hillcrest, Riviera, and Los Angeles. Each of these four layouts has a championship course kept in first class condition; each is within easy reach of the metropolitan district of Los Angeles; each has facilities for handling a large crowd; and lastly and most impor-

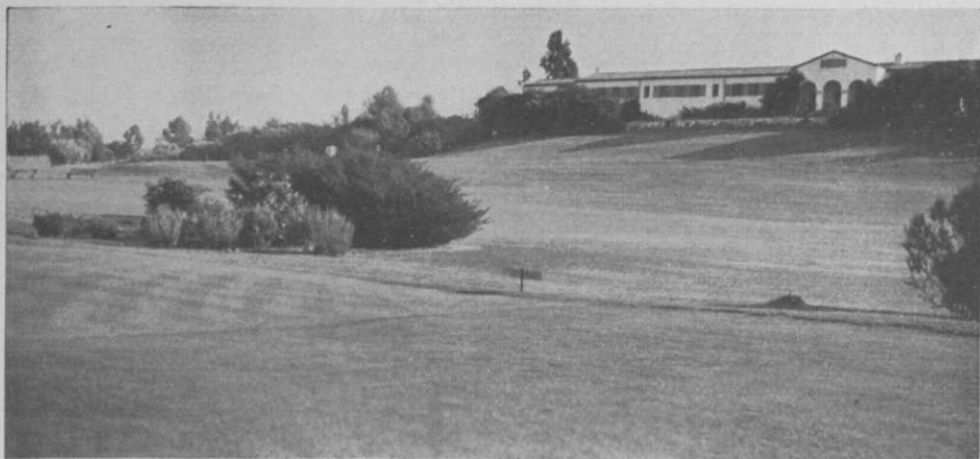
tant, each course is securely fenced so as to guarantee that all spectators shall have contributed an entrance fee to the cause.

Greensmen's Viewpoint.

The manifest purpose of expenditure of money on mid-winter tournaments is to create good will towards the courses in particular and California in general so that easterners will be tempted to visit the state and spend some money, to put the matter crudely. It is not the purpose of this article to doubt that the method employed is efficacious, but the psychology involved seems to be a bit vague. However, there may be many people residing in the Pacific Southwest at the present time who have come here because of highly publicised golf tournaments, but the writer is not acquainted with them. Those who seem to be most benefitted are the prize winners who return to their home courses in other parts of the nation to spend their money. So far this has been written at the risk of being termed destructive criticism. Here is a suggestion offered gratuitously to California chambers of commerce: Eliminate the cash prizes and spend the money on the courses with the purpose in view of providing the snow-bound Eastern business man an opportunity to enjoy cheaper and better golf in this state of eternal sunshine. This would attract the sort of people to whom local real estate agents are really anxious to talk. The eastern professionals should not object to this situation because there never has been enough prizes to go all the way around, with the result that coming to California has meant just an expensive outing for most of them.

Keep Greensmen Keyed Up.

But getting back to greenkeeping, although there is a paucity of big-money tournaments this winter, there are enough inter- and intra-club matches going on to keep the greensmen busy during the winter season, and in many ways these are just as exacting as the bigger events; although there are no galleries to be cared for, the players are more familiar with the surroundings and are quick to note any deficiencies on the part of the greenkeeping system. The greenkeeper must display his true worth this year as never before because he must keep the ball rolling satisfactorily no matter how cramped financially his club may be. And it is necessary for him to do this because a tournament played upon a poorly prepared



Practice green at Palos Verdes C. C. The darker area on the right is new grass replacing turf removed for course repairs

course is worse than no job at all. To be fired is bad enough, but to be fired because tourney players complain far and wide about the course conditions means that the greenkeeper's reputation is blasted completely.

Little money is available for extra work this year, so that the greenkeeper who has maintained a consistently good course is the one who will have a distinct advantage when it comes to preparing for heavy play. It has been found practically useless to wait until a few days before a tournament before starting to make preparations, for such a procedure is fraught with peril. The days of miracles are over and natural growth even assisted by modern science sometimes is maddeningly slow. Therefore instead of taking the risk of burning grass with fertilizers it has been demonstrated that it is better to polish up existing course conditions rather than try to create new ones. Inasmuch as most clubs felt that they could not afford to start making preparations for heavy winter play two or three months ago, visiting golfers will have to take the California golf courses "as is" and without frills, but it is to the credit of the local greenkeepers to say that the visitors will not be disappointed.

Many interesting activities are being put into practice on Coast golf courses for the purpose of alleviating the depressing influence of current economic conditions. Especially is this true on many of the municipal layouts where unemployed relief is being carried out in an efficient man-

ner. A typical example is that of the Pasadena Municipal course which will be the site of the Pasadena Open tournament, December 18, 19, and 20. Instead of attempting to improve the existing layout, which has been kept in excellent condition, an entire new nine holes is being constructed with another contemplated, and all of the work is being done by unemployed residents of the city. Incidentally the Pasadena course is located in an old river bed or arroyo. At one time the flood waters raged through here after heavy storms, making the ground useless for any permanent structure. But the construction of a dam and other flood controls made much of this land available for various civic enterprises with the result that the one-time river bed now contains besides the golf course, a park, the famous Rose Bowl where New Year's day football games are held, and ample parking space for the automobile of visitors to all three points of interest.

While every municipality does not have an arroyo at its disposal, almost every club has a practice putting green and can put it to the same use as did Gomer Simms, greens-wizard from the Palos Verdes club of Redondo Beach. Simms has constructed an unusually large practice green with an excellent growth of Cocos bent turf. Any bare spots which appear on his greens occasioned by extra heavy play or other causes are quickly and cheaply replaced by sod from the practice green which is reseeded immediately, thus inconveniencing no one.