

# Greens Miracle Men Rarely Praised for Part They Play

By ARTHUR LANGTON

**T**HE Los Angeles Open Golf tournament has been played and won; Ed Dudley has walked off with the lion's share of the \$10,000; the Junior Chamber of Commerce has achieved for Los Angeles its quota of publicity; the 15,000 spectators were thrilled by the galaxy of golfing greats; then the center of attention drifted across the border to the Agua Caliente tournament.

In all of the columns of press material broadcast on this event, exactly one four-line paragraph in small type was devoted to the greenkeeper involved. And the chances are that if the greenkeeper in question had not carried the striking name of Greenfield he would not have been mentioned, because the paragraph merely remarked on how appropriate the name was.

All of which goes to prove that full many a greenkeeper is born to work unseen and have his task unsung in the columns of the sporting pages. Not that greenkeepers in California in general, nor Robert S. Greenfield in particular, seek publicity, but in payment for all the feverish anxiety expended in preparing a golf course for a major tournament it does seem that a certain degree of recognition should be in order. As it is, all that the greenkeeper ordinarily gets is the task of cleaning up after the crowds have trampled all over his course.

## Suspense Worries Greenkeeper

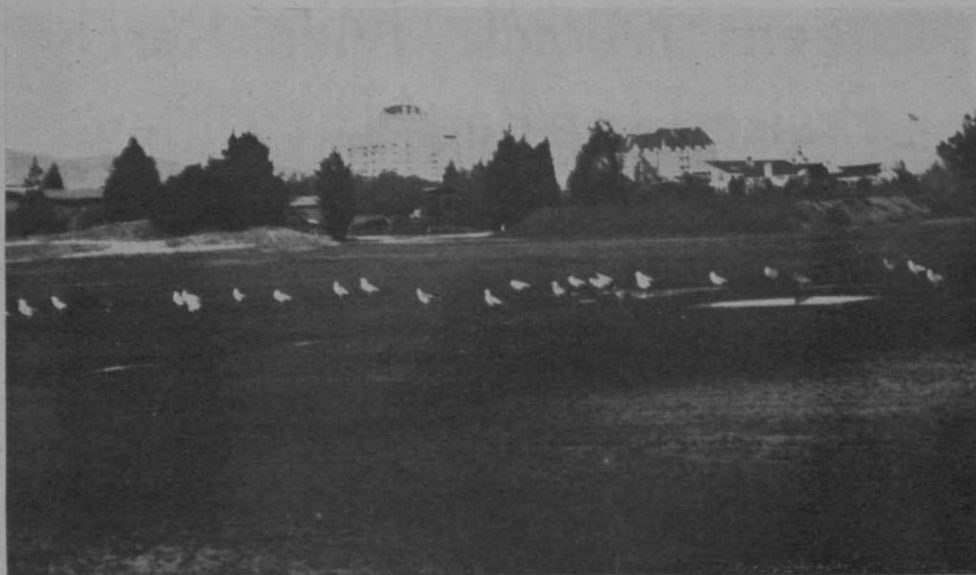
That the already tough job of grooming a course is not improved by the thoughts of what might happen, will be admitted by any greenkeeper. Take for example the Wilshire C. C. where the Los Angeles tourney was played. It was announced before the rainy season that this club would be the venue of the tournament. Immediately the question rose: would there be any rain before the scheduled event? If not, this would mean that the course would have to be watered continually in the ticklish job of keeping the grass green. But some rain did come to eliminate any worry of a drought, or an

extended summer season, as it is known in the Golden State.

But there were other matters to occupy the mind of the greenkeeper. Suppose the carefully nurtured grass decided to hibernate for the remainder of the season as it sometimes has a habit of doing? Or suppose, in trying to keep the plants awake too great an application of high-powered fertilizer was made and all the grass killed? Suppose a hundred other things! But fate for the time being was kind, or very probably it was because Greenfield did not try to dope his greens especially for the occasion. Nothing disastrous occurred.

However, the most rational greenkeeper in the world could not have prevented Jupiter Pluvius from putting on a special performance on that day before the play was scheduled to begin, which was what happened. Conditions looked ominous for any return on the large amount of money expended for advertising purposes, and the affair was postponed for one day. This proved to be a wise move because on the day originally slated for the beginning of play the sun came out and did much towards drying up the soaking course. It gave Greenkeeper Bob a day of grace in which to size up the situation.

It must be explained that the Wilshire course has a barranca running through it which takes care of most of the water that does not soak into the adobe-based soil. One fairway, however, does not have access to the natural drainage canal with the result that most of it was submerged in water which would soak into the adobe only very slowly. The stickler for perfection on a golf course might have found in this standing water an argument for the installation of an adequate drainage system. But consider; the rain in southern California comes during a dozen days scattered over a four-month period so that, at the most, water would be on this fairway for a grand total of not more than two weeks out of the year. Added to this



It's an ill rain that brings no grub, reflect the sea-gulls banqueting on the worms brought to the surface at Wilshire by the "most unusual" rain that delayed the L. A. \$10,000 Open.

is the fact that the Californian does not like to get his feet wet, and only a mere handful of the most hardy would even attempt to play when the turf was soaked. All of which means that a drainage system would have to be installed in this fairway for the benefit of half a dozen players during a fractional part of the year.

### Sea Gulls Have Banquet

Incidentally, the pools of water standing on this one fairway, probably combined with a recent application of lead arsenate, caused countless worms to be driven to the surface of the soil where they were pounced upon by a flock of sea-gulls that spread chickenlike over the terrain. When the birds took their departure, the last worm went with them.

But for these pools of water on the fairway, the rain had done practically no damage to the Wilshire course. In at least one instance it had done considerable good. The steep little barranca that runs through the course, which so many brilliant golfers found disastrous to their title hopes, had become rather rough on the bottom owing to the debris that had collected there. The runoff water from sections of Hollywood and Beverly Hills drained into the barranca and very neatly transported the assembled rubbish towards the Pacific Ocean, thus eliminating the

necessity of using sand for smoothing purposes as had originally been planned. Some of the sand was used in filling in a gash eroded by the water in its task of cleaning up the barranca.

Many greenkeepers will call Greenfield lucky in the light of what might easily have happened. This may be true, but Knute Rockne has said that the best players get the breaks.

### Every Job Is Different

Returning to the original theme of this discourse, many things are unique or superlative on the Pacific Coast, but one of them is not the exalted position in which local greenkeepers find themselves. The engagement or discharge of a professional or a house manager is something momentous in the annals of any golf club, but the greenkeeper is hired or fired with but a shrug of the shoulders. This is peculiar because the very nature of things would indicate that there should be more hesitation about discharging a greenkeeper than any other member of a club's staff. Waiving a club's members, the conditions confronting either a house manager or a professional are almost identical at any club. Neither climatic nor topographical conditions make their tasks vary appreciably.

But greenkeepers tell a different story. Each one of the 250 golf courses in Cali-

fornia presents a distinct set of conditions of temperature, rainfall, and soils, and no two are alike. It takes a greenkeeper about a year to learn of all the quirks pertaining to one particular layout and rules of procedure learned on one course will not apply to another. To illustrate: near Los Angeles are two courses within three miles of each other; one is the San Gabriel C. C., the other the Montebello Park course. On the San Gabriel course any amount of rain soaks right into the ground immediately and players experience little discomfort in playing immediately after a storm. But at Montebello open ditches have had to be dug along low spots in the fairways to carry away water that will not soak in. The reason for this difference between the two courses is simple: the San Gabriel club is laid out on soil composed of coarse material washed down from the mountains, while the Montebello soil is largely adobe. And yet a cursory examination would show very little difference.

But there is still a tendency on the part of club officials to consider the discharge of a greenkeeper all in the day's work. This may be a throwback to the old days when the man in charge of a course was nothing but a promoted laborer with no special skill or knowledge of his own except that displayed in wielding a shovelful of dirt. Perhaps the real reason for the continued disregard of greenkeepers is what sociologists call social distance. This is a state brought about by lack of contact with other groups and individuals. On golf courses, social distance crops out in the fact that there is very little contact between golfers and the man on the course and the feeling prevails that if anything is wrong with the greens it must be the greenkeeper's fault because there is no one else handy to blame.

A case in point here in California is that in which a greenkeeper helped to build a course from infancy to a class-A golf club, but in the meantime he kept very much in the background, although he is a very capable man. Recently it was decided to get a new general manager, but in order to do this members decided that it was necessary to discharge both the house manager and the greenkeeper. The greenkeeper had been satisfactory in every way and yet he was not considered. If it had not been for the vigorous action of the green chairman, the one man who knew the greenkeeper, he would have been unjustly fired.

## Bag Bargain Sale to Open Pro's Season

Ed Newkirk, newly elected secretary of the Illinois P. G. A., left this gem of selling thought in the editor's padded cell before shoving off for Florida.

Spake Edward:

"I am going to open the season with a real bag sale. T' hell with this business of sticking around until the end of the season and closing out a few bags at a cut just so you won't have to carry them over the winter.

"More than half of the bags at every pro shop ought to be thrown into the city dump pile and the only reason they're not is because the pros haven't put on enough push behind good bags that will make the old stuff look doubly terrible by comparison.

"When you get right down to it, a pro can sell a good looking and honestly made bag at a price that none of the stores can touch. The pro's low overhead accounts for this. But the stores have been unloading a raft of trick looking trash on the golfers just by putting on some price ending in 98 cents so people think it's a bargain.

"People who come into my shop at the start of next season are going to see a bag display and some signs advertising the attractive prices. I'm going to play it up so strong that a fellow or woman with a worn, dirty bag will feel ashamed without having anything directly said about the relic.

"Figure 200 bags in the rack and a hundred of them being overdue on replacement. I'll replace that hundred at, say, an average profit of \$2 a bag on the kick-off bargain sale prices. There is \$200 in the clear. Anyway it will be a noble experiment."

**H**ARRY ADAMS, pro at Hickory Hills (Chicago district), is giving the boys a good little lesson in how a pro can capitalize his wide acquaintance and learn some of the smart stunts of selling. Harry this winter is at a prominent clothing store, spending part of his time in the store and part out calling on his player friends to get them to come to his winter location and buy.

Harry has received quite a little newspaper publicity on this connection, probably as a result of the store advertising man's work.