

Divot Replacing, Poa Annua Greens, Interest Rees in Scotland

Capt. David Rees, widely known in American greenkeeping circles, is visiting the home folks in Scotland. With him is the talented Mrs. Rees. Mrs. Rees, during the British Open, was given the supreme thrill of hearing Johnny Farrell ask where Cap bought golf hosiery. John, the Mister Universe of the golf apparel connoisseurs, at last had been outdone. Mrs. Rees incidentally comments: "Tommy Armour's utter lack of 'strut' when he realized his dearest ambition is delightful enough, in my opinion, to be called a feature of the Open."

In Captain Rees' letter to GOLFDOM'S editor there are a number of interesting comments on course maintenance work in Scotland. He writes:

Drumderfit, Elgin, Scotland,
June 8, 1931.

Dear Herb:

I had hoped to see you at Columbus in February but we were sailing that month for home, and too many things demanded my attention nearer New York. It was truly a great disappointment that I was not able to be at the annual round up of good fellows, but I have high hopes of meeting again with you and some of the others, sometime, somewhere.

We have been home now for three months, but Britain has shown us no

glimpse of summer yet. Life is very leisurely with us—golf, cricket, fishing, with a lot of eating and sleeping. I am inclined to think that the golf course at Lossiemouth (Ramsey Macdonald's home town) is over-rated. Though its greens are real good, the course would give very little kick without its profusion of gorse bushes—whins, they call them here.

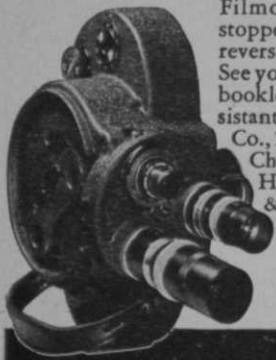
Last week I spent at Carnoustie, and in spite of Scotland's weather, had a grand week. I was a guest of Mr. and Mrs. Black, whose son, Sid, you will remember as a friend of mine in Westchester county.

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Mr. Black has been a member of Carnoustie Golf Club for 54 years, and when he first joined the club his annual dues were one shilling (25 cents). As a member of the club, he was able to take me to the clubhouse to quench a frequent thirst, and that was a real advantage, for the liquor there was both better and cheaper than that purveyed in the canvas Nineteenth Hole that flourished during the week.

Carnoustie Is Seaside Gem

The course at Carnoustie is an excellent sample of the fine seaside course which only Scotland can produce. Those natural courses test any man's golf. You will have noticed that 71 was the lowest score recorded during the championship, including the qualifying rounds. The fairways are dotted profusely with small, flat-topped hummocks or mounds, one to two feet high, and 12 to 15 feet in diameter. These hummocks are of course natural. I wondered right away if they presented any difficulty in maintenance but apparently not, for though I looked carefully, I saw no signs of scalping. The mowers in use there, I noticed, had rollers which probably prevented scalping. The fairway machines were cruising around sometimes during the hours of play, and I felt I was meeting an old friend when I saw a Worthington tractor coming towards me.

Spear the Divots

The turf on Carnoustie is thick and springy, and must be excellent to play on. It is mostly fescue and bent, with a liberal sprinkling of *poa annua*. I repeatedly noticed that turf taken with a mashie niblick would travel 20 to 30 yards after the shot and remain unbroken, even in a strip a foot long. In this connection, I was particularly interested to see after the play each day, a number of men going round the course each armed with a long stick with a nail in the end, and with these they speared the loose divots (previously duly replaced by the caddies) and carried them off in baskets. Following those men came another gang, each with a metal tub full of seaside sand carried by a strap around the shoulder, and with this sand they filled up all the divot holes. This procedure was of course a championship emergency measure, for under ordinary circumstances the real old thick turf of the course would very rapidly fill in. Ay, the Carnoustie turf was turf—not the six

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weeks old stuff my friend Riggs Miller and I debate about.

Greens Are Lauded

The greens were in very fine condition and remarkably true. They are almost wholly *poa annua* which was in the last stages of flowering. This conceivably might have been blamed for the failure of a short putt now and then, but I heard not a single complaint from the players. Gene Sarazen and Joe Turnesa both told me they thought the greens splendid. Adjoining the course is a large putting course, in extent about three acres, and it was as beautifully kept as anything I have even seen, anywhere. I visited the various bowling greens in Carnoustie and found them a joy to behold. I don't think we could find in the States anything in the way of turf so fine as that on British bowling greens. I am certain that if Professor Piper could have seen some of them, he would have been far less positive in his statements on British turf. *Poa annua* bulks largely in the golf courses of North Britain, and it really looks very well indeed.

Wind Requires Banging

The championship course was well trapped and bunkered naturally, and at most of the holes the drive had to be really well placed in order to open up the green. At the second hole there was a bunker in the middle of the fairway—maybe 200 yards from the tee—which occasionally caused a little trouble, though most of the players succeeded in carrying it. Harry Vardon told me as we passed this bunker "Ted Ray declares that Jimmie Braid (the architect of the course) ought to be buried in that thing!" I guess Ted had not always carried it. As is the case on the numerous fine courses on Scotland's east-

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ern seaboard, the wind was always a factor to be reckoned with during the recent Open. One day, for example, I noticed at the 12th, a hole about 460 yards, most of the players were taking two wooden shots plus a mashie to get on.

I was much interested in a very fine large marquee called the Exhibitors' Tent. Here the leading club and ball manufacturers had stalls, as well as other firms who regard the golfer as a customer. This tent was always a center of attraction, and I learned that a really large amount of business had been done. The steel shaft people ought to be making a clean up, for since they were legalized in British competitive golf, the steel shafts are selling like wildfire. One stall that did extra good business owing to the rainy weather was that of the "Golfrello" people, who sold very startling, flashy umbrellas of multicolored design. There was a White Horse Whiskey exhibit, but I don't think they were giving away samples, because I did not get one.

I think the British Ryder Cup team is poorly selected. It would have seemed wise to me to have exploited younger players—young Lacey, for instance, whose brother is or was at Pine Valley—and R. A. Whitcombe. Jolly has, I see, helped matters by withdrawing.

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CAPT. DAVID L. REES.



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