

California Boasts of Machine Use in Maintenance Betterment

By ARTHUR LANGTON

INTRODUCTION of mechanical maintenance equipment on California golf courses has followed, or possibly been in the van of, the general trend evident throughout the United States caused by the development of the idea that cheaper and better work could be done by the use of machines of many types. No one will deny that residents of this state are inclined to be boastful, but the opinion seems to be very well substantiated that California courses have more and better machinery than those of the East. In many cases this may not be true but the fact remains that topnotch courses on the coast in order to maintain their positions, have had to adopt the finest mechanical means at their command.

Western turf maintenance equipment is of high quality because it is the most modern on the market. It is the most modern because it is not given the eastern opportunity to get old. In California there is not a single item of equipment, with the possible exception of some of the irrigation devices, that is not in constant use throughout the year. Added to this is the extreme hardness of the ground on many courses which is particularly wearing on cutting equipment. And topping off the list is the predominance of hills incorporated in the design of most Coast courses. Golf architects with hills, mountains, and valleys for the asking have been unable to resist the temptation to include in their designs as much vertical topography as possible. Therefore it can be easily understood that the practice of operating machinery day in and day out over hard ground up hill and down dale does not make for mechanical longevity.

Furthermore it had been found that equipment with apparent mechanical defects, no matter what the cost, is far from the most economical to purchase. California courses are run with the minimum margin allowed for breakdown or other emergencies, so that machinery in the repair shop acts as a break to the whole maintenance system. Unless manufacturers

are prepared to stand by their goods and be ready at a moment's notice to render service in the way of replacements and repairs, they will not have the ghost of a chance of doing business with the greenkeepers of the Pacific Southwest, as more than one manufacturer has found to his cost.

Course Headquarters Glorified.

The mechanical trend at golf courses has taken on one pleasing aspect on at least California golf courses. In the old days the shop, shed, barn, or toolhouse, as it was variously known, was nothing more than a roof under which to store rakes, hoes, shovels and other equipage then considered necessary on the well-kept course. There were no arrangements and conveniences for the employees; frequently the structure relied solely for its illumination upon the discouraged light that managed to filter through filthy cobwebbed windows. For his office the greenkeeper had a packing case or a rough bench equipped with a pencil and a hook as a file.

Today the shop is a palace by comparison. Smooth, clean, cement floors support gleaming lathes, forges, grindstones, drills, buffers, and welding equipment. Efficient electric motors and overhead pulley systems gives the semblance of a factory to this modern descendant of a once humble structure. Electric lights are placed at convenient intervals, while lockers for the men line the walls and, in many cases, showers are provided for the groundsmen. And as for the superintendent's sanctum, hardwood desks, carpets on the floor, comfortable chairs, desk sets, and an air of big business is present in what was once the realm of the cockroach.

Skilled Mechanics in Change.

The reason for this startling metamorphosis is the advent of the skilled mechanic, which event was necessitated by the demands of the complicated machinery which even the skill of the ubiquitous and adaptable greenkeeper could not satisfy. The mechanic, expecting and demanding



Thirteenth green at Montebello where power maintenance shows benefits in good condition and economy.

favorable working conditions, insisted that his surroundings on a golf course should at least be no worse than those he would find elsewhere under more accustomed conditions. This insistence made for a general toning up around the shop, an improvement which by force of demand included the facilities of the groundsmen. Moreover, this improvement assumed wholesale proportions when it was demonstrated that the whole staff could do more and better work if conditions around the shop were favorable.

In speaking of the equipment contained in a modern western shop, let us take an excellent example, that of the Montebello Park public golf course over which Gene Marzolf is superintendent. This is an 18-hole affair which in addition has a 450-acre real estate tract attached which must be cared for by the club personnel. This involves grading, road maintenance, and the

upkeep of lawns around the tract offices. The course itself draws patronage from the metropolitan area of Los Angeles and thickly populated suburban communities. Play is uninterrupted except by darkness and the usual congestion is experienced on week-ends and holidays.

Marzolf Has Prize Layout.

To maintain this course and tract there are ten men exclusive of mechanic and gardener, two five-unit gang mowers for fairways, two tee and approach mowers, and two power greens mowers. Hand mowers are used only about two hours each week to trim around traps in places the power equipment can't handle. Housed in a \$5,000 shop there is \$3,000 worth of tools devoted to the upkeep of course equipment. These include a self-contained general purpose lathe, a reel sharpening lathe, a forge, a lifting crane, two power-driven drill presses, one large and one small, and an oxy-acetylene torch outfit. With this equipment Marzolf and his mechanic have been able to effect every repair necessary to his course maintenance machinery except those involving the use of electric welding. But it is to the credit of the Montebello shop that drastic repairs are rarely necessary owing to the mechanic's constant surveillance of the working machinery. Every day as each cutting unit is brought back to the shop it is greased, oiled, and washed, and the cutting height is checked in readiness for the next day's work.

This California greenkeeper is a firm believer in the efficiency of machinery on the course and in the shop and regards the habit of borrowing equipment as practised by some greenkeepers as a weakness. "I have found," he says, "that the borrowed equipment is usually out of adjustment or not adapted to my particular needs. It is



Gene Marzolf, Montebello course supt., operates a business office for business-like course maintenance.

then necessary to take time off to get into usable shape, which sometimes spoils it for the owner. On our own course we will not tolerate machinery that is not in first class shape."

Wants More Standardization.

As evidence of the improvement in mechanical conditions Marzolf points to the fact that a dozen years ago every golf course barn contained as many as ten broken down cutting units. They rarely were worn out, but cluttered up the barn because there were no repair facilities available. However, he does believe that further improvements can be made in machinery with benefit to the greenkeeper. One of these improvements is in the direction of standardization of equipment. At the present time there seems to be no agreement among the firms making golf course machinery as to what is right or wrong. This may be only a transitory stage similar to the one that the automobile industry went through years ago.

In regard to specific developments along mechanical lines that are being hoped for in California, there is hardly a greenkeeper in this locality who is not eagerly looking forward to the general adoption of topdressing machines that work efficiently when loaded with damp material. There are many kinds of apparatus on the market which will handle dry topdressing to anyone's satisfaction, but which will clog or distribute unevenly when soggy compost or soil is applied.

Tractor wheel spuds or sod pins offer another field of improvement. A constant source of expense and trouble is incurred on California courses by the necessity of replacing these spuds, in some cases as often as every other month. Mowers which will cut rough grass evenly and smoothly is the request which comes from one course, while from another, a public one, comes the demand that someone do something about strengthening flag poles to withstand for longer than six months the rough treatment meted out to them by the pay-as-you-enter player.

Trick Tees Costly.

Also for the public golf course greenkeepers the millenium will have arrived when some genius devises a mechanism to keep home-made tees out of cutting reels. Paper, wooden, and celluloid tees are not so cheap as to prevent many golfers from manufacturing their own from such blade-destroying materials as roofing nails, etc.

New Jersey Plans Turf Field Day June 15

NEW JERSEY'S state experiment station at New Brunswick will be the scene of a field-day program devoted entirely to turf culture on Monday, June 15. The meeting is sponsored jointly by The New Jersey State Golf association, the New Jersey State Greenkeepers association, and the experiment station. Invitations to attend are extended to all persons interested in producing and maintaining turf.

The program will begin at 3 p. m. (daylight saving time) on the experimental turf plots of the Agronomy department at the college farm, New Brunswick. Each of the several hundred plots will be labeled, so that visitors may draw their own conclusions as to the effects of the various treatments and conditions. Discussion of the field experiments will be conducted during the afternoon.

At 6 p. m. the group will adjourn to the Hotel Woodrow Wilson where dinner will be served at a cost of \$1.50 per plate. Following the dinner, there will be talks on turf culture and a discussion of problems. Several speakers of national reputation are on the program.

Cleveland Pros Start Season with Dinner for Officials

CLEVELAND district P. G. A. inaugurated the season with a dinner for officials of the local clubs at which about 90 pros and officials discussed their mutual business problems. W. H. Way, veteran officer of the pro association, was chairman of the meeting. Way and other professionals spoke on what the pro is trying to do for the game and related some of the details of business operations now being studied by the P. G. A. members.

Ganson Rose, Harry Spittler, pres. of the Cleveland District Golf association, and Ed Doty, treasurer of the C. D. G. A., spoke from the club officials' viewpoint.

The dinner was an interesting and profitable affair and will be made an annual feature of the Cleveland district P. G. A. schedule.

If your assistant is ambitious and can make more money for you, see that he attends the P.G.A. Business Conference.
