

Toil and \$400 Cash Put Course in Montana Sagebrush

By WENDELL W. WILLIAMS

I CAME TO POLSON, Montana, last July as one of the advance members of a well-known construction company which was to engage in a major project near that diminutive city. I dreaded the move intensely for one rankling reason, it being that there was no golf course nearer than 75 miles from our camp, and it was a private club with full membership. It was, therefore, with a sudden quickening of the blood stream, that I heard one of my fellow employes casually mention shortly after our camp was completed that we should build a course of our own. "God knows," he said, "there's plenty of room to lay one out." There certainly was! Miles and miles of rolling, sage-infested prairie.

Seven miles southwest from Polson, we built our construction camp on the Flat-head river. It was in the direction of the rolling hills and sagebrush south of camp where my companion waved an airy hand when he said:

"Why not build a golf course over in there? Plenty of room—wonderful topography."

However lightly the remark was made, it implanted within my brain the germ of an idea. I passed the thought on to one of the officials. Rather than laugh it off as I had feared, he listened with an attentive ear. "Go ahead and work out the details," he said. "It will be a fine thing not only for our employes but the residents of Polson."

So, in company with a few others who professed interest, I trudged over the rocks and sage to a high promontory, from where



One of Polson's sand greens. Note sagebrush in background

we tentatively laid out the course. Then we walked to the various points we had noted from the hill and made closer selection of the places where greens would be most advantageous. Don't think for a moment that the prospect looked sunny. Far from it! It was with sinking hearts we noted the immense boulders strewn through the future fairways; the tough, spreading sagebrush; the cattle and horse droppings dotting the entire section and dating back, perhaps, for hundreds of years; the buffalo variety, at least.

Time or Cash Pays Initiation

We talked the matter over with townsmen, many of whom had never played or even seen a game of golf. Here we received a surprise, for they fell in with enthusiasm and promised support. As an upshot of several conferences, it was decided that those of us at the construction camp who were sufficiently interested should go ahead and devote our spare moments to constructing the course. Strict account would be kept of the time involved, and all who worked would be credited in the time book on a 50-cents an hour basis for their labor, the amount thus earned to apply on their memberships. Or the sum of \$15, the agreed membership



Golf flourishes wherever golfers are.
This green nestles below towering bad-
lands

fee, could be paid in cash and no labor furnished.

The weather was warm for March and it was deemed advisable to go ahead with the work and postpone organization until after completion of the course. On March 25 then, about 20 volunteers turned out for the first evening's work. None of the town people was evident and we decided to go ahead and handle the work alone. These people, you see, had not yet been touched by the golfer's bug.

One of the engineers in camp with a penchant for golf donated his services, staking out the fairways, greens, bunkers and tees.

Green Gangs

The nature of the climate made grass greens impracticable. We agreed on a cinder base and a topdressing of sand. There was a hill nearby which we had noted produced a very fine grade of pure, white sand. Five men were told off as the "sand gang." One had his own truck and we rustled a bunch of burlap bags to transport the sand. These boys left at once for the first load. Another member of the bunch had a truck and he with four additional helpers was designated as boss of the "cinder gang." They departed for our boiler house with its mountain of cin-

ders in the rear. Those of us who were left comprised the "excavation gang." One man, who was appointed boss, cut the green. We had decided on a 30-ft. putting green and using a shovel trimmed square at the base and sharpened, attached to a 15-ft. quarter-inch rope, he circled around from the center stake, cutting the turf to a depth of about 2 in. The rest of us followed up with No. 2 shovels, skimming the sod. We tried to maintain a depth of 2 in. as nearly as possible, although at times it was difficult.

Sand Green Construction

The poorer sod which had been removed was piled up to form the nucleus of the bunker. The finer pieces were piled neatly near the bunker location and when the green was completely excavated, one man pieced them together carefully over the dirt and sod base. By this time the "sand" and "cinder" gangs had arrived with their material. Cinders were distributed evenly by means of a straight edge timber, pulled around with the center stake as a pivot. When thoroughly levelled they were tamped by huge hand tampers which we had made ourselves with flat pieces of steel to which long scrap steel handles had been welded. This was followed immediately by a sound rolling with two heavy hand rollers, borrowed from the City Water department. When this had been done to our satisfaction, the sand was spread on, using the same method as with the cinders and it also was well tamped and rolled until the green presented a smooth, gently sloping surface. About 20 sacks of cinders and 30 of sand were used on each green.

Next came the oiling. From the garages in town we had coaxed and in a few instances, purchased, enough waste transmission case drainings to apply about 3 barrels of oil to each green on the initial oiling. This was sprayed on by means of an oil pump with spray attachment which connected directly to the standard metal oil drums. As early darkness set in, we stood back dirty, greasy, immensely tired—but happy. Number One green was completed. It had been done in the 2½ hours between the time we wiped our stubby chins after a hearty feed in the camp mess hall and 8:00 o'clock, the hour of darkness.

This March 25 was a Wednesday. We finished 2 more greens that week. Saturday night the boys all wanted to go to town so nothing was accomplished that

evening, but Sunday morning bright and early we were hard at it again—hauling, tamping, rolling and oiling. We put in 8 solid hours that Sunday besides having the aid of a few of the more ambitious town folk who came out rather from curiosity than a genuine desire to help.

Thwarted the first part of the following week by heavy rains, it was Friday before any additional work could be done. Perhaps it was just as well. Most of us were office men and entirely unused to the rigors of pick and shovel and hand tools. We ached thoroughly and our hands were sore from many blisters. But by the following Wednesday, April 1, we heaved a sigh of tired but complete satisfaction. The ninth hole was finished. We had worked later those last few nights. Someone had uncovered an old carbide lamp and we worked by its light until as late as 9:30.

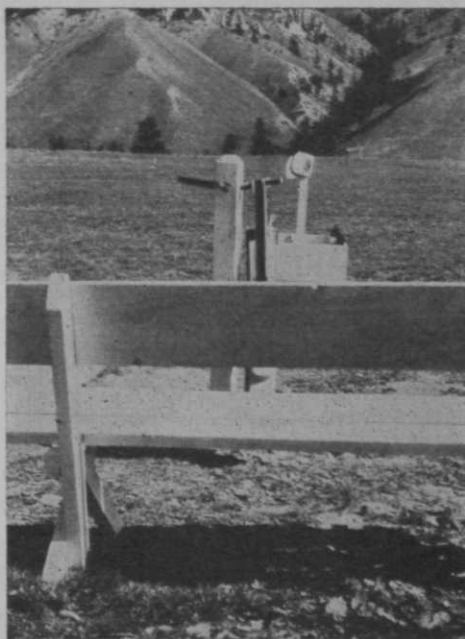
Clean-up by Night

Thursday, April 2, someone got the bright idea that an Easter Sunday opening would be auspicious. But there was a vast amount of work to do! We looked at each other in dismay. There were all the fairways to clean, sagebrush to dig and burn, manure to haul away, rocks to be dug out, markers and tees to build.

For the tees, a 6-foot square frame was set in a suitable spot and filled with the material which had been dug out to make it level. On top of this we tamped in sand. A considerable amount of painting had to be done as well. In one thing we were fortunate; our flags, purchased from an eastern firm, would arrive that evening on the local passenger train.

Those last few evenings were a nightmare of activity. Every available man, both from the camp and in the city was called upon, even begged to come out and do his bit. Twenty men were strung across the fairway with garden rakes. Five men went ahead cutting the sagebrush down with mattocks; 5 men did nothing but dig out rocks with crowbars; truck drivers hauled the rocks to a distant coulee; a wheelbarrow gang hauled off the fairway the piled debris of sage and manure, old grass and other burnable material and touched a match to it. A high wind was of material assistance, fanning the flames so that the debris burned to the ground.

We hired 2 carpenters who did nothing but cut and paint markers and posts to hang the green cleaners on; construct the



Eighth tee at Polson. Note the home-made bag-rack, sand box, and bench

tee boxes and paint them; build the sand boxes.

When darkness fell, which it does quickly in Montana, every man who had an automobile available drew it up on the fairway until there was a line of cars from one side to the other. Lights were turned on and cars moved up as the rakers advanced. It was a weird sight, these grimy men wielding garden rakes across the deep swales and sizeable buttes. A drizzling rain set in but no one minded. The golf course was the thing!

Cost \$400 in Cash

Our books show that the total cost of the course was \$1,000. We had a membership of 75. Four hundred and some odd dollars were paid in cash by those who were unable or did not care to work. The remainder of the "grand" represents work donated at 50 cents an hour, rental of equipment such as trucks, extra tools, etc. After paying for all materials used in construction there still remained a comfortable bank balance with which to pay an old caretaker to roll the greens and care for the course. This was augmented by occasional green fees.

The golf course had been completed in the brief space of 11 evenings and 2 Sun-

days. Without undue egotism it can be said the course compares favorably in construction and surpasses in scenery any in the state.

On Saturday, April 4, we climbed to a gentle knoll—the same one where we had first scanned the tangle of sags spreading out in every direction—and surveyed our handiwork, and to those of us who love golf and have fair imaginations, there was nothing lacking. Long stretches of clean, rolling fairway, green with spring rains; snappy white tee boxes, sand boxes, yard posts, markers and cleaners, were in place and ready for use. What had once been typical Montana prairie was now dotted with specks of white here and there—gently waving flags, well painted equipment. Greens were compactly rolled and oiled. Everything was in readiness for the morning's play.

INSURE FOR GREENS

Tucson Finances Grass Greens with Insurance Plan

TUCSON G. & C. C. after 18 years of play on the desert is making ready to put in a new 18-hole grass course.

To accomplish this the club has instituted a financial tournament that is attracting wide attention. A campaign to raise the necessary finances is being conducted much as any golf tournament only it is being played with green dollars instead of white balls. The committeemen are organized into twosomes and there are to be four rounds with the teeing off for each round at special tournament luncheons held at the Pioneer hotel, Tucson.

At the end of the first round \$30,000 had been chalked up and as they teed off for the third round the score showed over \$50,000. The condition of the times seems to be no barrier to the golfers of Tucson who confidently expect to make par for all four rounds. They have already announced, as this is written in the first week of May, a 19th hole dinner as the culminating event of the tournament.

The financial plan is unique, though it has had quite a record of achievement for the financing of fraternal organizations throughout the country. The club arranges through a local bank, acting as trustee and the Lincoln National Life Insurance Co. for the placing of endowment insurance on the lives of all subscribers in an amount

of \$450 for each \$300 subscribed. Thus the subscribers' money paid in as convenient over a period of years is loaned to the club for its improvement program and is returned to the subscriber or to his beneficiary through the means of insurance which costs the club about half normal rates of interest.

For instance: Mr. Golfer subscribes for \$300, electing to pay \$30 down and \$10 per month for 27 months. He is covered with \$450 endowment life insurance and the trustee bank issues a trust certificate to him for that amount. He makes his payments to the bank where it is placed in a trust fund for the special use of the club.

If Mr. Golfer dies after paying \$100, the insurance company sends to the trustee the \$450 out of which \$200 is taken to satisfy the balance due on the subscription and the \$250 residue is paid to the beneficiary named by Mr. Golfer. Had the subscription been paid in full then the whole \$450 would go to the beneficiary. On the other hand should Mr. Golfer meet with reverses and not be able to complete his payments, then what he had paid would be treated as an outright contribution to the club and the insurance protection can be cancelled.

The plan, according to its sponsors, seems to fit the special financial needs of country clubs. It has an appeal to the member who has the guaranteed insurance return regardless of his membership in the club.

Clever publicity is being used to promote interest among the old members and prospective new members. One folder in vivid two tone green is entitled "Old Enough to Be Green," and contains the significant statement, "Tucson Country Club has come to the turning of the ways. It will either completely dry up and blow away or it will rebuild, water and grass a new golf course that will add untold prestige to the city."

Another piece of literature is headed, "This Is Your Bag of Clubs." It is a sales manual for the guidance of the solicitors who are playing the twosomes under set rules.

A broadside folder is mailed to all prospects. It too, is in green and shouts, "Fore!!" declaring that this is the greatest tournament in the history of the club—that there will be "No scratches! No handicaps! No picking up! No conceding of putts! No gallery! We are out to beat par and par in this tournament is \$100,000."