

# California's Bermuda Fairways Stubbornly in Command

By ARTHUR LANGTON

CONSIDERING THAT fairways constitute the greater part of all golf courses, it is surprising how little can be done to take care of them here in California. For in this state which is amenable in many ways to artificial control, nature takes a lone hand in determining the quality of fairways. Several slightly successful efforts have been made to establish grasses whose habits were not in accordance with the natural scheme of things, but the success rarely has justified his expense.

The story of fairways in the Pacific Southwest might be termed poetically a saga of Bermuda grass. In the telling of this tale the sometimes despised *capriola dactylon* might be compared to the uncouth Uncle Oscar in a comedy of manners, the shirt-sleeved relative who, puffing at his odorous pipe, walks into the family's doggiest social gathering, sits down and puts his feet on the dining room table. The ensuing tableau has had its counterpart on the majority of fairways in this corner of the United States. But it is this same disreputable Uncle Oscar who lifts the mortgage from the family roof, and

this same devil grass that provides a playing surface when all else has failed. For this reason greenkeepers of the district have adopted a fraternal attitude toward this near relative of bamboo. As one course superintendent put it, "If you know you have to live with someone for the rest of your life, you might as well pat him on the back and kid him along, no matter what your true feelings may be."

There was a time a few years ago when Bermuda was considered the only grass suitable for any part of a Southern California golf course. Preceding this time the prevalence of sand greens indicated that even this hardy plant was not considered as equal to the task of providing playing turf. But with the establishment of a plentiful water supply for golf courses it was found that *capriola* could be made to thrive as the interest on the bonded indebtedness, not only on greens, but on fairways, tees, gardens, nurseries, driveways, and everywhere else as well. During the introduction of bents several of these grasses were tried on local greens with just enough success to make players satisfied with nothing else. Just as an earlier



A fairway at the San Gabriel (Calif.) C. C. Photograph taken in February, 1932, shows, as light patches, the dormant bermuda

Renaissance was a revival of learning, the introduction of bent was an incentive to developments throughout the whole realm of golf. In California, where the problem was to get as much water on the fairways as possible during the non-playing hours, the hoseless irrigation system was developed with its accompanying quick fastening couplings, pop-ups, and control valves.

### The Step-child Survives.

At these latest developments the locker-room greenkeepers foresaw the time—nay, the time already was upon them—when finer grasses could be substituted for Bermuda, which then could be relegated to the limbo of oblivion. With true local enthusiasm, many clubs jumped into the problem not only head first but apparently with both feet. But the gyrations attendant upon this trick were as nothing compared with the contortions of these same clubs when they found that green though their fairways now were, the old tee-providing mat was gone. Every grounded shot was accompanied by a squashy thud as iron clubs plowed into and scarred thinly protected turf.

"Well, never mind," said the experts. "By drilling in Bermuda grass seed the perfect fairway may be achieved. The devil grass will be adequate in the summer and will provide a thick mat for the other grass's greenness in the cooler months." So, with characteristic abruptness this very thing was done on several layouts in sunshine-and-orange precincts. Alas! Bobbie Burns had just this situation in mind when he wrote:

*The best laid schemes o' mice and men  
Gang aft a-gley,  
An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain  
For promised joy.*

For Bermuda grass, once having been scorned, resorted to passive fury. Greenkeepers learned to their cost that a group of foul-plugged flivvers on a winter's morn were as nothing to start as Bermuda grass from seed. It was found to be as wilful as a mule; it could be led to a piece of turf but it could not be made to grow. Even when pandered to with the choicest fertilizers it was as temperamental as a prima donna. Of course, when it was once started it flourished to the ultimate exclusion of everything else, but to get it started was difficult.

About this time the wiseacres who had remained impassive about the condition of their fairways and had not examined Bermuda's gift too closely by the blades, conceived the idea that the route to the millenium lay by using the reverse of the last named method; that is, they believed that by sowing bluegrass into Bermuda all would be perfect eventually. This was tried; the ground received the seed without a murmur; and everyone waited for perfection to arrive. They are still waiting. The fact that the roots of *capriola dactylon* will acquire for themselves most of the available nourishment in the ground to a depth of 4 or 5 feet had not been considered as a possible deterrent to bluegrass with its root action of only a few inches. But this truth was graphically demonstrated.

### On 50-50 Basis.

Thus it was decided that if Bermuda and bluegrass were to indulge in each other's proximity, they must be given an even break by being sown together. In this way the bluegrass would withstand the onslaughts of its colleague, provided it took root, for a number of seasons depending upon the coolness of the climate. The cooler the weather, the less aggressive is devil grass. One other thing that nature taught the California greensman in regard to the state's most favored grass: Those fairways which had been sowed to blue and then had been topdressed with barnyard manures soon produced an excellent stand of the hardier grass. It does not take a Sherlock Holmes to determine the reason for this phenomena when it is understood that *capriola* is a prolific grower in alfalfa fields and other pasture lands.

With these object lessons still firmly fixed in mind, greenkeepers of the Southwest have decided that because there is so much work that can be done on greens, and owing to the fewness of the men which the clubs can afford to hire, and inasmuch as the expense would be prohibitive, and so on and so on, it is advisable to allow fairways to pursue their own inclinations, which are the inclinations of Bermuda grass. But common sense, a frequently rare commodity, dictates that much can be done to fairways besides cutting and irrigation, without dire results, although these improvements being on a necessarily large scale run into expense which, for



The same part of the San Gabriel (Calif.) C. C. as pictured on page 21. This picture was taken in April, 1932, when bermuda has resumed growth

various reasons, most clubs are anxious to avoid just at present.

### Improving Shot Areas.

Expense probably has been the real reason for the prevalence of the fallacy that because fairways get along without fertilizer they do not need it. The application of almost any kind of a fertilizer will do wonders toward improving the fairways and thus toning up the whole course. A plain soil topdressing can be the means of eliminating weeks of winter golf, a black eye to any course, especially to those not having snow and frost as alibis. As Bermuda fairways age, their mat gets heavier and coarser so that at the end of 4 or 5 years the turf has a somewhat unpleasant spongy feeling underfoot. This situation may be improved by a thorough disking, the advantage of this method being that bits of grass are driven deep into the soil to contribute to the humus. However, this process is not advisable where the soil is very gravelly because the disks will resemble circular saws after a short time devoted to this work.

For practical purposes it is not necessary to go to the costly task of improving every section of each fairway. Attention can be devoted almost exclusively to those portions between 150 and 275 yards from the tees and to the approaches. This will give practically every player who hits his ball straight a fine piece of turf for all his second shots and pitches. This involves a principle which is being applied to the most modern golf course sprinkling system. The first hoseless outfits distribut-

ed their largess with a fine disregard for the varying requirements of tees, fairways, and greens. Later these three main divisions were put under separate controls so that each would receive just the amount of water that it needed. The next step will be to have the system controlled so that the different requirements of each section of the fairways may be provided; thus economy and efficiency may be improved. This flexibility is one of the few advantages of the old hose systems. Many greenkeepers for the sake of cutting down expense do not water that portion of fairway contained within 150 yards of the tee. The ground thus made devoid of vegetation permits a dubbed ball to run on to the fairway proper, so that few can complain of poor lies. The only objection to this procedure is based on aesthetic grounds, since the bare spots are unsightly.

A number of California greenkeepers have expressed the desire for a machine designed to scatter dressing over fairways. Such a device, having to be built on a grand scale, would be more expensive than most clubs could afford, especially since it would be used on each course only once in 3 or 4 years. Therefore, the suggestion is offered to manufacturers of golf equipment to build a number of such machines and have them available for rent at various golfing centers. This idea has been put into practice with considerable success by William P. Bell, Southern California golf architect, with a large piece of greenkeeping machinery that he owns. There seems to be no reason why some

enterprising manufacturer could not capitalize on this plan.

The futility of anything which may be done to fairways has just been pointed out to the writer by a Los Angeles greensman. "Why bother about fairways?" said he. "Nobody takes any notice of them. The shark rarely takes more than one shot from each one. The dub almost never gets on them. You and I are so glad when we are on them that we never notice the defects. So forget about them."

Well, maybe he's right.

## "Golfer's Foot" Prevention Is Vital Locker Routine

IT SEEMS probable that ringworm of the feet, popularly known as "athlete's foot" or "golfer's foot," is the commonest of skin diseases. There are indications that the disease is spreading rapidly to the locker and shower rooms of nearly all golf clubs to an extent where real attention and preventive practices must be recognized as an essential of club routine.

The disorder is transmitted in many ways. It may be caught by walking in bare feet in the locker-room, by wiping the feet with a towel previously used by someone already infected, or by coming in contact with the parasites which cause the infection on a shower booth floor.

Ringworm starts with a small spot of inflammation that gradually spreads. As it spreads, the center heals so that after three or four days the characteristic ring appearance is formed. On the feet, kept moist and warm by shoes, ringworm takes the form of small blisters, which break and leave an itching raw surface which, while not particularly painful, is disturbing to peace of mind.

Combating athlete's foot consists of maintaining constant sanitation in the locker and shower rooms to destroy lurking parasites, and providing proper antiseptics and medicines in convenient locations in the locker-room for those members who are infected to use on their feet. Many efficient scrubbing solutions are available on the market which will serve to keep floors in proper sanitary condition, and avoiding wiping the feet with used towels will prevent infection from that source.

Remaining sanitary measures consist in providing members with antiseptic solutions prepared for ringworm prevention. Containers should be available in the shower room and in the locker-room proper, and it would not be a bad idea for indi-

vidual bottles of the solution to be carried by the locker man so that members with the infection can continue the treatment at home.

One most important method of preventing spread of "golfer's foot" is to make it a club regulation that members must not walk barefoot in the locker-room. A notice requiring the use of paper bath slippers, wood-soled sandals or other foot-gear should be posted conspicuously on the locker-room bulletin board and the locker-man should be instructed to see that the regulation is obeyed.

PITTSBURGH Field Club has happy answer to an executive problem. J. W. Carr, long active as an official of the club, recently retired from U. S. Steel Corp. after 30 years to become the Field club's resident sec-treas. It's successful co-ordination in this case, as manager, green-keeper, pro, and Carr all have been working smoothly in harness together for some years.

## Col. Clinton G. Holden, Famed Manager, Dies

DEATH OF Col. Clinton Grant Holden, for the past seven years manager of Olympia Fields C. C., and first president of the Club Managers' Association of America, occurred April 17 in Harvey, Ill., after an illness of six months. Complications following pneumonia were responsible for his passing in his sixtieth year.

No man in club managerial circles was better known or better loved than Col. Holden, whose natural ability as an executive and diplomat had been tempered for 22 years on the firing line of experience. Among his outstanding posts were: Colonial Club, University Club, Cleveland C. C. and University Club, all of Cleveland; Newark (N. J.) C. C.; University Club, South Shore C. C. and Olympia Fields C. C., all of Chicago. During the World War he served for four months on the staff of General Pershing.

Col. Holden is survived by three brothers and three sisters, and was buried at Conneaut, Ohio, his boyhood home, on April 21.

IF YOUR club is having trouble effecting collections from members, make dues payable in twelve monthly installments rather than all in a lump or quarterly. This eases the members' burden, yet gives the club its money as it is needed.