

Coast Greensmen Given Free Hand But Problems Keep Up

By
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Oakmont C. C. members (Glendale, Calif.) have no difficulty visualizing how a new green is going to look after they see the clay models as prepared by Lester Gould, superintendent of grounds.

RECENT months have demonstrated one thing above all other on California golf courses: barring financial restrictions greenkeepers have enjoyed greater freedom and greater opportunity to display their real worth than ever before in the history of golf. Course officials have been too busy attending to their own shaky businesses to spend much time creating new devices to disturb the nocturnal slumber of the weary greenkeeper. If nothing else, the depression has been instrumental in destroying the bland self-assurance on the part of many prosperity successes which has led them to believe that because they were Napoleons of the feed and fuel business or the glue market they knew all about running a golf course. And fear of assessment has stilled the club member's cry for improvements involving expensive new construction.

Instead the order has been given out, "Give us golf, but don't spend any money." Perhaps this command has been a little harsh in many cases but some surprising results have been obtained as a result. In not a few instances the courses coming under this edict have been improved noticeably. This because non-essentials have been banished and attention has been concentrated upon maintenance of tees, greens, and fairways.

Greenkeepers Pals in Distress

How nobly California greenkeepers have responded to emergency is also indicated by the closer knit spirit of co-operation which has been created during the past two years. No longer do course superintendents operate as isolated beings. In this time of stress a fraternal spirit has been fostered which has been to the benefit of all courses throughout the state. For

instance, when a turf guardian at one end of the state is confronted by a new problem it is not unusual for him to communicate with his colleagues at the other end. In this manner he becomes the recipient of much beneficial advice in regard to identification, treatment, and policy.

Not long ago Earl Randleman of the Western Avenue course of Los Angeles found that large areas on one or two of his greens had been entirely devastated of grass for some obscure reason. He made an investigation and found that the soil was streaked as if by rust. Sounding the alarm among his colleagues many of them came to his aid and the group engaged the assistance of scientists at the Citrus Experimental Station in Riverside as well as that of the faculty of the University of California at Los Angeles. Meanwhile every superintendent was put upon his guard against a possible invasion by this new disease to the Pacific Coast.

Although little has been discovered beyond the fact that a protein-consuming fungus was present in the affected areas and that its spread has been checked by the application of lime and fungicides, every greenkeeper is forearmed by being forewarned. A few years ago Greenkeeper Randleman might have had to suffer in silence, but now with the searchlight of investigation being turned on it is prob-



In the spirit of pure cussedness, San Gabriel C. C. officials believe, some motoring vandal recently drove a car onto this green and deliberately ruined the putting surface, as shown. A fence has been erected to prevent further forays.

able that more definite and helpful information may be forthcoming at any moment.

Avert Water Disaster

Last December the action of one course benefited every course in the Los Angeles district—an area, incidentally, closely akin in size to that of a European state. Early last year these golf links, all purchasing water from the City of the Angels, were deprived of the irrigation rate which they had been paying for years and were placed upon the domestic list, which made a difference of several thousand dollars on the gloomy side of the ledger for all courses involved. No real justification was revealed for the change in water schedules. Came the time for deciding the venue of the 1933 Los Angeles Open Golf Tournament, an annual event promoted by the Junior Chamber of Commerce. For a time there was doubt that the event would be played this year because of financial straits. After considerable debate it was decided to continue with reduced prize money, it being argued successfully once more that the accruing advertising would attract the attention of throngs to the existence of Los Angeles as a place to distribute their wealth. But—and here was the catch—the affair would be played only if the course of the Wilshire C. C. were available; this because it was of championship caliber, was well

located within the heart of a golf-interested populace, and was equipped with an impregnable fence withal. Thus would adequate return be assured. However:

“Sorry,” said some Wilshire genius, “we couldn’t think of accommodating you this year, water rates being what they are—”

This gave the Junior Chamberites pause to think, and thinking in this case being tantamount to action, gentle but firm pressure was applied to the appropriate spots with such good effect that the city fathers reconsidered and decided that golf course irrigation was a legitimate low rate enterprise. Now all greenkeepers in the Metropolitan area are considering erecting a statue to Wilshire’s greenkeeper, Bob Greenfield, believing that this canny Scot was in some way responsible for the expeditious change in schedule. Incidentally a most successful tournament was held, one noted for its universal lack of complaint in regard to the condition of the course.

Smart Use of Models

Another scheme to forestall the depression in some measure is being tried at the Oakmont C. C. of Glendale, where Superintendent Lester Gould is in a process of reconstructing a number of his greens with an eye to improving their quality, increasing play, and lowering upkeep costs. Unfortunately, Gould discovered, unless a

recognized and consequently high-priced expert was called into consultation in regard to the remodeling, difficulty was experienced in getting the members to come to some unanimity of agreement in regard to just what constituted an improvement. As everyone in the business knows there are just as many opinions in regard to how a green should be constructed as there are players, and most of the ideas are impractical. The great advantage of retaining an expert is that his word is taken as gospel, if only because he charges so much.

So Gould is now trying a method of circumventing any kickbacks from the Oakmont players after the reconstructed greens have reached maturity. This is the construction of a model of each green as it will be in its completed form, not a new idea in itself, but the Oakmont greenkeeper goes ahead one more step and places the facsimile for all to view and invites everyone's criticism. The miniature green being carefully made of modeling clay, hand-painted, and complete in every detail of drainage, contours, traps, and pipe lines, is bound to attract attention. In this manner the club officials are enabled to get a fair cross section of opinion from those who will suffer or enjoy the projected changes.

Another use for working models has been revealed by C. W. Hazlett of the Bel-Air C. C. He found, as have many others, that teamsters, being non-golfers, frequently were lost when they were hired to do construction on a golf course. They had difficulty in understanding just what they were expected to build, not knowing a green from the Athenian Acropolis. When construction time comes around Hazlett therefore has a pile of earth about 12 feet in diameter placed near the projected grading work. In this he shapes a model of the finished job. Then he tells the teamsters to get busy and build him something like this according to specifications. All of which enables the work to go ahead without the necessity of the greenkeeper being present to direct the placing of each scoop.

Mystery in Dirty Work

Among other events on California golf courses this season is one for the amateur detective and one which has the constabulary of the little town of San Gabriel considerably perplexed. Recently on two

nights one week apart some individual or individuals drove a car on the grounds of the San Gabriel C. C. and with malice aforethought charged across greens, slamming on the brakes and skidding the wheels. The damage wrought on the moist turf can be imagined; the sod was torn and rolled, leaving long ugly scars. No motive has been discovered; no employees had been discharged just prior to the disfigurement; and no one can imagine a person having a sufficient mad at the club to perform such a trick. Whatever the cause the Mission City course is now barricaded by a substantial fence, thus putting it in the championship class.

The most cheerful news that has come before Southern California greenkeepers in many moons arrived a short time ago with the announcement that the Southern California G. A., with Norman Macbeth as the leading light, is promoting the establishment of a turf experimental station in the Pacific Southwest by the U. S. G. A. This has been a crying need for years inasmuch as the thickest populated spot west of Chicago as far as golf is concerned has never received the benefits of such a station. This lack has not been without its consolation because it has made the local greenkeepers more self reliant, greenkeeping practices obtaining in other sections being of scant use here. Nevertheless there has been a feeling that such a station in the hands of grass experts and plant pathologists would be the means of saving Southern California golfers thousands of dollars in course maintenance. For some time Los Angeles greenkeepers had considered establishing an experimental plant of their own, but economic conditions brought this idea to a halt. With the establishment of a station by the golf association, local course superintendents are looking forward to a rosier future.

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