

# SPIKE IDEA THAT TOURNEYS RUIN

**I**N some uninformed quarters there still exists the erroneous idea that a major tournament results in heavy, long-lasting damage to a golf course. The idea has been allowed to stick, and even has received some promotion from fellows who are not acquainted with the actual condition. The result has been to discourage officials and members of clubs that might otherwise be logical avenues for fast-field events.

The truth of the matter is that, with the exception of some spots on the winter circuit, whatever damage results from tournament reception vanishes in approximately two weeks time. Restricting practice rounds to a reasonable limit so the club members will have the minimum of inconvenience, and the course will suffer no undue hacking, means that a club can take one of the biggest events and suffer no course injury that will be evident three weeks after the tournament concludes.

## Baltusrol OK After Two Weeks

Expert testimony from those who have been hosts to major tournaments can be led off by a statement from Major R. A. Jones, general manager at Baltusrol, scene of the 1936 National Open.

Says the Major:

"On the Sunday morning following the Open championship at Baltusrol in 1936, the course and particularly the lawns about the clubhouse looked terrible. Thousands of people milling over the turf for three days of the tournament, plus small galleries following the players during practice rounds, did cause a lot of temporary damage to the turf, but in less than two weeks the turf was fully restored, except in a few places about the first tee where resodding was necessary. It was a natural recovery and the expense involved was negligible.

"Preparing a golf course for a National championship is not an expensive undertaking. Most of the work done is in the nature of permanent improvement, and a well laid-out course needs few structural changes; a few extra tees perhaps, extra sand in the traps and care in greenkeeping methods months prior to the tournament in order to provide the best possible playing conditions.

"Prior to a tournament, members take a particular interest in their course, are careful about replacing divots and the staff gives of its best. The fine condition in which we find a championship course is due to more to this pride and interest than to a lavish expenditure of money, unless the club goes out of its way to add problems with the idea of having its course regarded as tough.

"Since everybody concerned has done his best to produce the most perfect playing conditions, it seems reasonable enough to expect that the contestants themselves will cooperate, but many don't.

"Some players are quite satisfied with three or four practice rounds; others would like to play the course daily for two weeks or more and play under all or any conditions of weather. Most players try to anticipate the position of the tee discs, consequently the tournament tees are severely punished prior to the tournament.

## Short Hole Tees Take Most Punishment

"On the short holes, it is not unusual for contestants to play three or four iron shots on each round, particularly when practicing alone, as many do. This practice goes on from early morning to dusk every day right up to the tournament and there isn't the time in which to effectively repair all this unnecessary damage, for the greens staff is taxed to the limit with other extra tournament jobs. We roped off sections of our tees, but the ropes were removed and we finally resorted to stakes and wire.

"If there is wet weather prior to a large tournament such as the National Open, the greens suffer most during the practice rounds. For in addition to the normal wear, there are so many deep ball holes and here again contestants will practice putting for a long time in addition to playing numerous pitch shots.

"If there is heavy rain during the ten days prior to a championship, the course

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should be closed for play entirely and no play should be permitted on Sunday prior to the tournament. The greens staff must have some time in which to make preparations.

## Practice Must Be Permitted

"A good showing in an Open championship is a very important matter to the players. The gallery pays to see their performance and the players should be given reasonable time for practice, and that is recognized. On the other hand, the club members pay to see the tournament, give their services to help run it and do without their course and lockers during the tournament proper and on days set apart for practice rounds.

"To qualify for the National Open does not carry with it the right to unlimited practice rounds on the course selected for the championship, and it isn't fair to permit local contestants such latitude, and I believe the majority of the first class professionals regard five practice days as adequate and do not expect to practice on Saturdays and Sundays when the members need their course.

"It would save a great deal of trouble for all concerned if the USGA would establish a definite rule to the effect that no contestant be permitted to practice on the course except on the five days (Monday to Friday) prior to the tournament, and to prohibit the use of certain tees on short holes, particularly where it isn't possible to build sufficient teeing space to stand the unrestricted use of irons.

"In 1936, the players who practiced here two weeks or less before the tournament, found low scoring very difficult, but a week of dry weather and the total absence of wind produced the most perfect scoring conditions we have ever known. The early practice rounds, therefore, were useless for the distance obtained with wood irons had increased tremendously, the rough had thinned out and playing from the dry sand in the traps was a simple matter."

Hugh Luke, veteran expert in charge of maintenance at the Garden City GC where the 1936 National Amateur was played, remarks:

"I would not say that the damage done



Because of the recent ruling on amateurs participating in tournaments sponsored by manufacturers, the annual True Temper Open will henceforth be known as the "True Temper Championship" and will be held this year in conjunction with the third annual Philadelphia PGA Open. Date of the event is June 24-26, over the Whitmarsh Valley CC course, the 98-yard ninth hole of which is shown in the above photo.

by the player in practice was in any sense permanent. If the fairways are well established and well fed they will recover, as the grass roots are usually deeper than the turf taken in playing a shot.

"At Garden City we had nine days plus the week-end membership play straight through to the championship without a break, so you can see we were hard pushed to make the course presentable.

"Looking at the situation from all angles, I'm afraid the heavy advance play is unavoidable as it is impossible to have the practice with a week interval before the championship.

"The expense involved in any long period of practice would be a hardship on many competitors especially those who have to travel great distances to the scene of the championship.

"I do not believe the divots taken in a championship affect ordinary play because the area of play in a championship is beyond regular play. In the first place if a hole is a good golf hole (assuming a par four) the second shot should be played around a certain area. If the average player plays from said area, the logical way to step up that hole is by stretching at the tee for championship play, hence the divot marks will not be where the ordinary player reaches on his drive.

"Repairs to the course after a championship are not very great if the course is well established, as previously mentioned.

"I am not inclined to give costs as the methods used and cost of labor vary with

### CMA Names V-P's

Newly appointed vice-presidents of the Club Managers Association of America, as announced by J. A. MacGoogan, president, are:

Alfred I. Barton, Surf Club, Miami Beach, Fla.; P. J. Cannon, Tulsa Club, Tulsa, Okla.; G. H. Davies, Beaconsfield G & CC, Montreal; Henry Dutton, Albany CC, Albany, N. Y.; John J. Ferguson, Jonathan Clubs, Los Angeles; S. H. Frazer, Beauvoir CC, Montgomery, Ala.; E. I. Gossom, New Orleans CC, New Orleans, La.; R. C. Magill, Racquet Club, St. Louis, Mo.; Chas. McKeown, Wisconsin Club, Milwaukee, Wis.; Darwin Meisnest, Washington AC, Seattle; Wm. Norcross, Essex County CC, West Orange, N. J.; E. M. Ries, Colonial CC, Memphis, Tenn.

locality so that what would be reasonable in our district would be away off in another. Figures are often deceiving as without knowing the course referred to, and the condition it is in, they do not reveal much but often do much harm through unjustified comparison with other courses.

"To condense the whole matter into a few words, our damage from divots was two-thirds practice and one-third championship play."

Bert Sheldon, widely-known greenkeeper at the Country Club of Cleveland where the 1935 National Amateur was played, comments:

"We have a good practice fairway where 25 players can practice at the same time. To some extent, this kept them off the course for practice. I planned my work to please the player when we were getting the course ready for the National Amateur. There is a lot to where the cups are placed and I doubt that this matter often is considered with respect to maintenance. I was very fortunate in having a man like Mr. Jackson of the USGA take this phase of play and maintenance into consideration when placing the cups for the competition.

"Three weeks before the National Amateur I topdressed all the tees and greens. Immediately after the tournament had concluded I again topdressed greens and topdressed and seeded the tees. This put the tees on the long holes in good shape. On the short hole tees I plugged in new

turf before topdressing and seeding. Most of the wear was on the back of the tees so it was not in areas our players usually use. I filled in each divot hole on the fairways with a mixture of soil and seed, and fertilized the course. In a surprisingly short time you couldn't tell that we had been hosts to the Amateur.

"The Country Club course normally requires 12 men for maintenance. For the National Amateur our directors allowed me four extra men and two caddies to pick up the debris scattered around. We were fortunate to have rain only the first day, and that kept down our damage to not much more than the ordinary amount when we have heavy play."

### Only Tees Badly Marred

Alex Cunningham, pro and supt. at North Shore GC, where the 1933 National Open was held, reported that within three weeks after the tournament had ended no one could tell that a major event had been played on the course. Cunningham declares that the only aggravating part about having a tournament is that the contestants in practice rounds won't confine themselves to practice tee areas but want to make their own guesses as to where the tee markers will be placed. He does not consider that the usual amount of practice preliminary to a tournament is regarded as much of a sacrifice by members. The members invariably are guests of neighboring courses. Some of the members enjoy the close observation and visits of the practice rounds even more than they do the competition, and there are generally starting times for many home club players during the practice period.

Fred Kruger, superintendent at Olympia Fields where National Open, Western Open, PGA championships and many qualifying rounds have been played, observes that tournament play doesn't mean much more damage to a course than the play the course gets on days of heavy traffic by members. Divots on fairways and tees are quickly and inexpensively repaired by topdressing, plugging or seeding, and with fairway and tee watering now available, means very little additional work in the greenkeeping routine.

He adds that he cannot see where the practice rounds hurt, because they create interest for the average club member, and the greenkeeper welcomes anything that increases interest in the game.