

Golf Around the War-torn Map

By ROBERT D. PRYDE

A few years ago Robert D. Pryde, widely-known veteran, Connecticut pro-greenkeeper, took a world tour. Many of the places visited by Bob now have an interest far removed from golf. Pryde's golf-slanted comments made shortly after his return to the Race Brook CC, Orange, Conn., have sharply topical value.

Reported Bob Pryde:

"In Japan I saw some fine examples of golf architecture. I also saw grass there that was immune from brown patch, but it was so coarse, we in the United States would not consider it good for a putting green. I saw Cocoos bent on all the greens of another course and they were marred by brown patch. The Secretary of the club asked me if we had a grass that was immune from brown patch, and I told him of our experiments in selecting indigenous grasses that were of a resisting nature.

"I found out later, at Bingley, England, the British experimental turf garden, that they are specializing in the selection of indigenous grasses and trying them out in different localities for durability, color and ability to withstand disease, such as dollar patch and snow mold.

"In China, I saw on golf courses methods that were new to me, but practical and sensible. I could take a lot of time telling how in Manila they made their course. The ground was all clay and baked by the hot sun became quite like cement; no such a thing as water leeching into the soil but a drainage system was installed that worked perfectly.

"Then at Singapore, I saw orchids growing outside in pots, not in the ground, with all their delicate colors; truly a beautiful sight to see. Flowers are all grown in pots there because, if put in the ground, the ants will eat them.

"It was at Singapore that I saw a special method for taking out weeds. At first a piece about 12 inches square was loosened with a strong table fork and then the weeds came out easily by picking. Try this method and you will see how effective it is. Of course, the labor is cheap out there, 10 cents a day pays for the man or woman who does

this work. It also has another great advantage of aerating the soil. You will notice, when you transplant a piece of turf, it immediately takes on new life, so this method of taking out weeds has a double purpose.

"It was here that they used an imported grass from Australia and after they got it installed on all their greens, they found it was a native of the Straits Settlement and plenty of it was to be found on the course. The reason it was not recognized was that it was full of weeds or bamboo grass. Seventy people were employed to maintain this course.

"As I proceeded, I found plenty of courses in Ceylon, but few in Sumatra. Here the course I visited was in conjunction with a flying field, and not a very good course. Most of these courses had a grass similar to our Bermuda or Carpet grass, stoloniferous, but with this exception: our Bermuda has a resting period. In Panama, the Bermuda is forced, so that it keeps growing all the time, but on these other courses I have mentioned, the grass has a steady growth.

"Worms, grubs and white ants are the great pests in the East. At Singapore, the property belonged to the government, and, as there was a lake on the property used for drinking purposes, arsenate of lead was forbidden. They could use carbon disulphide, however, and this was their method of destroying ants. Making a series of holes about two feet away from where the ants were at work, they put in the carbon disulphide, and then covered it up.

"Flowering trees in Africa and Cosmos growing wild on the side of the road in millions, with blooms which we would be proud to have in cultivated gardens, were in evidence, as well as a great variety of other flowers. In many cases it was necessary to prepare the soils to grow certain crops. Sometimes the soil was cooked in a kettle, and I was told that tomatoes would not grow in the Straits Settlement unless this was done, or the soil sterilized in some other way.

"The Experimental Station at Frankenkalk, Johannesburg, was interesting. It

is run by African Explosives and Industries, Ltd., in conjunction with the University.

"They had many plots of grass with cement walks laid all around them, and, by applying fertilizer on portions of the plots, a combination of color effects was produced which was quite pleasing to the eye.

"The ground itself was dry and hard like cement, and if the grass roots need air, the only way they could get it was through the plants themselves. What impressed me was that no attempt had been made to make this soil friable.

"In Manila, where they had so much clay and volcanic matter, tons of peat moss was worked into the clay to make it pervious to air and water.

"At the Frankenwalk Station they grew an acre of clover (which was a new crop there, as clover does not seem to be a native of South Africa) and it had grown well, strong and healthy plants, and when ripe, they turned their cattle in to assist in the fattening process; but, strange as it may seem to us, the cattle would not touch it. They had never seen clover, and would not try it out.

"The names of the grasses in South Africa used for greens are: Bradley grass, Florida grass, and McGuinness grass—named after the locations where they originated. All of them are stoloniferous and grow similar to our Bermuda, but get brown when cool weather comes. They make a green with considerable cushion, and, as such, the surface is poor for putting. I claim the cushion should be in the soil and the grass upright to get a good putting surface.

"In the Union of South Africa they have a golf course for every 6,666 people—300 courses in all, and when you get in Rhodesia, you find a golf course for every 3,333 people. While they are long in courses I know they would welcome better grasses than they have at the present time. The country is very young; Johannesburg is only 50 years old, but it has 500,000 inhabitants.

"In my travels I learned the Indore System of building a compost heap, supposed to be of Indian origin. Compost becomes available in three months.

"First, prepare a suitable place two feet deep, convenient to running water. Then put in ditches, lined and covered with brick or other material with opening to allow the air to circulate through.

"After the pit is prepared and the brick-lined ditches installed, start the compost bed not too close to the bank and leave room at the end of the pit for turning. First, put a layer of 3 inches of dry hay, straw, weeds, fallen leaves, wood shavings, sawdust, or anything that rots and will go back to the soil again. Then put on a layer of manure 3 inches deep. Should manure not be available, sprinkle well with urine earth, taken from the soil under cattle or horses. To assist this fermentation, sprinkle a few handfuls of wood ashes, a supply of which should be kept under cover. Then moisten the layers with water, not too much as that would flood the pit. Repeat as above, until it is built up about 2 feet 6 inches.

"The whole is watered night and morning until fermentation starts, then once a week, also when turned. The compost is turned after it is 15 days old, then it is turned again after 15 more days. When it is two months old the mass is removed and watered, put in rectangular piles at the bottom and about three feet high, to ripen for a month. Then it is taken and put under cover to prevent weed seeds from blowing into it.

"The first month, on account of the fungi breaking down the organic matter, the temperature will be high and a metal rod inserted, should be hot to the touch when withdrawn. In three weeks the mass gets dark and crumbly and the temperature will fall. Bacteria is now at work in preparing the humus.

"Caution: Pack lightly, so that air can penetrate through, and when turning, shake and scatter lightly, which, along with the required amount of water, will make a complete compost with three turnings. Should the pits cool, the fermentation has stopped, and it likely will be for the want of water. Wet thoroughly when turned and pack lightly. On the other hand, if there is a strong odor and the flies gather, this is due to the air supply being insufficient—often caused by too much water. If such a condition is present, turn compost again and add wood ashes or manure.

"Over-packing, over-watering and failure to turn at the required time, will cause disappointment. Keep in mind that a good supply of air and water along with the turning, will give you a compost heap in three months time. I saw experiments being tried out to reduce still farther the time factor."