

How Interlachen Came Back After Lean Years' Neglect

INTERLACHEN Country club at Minneapolis is in the records as having one of the great championship courses of the nation. It was at Interlachen in 1935 that Glenna Collett Vare won her sixth Women's national championship by defeating a local youngster, Patty Berg, 3 and 2, in the finals. In 1930 at Interlachen Bobby Jones won the U. S. Open of his Grand Slam. Several sectional championships have been played over the course.

Then along came years of depression and the war years. Little by little Interlachen slipped from its proud status as a gem of courses. The old story of a golf course being unable to live on its reputation and of nature winning the decision over a lean budget was repeated at Interlachen.

It's a story that greenkeepers and green-chairmen know too well, and a story that has been seen on quite a few courses that once were rated in top condition.

Now the tide has turned at Interlachen and it already shows astonishing improvement.

The bright chapter of Interlachen's restoration began in a modest way. Wm. Boutell, green chairman and a fellow who's been around as a good golfer, saw the first part of the problem was that of getting members to realize what the job of restoration was and how tough it was going to be.

Members Pitch In

Bear in mind that Interlachen's membership is that of the type you'd expect at a club that is host to USGA championships. Getting them to contribute manual effort instead of advice and criticism indicates that the situation must have been unique.

But that's what was done in an early part of the rehabilitation program on Interlachen's course.

Let Boutell give the green-chairman's slant on the job that has been done. He says:

"In our restoration program, we first looked at the course from a golfer's point of view only. What was he complaining about the most? We had 4 very ugly appearing conditions: Very poor fairways, sand traps without sand and full of

weeds, 3 or 4 new lakes, a condition caused by bad drainage, and some large mounds in the rough covered with hay.

"We hit the fairways in the fall of 1944 with fertilizer (6-10-4). Within a few weeks, the members were boasting about the improved turf. We next tackled our new lakes. Before we finished that fall, we completed our entire drainage problem and of course were free of the lakes. With the aid of a rented bulldozer, we knocked off everyone of those unusual mounds in the rough and replaced these hazards with fairly large trees. Old man winter kept us out of the traps that fall.

"In the spring of 1945, we started with the same 4 man crew, which was not big enough to fix up the traps. So, I decided to give the membership an opportunity to see what a job we had in keeping a golf course in shape. I selected 8 willing members to be captains of teams which could clean up the bunkers on the entire course. Each captain picked his own team and also the hole he wanted to work on. We had the complete lineup posted on a huge bulletin in the clubhouse. I have never seen such enthusiasm. They not only cleaned up the traps but also discovered what a difficult job our greenkeeper Erich Pahl had.

"By June 1945, we had increased our crew to 8 men and with this gang Erich made Interlachen the finest conditioned course I ever saw.

"Aside from normal maintenance, our policy has been to make little improvements which will please the members and keep them boasting about Interlachen. For example, we have beautified ugly appearing traps. We have killed all the poison ivy on the course. We have eradicated bad noticeable weed areas on the fairways. We have rebuilt and smoothed up some of the tees.

"We now are working on our hardest assignment. Most of our greens are old and need resurfacing. We have built a 12,000 sq ft. nursery which is ready now. We built this from stolons taken from our 2 best greens. We are planning to return 3 or 4 greens this fall and continue this practice 'til the grass on all of the greens is alike."

Members Ease the Job

Boutell says that the participating procedure was highly effective in getting members to appreciate what the green-

keepers' problems are. Now the members are conscious of what they can do to help minimize the problems of maintenance. They see that every footprint is raked out of the traps. Replacing divots is automatic with most of them, and they do it with far more care than any but the very best caddies these days use in replacing divots. Some of the members carry knives to fix ball holes on the greens.

"It's been astonishing to see how members have become so keenly interested in having Interlachen in beautiful shape," declares Boutell.

Erich Pahl, a widely known expert greenkeeper, was brought back to Interlachen in the spring of 1945.

Greenkeeper's View of Job

Now to get the high spots of the restoration work as Pahl sees them:

"We started our rehabilitation work last year by rebuilding our No. 8 tee which had settled so badly one could not get a decent tee shot. The front end had to be raised over a foot to bring in the right elevation. Another job that has received considerable endorsement was rebuilding of trap on left of No. 15 green which could not be seen until one approached the green. We changed the outline, built up the rear and with the sand on that slope it is now visible for some distance and gives a very good appearance.

"We then cleaned up a couple of spots

in the rough and planted trees so now we can keep it cut with the rest of the rough and soon will have the appearance of a park.

"This year we fertilized our fairways in the spring and with the rains coming as often as they have we have had one big job keeping it cut. We have cut 3 times a week and our fairways are like carpets. We also put in a bent nursery last fall and got a sod nursery started so expect to do over 2 of our greens this fall. They have become infested with poa annua but are still of the old Virginia bent.

The main idea is to do them over with another bent that has been used on several of the greens previously.

"Our biggest problem has been keeping our old equipment running and when we couldn't get parts we made up something to replace them and have been able to keep things going. We have a crew of 9 men regularly and have kept them pretty busy keeping the grass cut but do find a little time for other work without getting extra help. Our big job last year was getting the course back in shape and appearance after the war years which with a shortage of help caused a lot of the work to be neglected. We have succeeded very well and have had much favorable comment.

"It is my aim to clean up and smooth several other parts of present rough areas so we will be able to keep them cut also."

Extra Tees Add to Course Interest

By WILLIAM B. LANGFORD

The 18 holes that make up a standard golf course should vary in character as much as possible. Each hole should present a different problem in golf strategy and stroke making.

Of course no architectural arrangement in golf is constant. A hole will vary in difficulty, sometimes widely, with changes in wind or ground speed, and thus call for different methods and implements.

Variations contribute so materially to golf's fascination, that no opportunity to add life to a course by creating new combinations should be neglected.

If they are thoughtfully planned, extra tees can, at little cost, greatly alter the character of a hole. They should not be grouped together, but should be spread out as much as possible to alter length, angle with the pole axis, and elevation. They should be placed to vary the effect of natural and artificial features, not only on the tee shot but also in subsequent play. The bunker, which can be carried from one tee, may have to be avoided from another, and a score of 4

from one setup be no better than a 5 from an alternate arrangement.

No one of these multiple tees should be designated as a championship or as a ladies' tee—they should be of equal value, and should all be in play frequently. Make use of all the variations the possession of several tees permits. The short tees may be more interesting than the long ones.

Wind and ground speed conditions should influence the daily placing of tee markers, but don't blindly follow the routine of playing from a short tee against the wind, or on days when the course is slow, unless such conditions make performance from a back tee impossible.

Where 2 or 3 different colored sets of tee markers are used simultaneously, they should always be as far apart as possible, so that a choice of tee spots really means something in playing the hole, and so wear on the tee surfaces will be uniformly spread.

Where different tees present materially different yardages, it is good practice to place signs on posts at each tee, showing the yardage from those spots, and the score card should indicate the different hole lengths.