

# Business Background of Open and PGA Championships

By **HERB GRAFFIS**

Perfect weather conditions were a major factor in bringing the National Open at St. Louis CC, June 12-14 and the PGA championship at Plum Hollow GC, near Detroit, June 18-24, close to record galleries. Due to customary delay in reporting on advance ticket sales at both events, accurate figures are not available at this time.

Newspaper and other estimates of attendance are notoriously unreliable on golf events. We have gone to the trouble of comparing estimates and announced "official" figures with counts of persons in gallery panorama photographs and with financial statements as eventually released and know how overly-enthusiastic the guesses are.

St. Louis at its previous National Amateur, National Women's and Western Open championships had demonstrated that it was a good golf tournament city but hadn't given any indication that it would draw galleries as large as those of this year's Open.

The gate which apparently was for the much greater part comprised of young people who haven't the money to be private club members reflected a good advance sale and promotion job at St. Louis. That performance was surprisingly well done. St. Louis CC members are not reputed to be the type that warms up to the onerous details connected with conducting a successful championship. The St. Louis organization plan was admirably designed and carried out as was Plum Hollow's.

## PGA Dates Pay Out

Plum Hollow's gallery also was predominantly of younger people. The Plum Hollow innovation in starting the PGA on a Wednesday and having it conclude the following Tuesday seemingly paid off very well in big gates Saturday and Sunday, a small but bonus gallery Monday, and at least 5000 for the afternoon of the finals

between Ferrier and Harbert. Plum Hollow did a fine local publicity job and its campaign of selling to industries for employee use 10 admission tickets for \$18 was an especially productive operation.

Both courses were in excellent shape after the greenkeepers and chairmen had worried, sweated and in some details rebuilt, with a miserably rainy and cold spring threatening to defeat the brains and labor that had been applied. The St. Louis greens were faster and trickier according to player report, than those at Plum Hollow, but at both places the putting surfaces were true and stood up under the heavy play.

The St. Louis course was shockingly tough to players accustomed to the generally mild conditions of tournament circuit play. Out of bounds was possible on at least seven of the holes.

The yardage at St. Louis:

395 - 233 - 187 - 421 - 545 - 325 - 150 -  
347 - 537 — 3140 — Par, 35 out.  
349 - 399 - 180 - 576 - 416 - 500 - 188 -  
365 - 419 — 3392 — Par, 36 in.  
Total — 6532 — par 71.

Three 67s led the first round. Thirteen, including Lew Worsham at 70, were under par for the first round. Compare that length with the 7037 par 72 Oakland Hills where Guldahl set the Open record of 281 in 1937 and you understand why there were forecasts that a new record would be set at St. Louis. Worsham and Snead tying at 282 and doing the added distance in 69 and 70 respectively, were the only two in the field to beat par for the regulation distance.

## Plum Hollow's Fangs Filed

Plum Hollow, a magnificent course on hilly terrain and not as tightly bordered by woods as St. Louis CC, was made much easier by the PGA than the USGA made the St. Louis course. In the first of the qualify-

ing two rounds 21 players bettered par of 72 at Plum Hollow.

Plum Hollow's rough was kept at moderate length, there was very little rough fringe around greens such as made the targets small at St. Louis, and cup placement at Plum Hollow, with few exceptions did not present much of a problem in approach shots.

Plum Hollow's card:

477 - 208 - 442 - 459 - 205 - 586 - 320 -  
514 - 197 — 3408. Par 36 out.  
455 - 349 - 235 - 391 - 164 - 436 - 432 -  
559 - 478 — 3499. Par 36 in.

Plum Hollow is laid out in a way that makes it possibly the greatest championship golf course in the United States from the spectator's viewpoint. There may be better courses where natural elevations provide vantage points for spectators closely coordinated with splendid shot requirements for the players but I don't recall any of them. From about five places on Plum Hollow spectators could see several tees, greens and fairways.

### St. Louis Toughened

The USGA may be criticized by players for making the St. Louis course a heart-breaker for those who didn't happen to stay on the beam. The shot that misses the green or the carpet by a few feet and leaves the player with a chip requiring delicacy and power is a shot no longer in the bags of the stars. The players claim it's unfair and simply a matter of luck.

Deep rough bordering fairways and particularly that which gets fairway watering and is murderous a foot or so off the fairway brings forth the groans of players. But to all of it the true champion can best adopt the philosophy of Hagen at Scioto in the 1926 National Open. A player asked Walter, "Isn't that rough the worst in the world?" Hagen blandly replied, "What rough?"

With many new courses due for construction during the next few years there is a risk of putting too strong an accent on length. That means unduly heavy real estate investment and taxation and maintenance charges higher than need be. Francis Ouimet, chairman of the USGA championship committee, did all golf a valuable service in demonstrating at St. Louis that a short course can have genuinely high class championship calibre. The St. Louis course was laid out by the late Charles B. Macdonald in 1914 and has not had many major alterations.

### Greenkeepers at the Open

The tie-up between the USGA Championship and Greens Section committees was in evidence at St. Louis. The course

provided fine turf. So did Plum Hollow where flood conditions earlier this year made essential masterly greenkeeping in bringing the course into great playing condition. At St. Louis national and local greenkeeper officials and members met with the Green Section for a discussion of operations. Green Section budget is a main problem. More work is required than can be financed with so many clubs in the U.S. riding free and not paying USGA membership dues in carrying their share of the financing.

### Par 3s Severe Tests

Particularly interesting at both St. Louis and Plum Hollow were the five par-3 holes on the courses. The sharpshooters found these par 3s agonizing tests in some distances. The 233 yard second at St. Louis with a declivity in the middle lengthways of the large green, traps, rough, trees and hogback terrain flanking the green caused some highly favored candidates to bleed internally and get the screaming-meemies before they really got started on their rounds. Then the 187 yard par 3 with a lake in front, deep bunkers and the green at an angle from the tee, took another kick at the hopefuls before they could get their morale rebuilt.

It was informative to this writer to watch at these holes the performance of younger fellows who are considered potentially great players. Worsham was quite impressive at these spots in showing his knack of being able to read a course and a green.

In considering the course and rules conditions of this year's major championships there was ample evidence that younger players haven't received the harsh schooling of their predecessors who had to play the ball from whatever lie they found it in on courses that were far from being groomed as exquisitely as the modern standard.

### New Gallery Problems

Marshalling at both events was done as well as usual. The marshals' work could be made much easier and more effective if large signs around the courses informed the gallery of what was expected. One very simple custom could be developed in golf galleries in providing more opportunities of seeing what's going on at the greens. The first row of spectators should be instructed by signs that they're expected to sit down, the second row to kneel, and from the third row back the galleryites could stand.

The large galleries of postwar tournaments naturally are of younger, more active and less experienced golfers. They expose themselves to considerable risk. In

the Ferrier-Harbert finals at Plum Hollow spectators were hit by seven shots. That's an element making the liability insurance highly important at a tournament.

Amateur photographers constituted considerable of a nuisance to players at both championships. The newspaper and news reel photographers generally are experienced in covering golf tournaments. The newspapermen know where to get for a good shot without bothering the player and when to shoot without interfering with the player's concentration. The motion picture equipment used by the news reel men is silent.

There is need of tournament photography regulations to be worked out by the USGA and PGA and press photographers associations. It seems that the only answer to control of amateur photographers at major tournaments is to confine their shooting to players on practice tees.

#### Practice and Parking Solved

St. Louis was lucky in having a polo field convenient for players' practice. Plum Hollow's practice area was limited too much to be up to the high architectural standard of the course.

At St. Louis and Plum Hollow member and press parking space cut down practice areas. Public parking was conveniently

available in privately-owned fields near Plum Hollow. At St. Louis public parking was free a mile or so away from the club but with frequent bus service at 50 cents a round trip from the parking area along a highway to the clubhouse. The St. Louis CC being surrounded by residences and in territory where traffic was generally along narrow lanes, couldn't have public parking any closer to the grounds. The St. Louis parking arrangements despite the bus haul were convenient and provided fast service.

At Detroit arrangements for the long haul of players, newspaper and radio men and telegraphers between downtown hotels and the club were especially well handled by station wagons and cars provided by public relations departments of motor companies.

Press and wire facilities and scoreboard were in a room adjoining the lockerroom at St. Louis and in a tent outside the lockerroom at Plum Hollow. An improved type of walkie-talkie was used at Plum Hollow in getting details to the press and public scoreboards.

At both clubs the scores in the press quarters were put on the board about two holes later than the time the scores were made on the course, until the quarter finals.

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This gives you an idea of Plum Hollow's terrain which makes it a great course for spectators as well as for players.



All receipts from entry lists, ticket sales and miscellaneous endeavor will go to organizing the gigantic program.

"Experts conceive that if Denver gets this program, the nation's top amateur golfers in a half dozen or so years will originate here, just as the Jones-plan has produced America's top tennis players from southern California."

## BACKGROUND OF CHAMPIONSHIPS

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at Plum Hollow when the lag was reduced.

At St. Louis again was shown the need of thin strips of tape or some other means of underlining or otherwise making easier the locating of scores of leaders.

### Club Regulation Enforcement

Inspection of clubfaces to see that they were in accord with USGA rulings provided some excitement at St. Louis. The players had to alter or discard some clubs at St. Louis. The inspection by the USGA at St. Louis was done by precision instruments which is the only way it can be properly done.

The club inspection was but one of numerous matters pointing to the logic of having one set of rules and standards for championship play and such rules and standards being established by an impartial and judicial authority.

It is obvious that the National Open is a far more rigid test of rules of golf observance than the PGA championship although Open qualifying rounds were featured by conflicting rulings on lifting and cleaning a ball on the green. Adverse weather, turf and maintenance conditions on PGA tournament circuit courses have accounted for general procedure contrary to the codified rules of golf. There were observed in both championships violations that wouldn't have been condoned by the rules-wise women playing in a Class B championship at a cow-pasture course.

### Rules Are Disregarded

One rule flagrantly disregarded in both tournaments is Rule 18 (3) Touching Line of Putt. "The line of the putt may not be touched, except by placing the club immediately in front of the ball in the act of addressing it and as above authorized. It is not permissible to touch the ground behind the hole in order to point out the line of the putt." The "as above authorized" reference is to the paragraph of Rule 18 (2) which says:

"In moving any loose impediment with the club it must not be laid with more than its own weight upon the ground, nor may anything be pressed down either with the club or in any other way."

And that paragraph of the rule, too, was frequently violated.

It's easy to understand why pressure of the tournament players upon the PGA would result in easing the conditions of course severity and rules laxity. The tournament players are in a tough enough business without wanting to subject their nerves, skill or financial prospects to any avoidable risk. They forced out the stymie although that shot is one that a player with a golf champion's finesse ought to be able to play in demonstrating a spectacular command of a traditionally basic feature of match play.

The result of stymie elimination was to make the PGA championship less of a test of delicate golf technique and virtually a medal play event on a hole by hole basis instead of true match play. Even at that, the PGA finals certainly supplied more see-saw drama than the National Open 72d and 90th holes where the crises came as Snead holed a 20-footer to go into a tie with Worsham and missed a difficult 30½-incher to lose in the play-off.

The much-discussed measuring incident which determined Worsham to be an inch nearer the hole might not have occurred if Snead had proceeded under Rule 6 (2), part of which reads: "If by mistake a competitor play out of turn no penalty shall be incurred and the stroke cannot be recalled."

There is a possibility that the tournament pros would find that knowledge and observance of the rules commensurate with their authoritative status as shot-makers would ease instead of adding to the strain on them.

### Tournament Strain Shows

The tournament schedule certainly takes a lot out of the players. Locke showed that by being a very weary fellow after missing a few makeable putts in the last round at St. Louis to lose his title chance through faulty performance in the department where he usually is superb.

When Hogan, Locke and Snead were knocked out in 18-hole rounds at Plum Hollow there was some expressed belief that absence of these three super-stars would reduce the gallery and that the 18 hole rounds should be abandoned because they are unfair and too risky for the name players who draw the big gates. But the absence of the three headliners apparently didn't have any costly effect on the gate. There are some who maintained that if fear

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of losing headliners early in the competition is to be a major element in determining the plan of the PGA championship why not simply give the stars a pass through the perilous stage instead of having them play in a tough championship.

The shot-making demonstrations prior to the championships gave the clubs really something to sell to the public that paid to witness practice rounds. That PGA feature is a great addition to the tournament shows.

It could be extended by a tie-up of illustrated lessons in the tournament programs. The program advertising isn't what it used to be when the corporation tax situation favored loose use of the 10 cent dollar.

The Michigan PGA took colored talking motion pictures of star shot-makers at Plum Hollow and before long will announce terms under which prints of the film may be secured.

Clubhouse operation at St. Louis CC and Plum Hollow was remarkably swift and smooth as far as the public was concerned although the managers at both clubs were operating under severe handicaps. The St. Louis clubhouse is large and sprawled out. The Plum Hollow clubhouse is small and not laid out to care for heavy rush patronage. But in both cases the emergency was

met so players, members, guests and the press were served better than could have been imagined in advance by anyone who knew the problems involved.

Whoever thought of getting Johnny Manion on lend-lease from his club to officiate in the lockerroom at St. Louis deserves commendation for an innovation that should be made standard practice at major tournaments. Manion, a tournament veteran himself and widely acquainted with player, official and press personnel, had all the answers.

A tournament seldom is much of a break for the pro of the host club. It too often means that he is practically out of business during the days of the tournament. There have been some exceptions, notably in 1930 during the Jones finale at Merion when the very canny George Sayers sold a record number of the then new sand-wedges. At Plum Hollow Sam Byrd's pro shop did big business in golf shoes, sox and hats with the gallery. The Hagen company had a display of playing equipment and apparel in a tent that also did very well.

The pro shop can be an addition to public service at a National Open and Alex Ayton at St. Louis had made tentative plans for taking care of this feature but the plans did not receive official approval.