

U of Illinois Looks Ahead with Its New Course

By MARGARET CONNOLLY

It's been a long time since the University of Illinois could boast of its intercollegiate golf record. The Illini golfers won the Big Ten title in 1940 and 1941. Now Coach Ralph Fletcher has good reason to believe his squad is on the road back to the top.

Fletcher bases his hope on the belief that if a school has a new championship golf course that gets better each year, the team will inevitably improve with the course. Illinois has such a course now. After two years of construction, it was opened for play late in the spring of 1950. Last year gave it its first real test.

Byron Nelson gave an exhibition at the 1951 USGA National Junior Amateur tournament held on the new course last July. He and other golf authorities have praised the University layout. Their complaint has been that the turf had not matured on the fairways but this season will see fairway turf satisfactorily developed.

James D. Standish, USGA pres., in presenting the trophy to the 1951 USGA National Junior championship winner, Tommy Jacobs, said that among the many courses the USGA Executive committee had seen none had more uniformly fine greens than the comparatively new University of Illinois course.

In June, 1948, C. D. Wagstaff and Co., designers and builders of the course, be-

gan work on the 170 acre farm about 5 miles southwest of the Urbana-Champaign campus which had been selected as the course site. The construction work went on a \$166,924 bid. The Athletic Association allotted another \$51,250 for landscaping and a complete course watering system and a well. Since then \$35,000 additional has been spent on an all-weather road to the course and other improvements. The clubhouse is still to be built.

"Not one cent of the taxpayer's money goes into the athletic program here," athletic director Doug Mills says. "The cost of the course, which exceeded \$250,000, was paid from dividends from intercollegiate athletics at the University. Intercollegiate athletics not only pay their own way but also support the intramural program and provide funds for building recreation facilities for the whole student body," Mills points out. "Everyone's talking nowadays about de-emphasizing the big college sports, but it's profits from football and basketball at Illinois that built the University's ice rink, tennis courts, and now the golf course in addition to maintaining the stadium and other athletic facilities.

"This course is another indication of the university's consideration for the students who can't make the inter-collegiate



(Photo by Gliessman)

Dredging this 7-acre lagoon on the University of Illinois course combined a golf architectural feature, tied in with the watering system planning, and provided earth for relieving the monotonous flatness of the terrain.

competitive teams. They — and the team players too — must receive benefit from a comprehensive sports program and adequate facilities that have a lasting carry-over value. The value of this new golf course will be reaped by many thousands of students long after they've graduated.

"The course was designed for both the average golfer and the champion," Mills continues. "The construction company dredged a seven acre lagoon on the grounds. The earth from the lagoon was used to give an interesting contour to the land around it. The water hazard is a tough test of skill on four holes. The rolling greens, the sand traps, and the bunkers are tough tests on all 18 holes. About 60 traps dot the course. Fairways are narrow, and dog-legs are abundant." Says Coach Fletcher, "It's a tough course from the championship tees and played at that length tougher than the average golfer can handle. The par 72 will stand up against expert sharp-shooting."

The tees are rather narrow but deep. The markers can be set at the back of the tees to extend the distance on most holes about 50 yards, stretching the course from 6200 to the 6,900 yd. mark.

A deep well supplies water to the lagoon and two pumps feed the lagoon water into the watering system. The sprinkler system cost an estimated \$60,000.

Public Fee Is Higher

The course is primarily for the students, faculty, and staff, and for inter-collegiate play, but the public can use the links for a slightly higher fee than the university people pay. Faculty and staff members have to find their own transportation, but students get free rides to the course. They use the buses running regularly to the University airport for the department of aeronautical engineering.

The Athletic Association board of directors chose the design for the clubhouse from entries submitted in student competition in architecture classes. The winning plans by Arthur Kaufuss include a pool as well as a clubhouse. The Association hopes to start work on the clubhouse within the next five years. Right now it can't afford it. If athletic receipts should fall off because of an economic squeeze, the house would have to wait still longer.

The old University course is perfectly flat, short, and nine holes. It's hardly a challenge to a duffer. The Illinois team did some practicing on the local country clubs' courses, but they just didn't feel at home on them.

There has been talk of abandoning the old course and turning it into a baseball diamond. "I hope they don't tear it up," said Fletcher, "It's good enough for the beginner. They can always get a crowd

out there." The duffers would like to have it kept too, as the new course looks to some of them like it is more than they can handle.

Fletcher hopes the new championship course will attract good golfers. "I want to make good young golfers hear so much about the course that they'll want to play it and will come here to school," Fletcher says.

Landscaping with Foresight

Scenically, you can't call the new course beautiful yet. It was converted from flat farm land. Earth-moving from the lagoon and in borrowing from fairways to build up greens, as well as in constructing fairway traps has been handled to give a rolling look to what was almost a pool-table level. Employment of earth-moving machinery and methods that have progressed greatly in the past decade made possible a contouring job that wouldn't have been practical from a cost viewpoint, then years ago, even with the lower costs of labor and equipment rental at the time.

The trees and shrubbery are still low but time will develop the planting so in 10 or 15 years the site that once was prairie will be converted into an area of apparently natural wooded and shrubbed beauty.

Especially interesting from the golf architectural and maintenance viewpoints is the way in which the planting has been coordinated with the golf shotmaking requirements, and arranged so landscaping care as a course maintenance factor will not add unduly to costs.

JOE TUTORS PAT AND MIKE



(L to R): Tracy (Mike), Hepburn (Pat) and Novak (Joe.) Joe Novak recently completed a 9 weeks hitch as technical director on an MGM picture "Pat and Mike", starring Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy and having, among its other characters Babe Zaharias, Beverly Hanson, Helen Dettweiler, Betty Hicks and some lady and gentleman tennis stars. The Bel Air pro and former PGA pres. tutored Pat (Miss Hepburn in golfing technique for her performance as a sports wonder girl. The outline of the screen story reads like the picture ought to be very funny.