

How Merion Prepares for Big Championships*

By **JOSEPH VALENTINE**

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I WAS WORKING at a bank for \$5 a week, and worked on Saturday until 8:00 p.m. Out of my earnings I had to pay \$3 per week for board, and that left \$2 to keep my shirts clean.

I went to Merion Cricket Club on May 16, 1907, on Thursday, and I was sent home at noontime on Saturday with \$5.25 for two and a half days work. Naturally, to me it was an inducement to a better living. And I have not been disappointed in my choice.

I was brought to the new golf club, known today as the championship East course of Merion GC. I went there on the 1st of March, 1912, to shape up the course, and we opened it on the 14th of September of the same year.

I have prepared the course for seven major National Golf Tournaments:

The Amateur in 1916 when Chick Evans coupled his Amateur title with his 1916 Open Championship. That year at Merion, Bobby Jones, then only 14 years old, made his first appearance in a national championship. In 1924 the National Amateur Championship again was played at Merion and Bobby Jones was the victor.

In 1926 we had the Women's National Amateur championship won by Mrs. Stetson of Philadelphia.

In 1930 the Amateur championship was held and the Grand Slam was completed by Bobby Jones. He then retired from competition.

In 1934 I took care of the course for the Open Championship won by Olin Dutra.

In 1949 we again had the Women's National Championship won by Dorothy Germain Porter.

We had the Open Championship in 1950 won by the great player of today, Ben Hogan. So you can see I have had some experience preparing the course for USGA Championships.

In all these tournaments the USGA tried to get a course that would be convenient for the spectators, and at the same time

provide a true championship test of playing skill.

The course must be interesting alike to players and spectators. This scope we have at Merion even though the course is not too long — only 6694 yards with a par of 70. The layout is made for the precision shot. A long hitter off line a bit will not have any advantage.

Always Championship Condition

It is our feeling that the course in itself should always be in championship condition. We cannot see why the test of golfing skill should differ from the test during an ordinary round between members and members' guests. All players are playing the same game even though their proficiency does differ.

There are certain requests made by the Tournament committee of the USGA. These concern principally the clear marking of boundaries and so forth. If there is a tree in the line of boundary, extra white stakes must be placed to define the line more clearly to avoid unnecessary discussion or calling in a referee to render a decision.

You may perhaps find some remote spots where it is hard to decide whether or not they are out of bounds. It is better to define these spots and put them out of bounds in order to avoid any doubt about it.

All water hazards must be definitely marked with small stakes painted white to avoid any question in the mind of the player as to whether he is inside the hazard or not.

Water hazards must be clearly defined not with white lines, as used to be the rule, but with white stakes from 25 to 30 feet apart or closer on the sharp bends.

A parallel water hazard must be clearly defined with four stakes painted red, plus a sign where it ends.

All bridges must be substantial and well-secured to avoid any mishaps that might incur liabilities for the club.

There should not be any "Ground Under Repair" signs any place on the golf course. At the 1950 National Open the USGA Committee ruled that the "Ground Under Re-

(*1954 GCSA conference address)

pair" signs should be eliminated completely, and a ball in such areas be called an unplayable lie.

Protecting Fairways, Tees and Greens

Tees as well as fairways must be roped off. In fact, for the last tournament in 1950 we used 20,000 ft. of $\frac{3}{4}$ in. rope, to protect fairways, tees and greens.

We used 1500 iron rods to support the rope. The iron rods were approximately 6 ft. in height and the ropes slip into loops on the rods so we could drop the rope in a minimum amount of time to make openings for the galleries.

You need about 5000 ft. of gallery rope to be stretched across the fairways by the committee in charge of the galleries.

Greens must be roped off to prevent unnecessary damage.



Greensboro (N. C.) Golf Year Is 358 Days Long

George Corcoran, pro at Greensboro (N. C.) CC, shows count on non-golf days at his club last year. Jan. 9, Feb. 19, March 2 and 11, Dec. 4, 18, 12, were only days missed. There were 266 consecutive days of play.

This record, says George and Jim Foster, golf editor, Greensboro Record, makes Greensboro the nation's greatest location for good golf weather.

Greensboro, with 5 18-hole courses in a city of 74,000 population, had 89,546 rounds of golf played last year. George and Jim figure that's the greatest per capita golf playing record of any city in the world.

You must keep people from trampling all over the greens and bunkers.

Provision must be made for comfort stations. At least three double ones must be erected on remote spots on the course to provide facilities for the spectators. Three or more comfort stations are needed.

You will need to have installed three or possibly four public telephones.

Outgoing message facilities are needed for the press room, as well as messenger boys. You must have a press room or tent to accommodate at least 100 reporters. Naturally, they must have a well lighted scoreboard and other necessary facilities.

Parking facilities must be provided. There should be convenient parking for at least 2000 to 5000 cars. You may arrange two or more places for parking.

Provision should be made for a tent to accommodate a Red Cross First Aid Station. If possible a doctor should be in attendance. Medical aid must be available in case an emergency arises.

The serving of food to the public comes under the jurisdiction of the House committee, but the man in charge of the course must have a hand in it too. It is his job to provide water and other facilities, and comfort stations for the attendants.

Care of Greens During Play

There must be a man for each hole to take care of all ball marks on greens after players have holed out. This man shall not go on a green while players are approaching or putting, but as soon as they start to move the man must make any needed repairs.

Also the man must take care of footprints in sand bunkers. Our bunkers are so constructed that they do not need any artificial ribbing. But in order to make it fair for every player footprints must be roughly taken care of.

You must have a crew to take care of cleaning up every evening or morning. We prefer evening as the time to clean up the must be removed in order that the course will be presentable every day of the tournament.

Preparation of Greens

The putting greens must be in A-1 shape and the surface should be uniformly smooth. This does not mean it will have to be as smooth as glass.

The greens should not be too soft. You must be careful not to overwater. Use the minimum amount of water needed to enable the grass to survive. The green should be firm enough to offer a challenge to the skillful player. Do not water so excessively

that greens will be soft enough to hold even a poorly placed shot. Make this an opportunity for the golfers to demonstrate their proficiency.

We cut greens to 5/32 of an inch in order to accentuate delicate undulations. This is very important.

The tees ordinarily are mowed at a height of 3/8 in.

The fairways will have to be mowed every evening at the height of 5/8 in. or lower, if you have the type of turf that will withstand close-cutting.

Our rough ordinarily is cut at 5 in., but if at all possible within a distance of 8 to 10 ft. of the edge of the fairways, mow to 3 to 4 in. to make it fair for the player who is off only a few feet. The inside part of the rough could be higher than 5 inches due to the fact the spectators tramp it down.

Placing Cups

The cups are placed by the committee but you must go along with them and give an explanation of how each hole should receive a well-placed shot. As the days go on you will find the cups are placed in increasingly exacting positions — but never in a ridiculous spot.

We used to provide the scoreboard according to the specifications of the USGA. The USGA is now providing the proper scoreboards. You must see to it that the scoreboard is roped off to keep the people back far enough to give all a chance to read the scores.

Reaction of Club Members

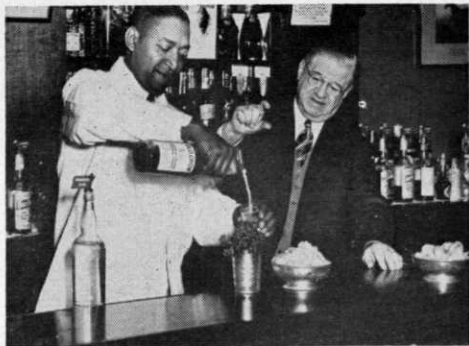
During any preparation for a championship you may find some of the chronic grippers complaining as usual. This is the case at any club. No matter what the club does or what the supt. may be able to do a few will always find some reason to criticize the green committee. But I always state to them that what we do for the championship course could not be done otherwise for the proper upkeep of the course.

We have two 18-hole courses for our members. The committee takes into consideration that for the few dollars spent on the course the club members receive the benefit over a long period of time.

In my experience I can say that our club members have taken great pride in the course, especially if the par is not broken at the total end of the competition. And this has never yet occurred at Merion.

After tournament play some small repair work will have to be done. Damages by the galleries and divots taken out by the players must be repaired. This is not too expensive.

Old Master Produces Soul-Warming Art



Here is Old Master Fred Crawford, manager of the famed Pendennis Club at Louisville, and his veteran Old Master bartender Millard Hill, collaborating on a Pendennis Club mint julep which is to most other mint juleps like a painting by Titian is to a picture in the funny papers.

Club managers hail Fred as a beloved genius at the art of managing a fine club and their members who participate in the Derby Day rites at the Pendennis Club endorse the judgment of their managers. Note the generous gap between Fred's thumb and forefinger as the work of art is in progress. Fred wants the sun to shine bright elsewhere as well as on My Old Kentucky Home.

Here's the recipe for the mint julep Crawford and Hill are compiling:

Use pewter cups. Crush three sprigs of mint and rub the sprigs around the inside of the cup. Fill the cup with cracked ice, packed loosely. Reach for a real Kentucky sour mash bourbon like Old Crow, and pour in a jigger that's at least three fat fingers. Add a tablespoonful of simple syrup. Fill up with spring water. Stir it hard for a minute with a bar spoon, till the cup coats with crisp white frost. Place three sprigs of mint around the edges, stems down.

Sports Tales and Anecdotes Good Reading from Menke

Frank G. Menke, sprightly veteran of the sports scribes, has collected many merry and absorbing chronicles of sports into "Sports Tales and Anecdotes" which A. S. Barnes & Co., 232 Madison ave., New York 16, has published at \$3.75.

It's one of those books that delights fellows who have been around in sports. Frank is a good picker of incidents and gossip that will always keep fresh.