

# Big Golf Revival in San Diego



San Diego CC, busy in the van of the big revival that is restoring the area as a golf center.

**S**AN Diego, Calif., one of the pioneer golf centers of the Pacific Coast, is staging a golf revival after a long lull. Grass is growing on new built courses; golfers are digging divots on newly opened fairways and other layouts are on the drafting boards as San Diego moves to end its serious shortage of golf facilities.

In the early sand-green days the Hotel Coronado course was the golfing home of Coronado residents, high ranking Navy officers and world-travellers stopping at the famed hotel. It was here that the historic Spreckles Cup tournament was held to attract the West's finest amateurs.

The San Diego CC, established in 1921, and La Jolla and Rancho Sante Fe, both built in 1927, were meccas for San Diego golfers and the site of San Diego Opens in the Hagen-Diegel-Sarazen era.

The late Billy Bell, California architect, took golf below the border to build Agua Caliente golf course for James Crofton and Baron Long. It was there that chunky Gene Sarazen rolled a wheelbarrow full of silver dollars from the winner's circle at the race track up the road from the second hole. In fact, the first Auga Caliente Open was held on the pitch-and-putt course built to keep the golfers busy until the big course was built. It was here that pari-mutuel betting was tried one year with win, place

*War, depression and other catastrophes took their toll of the city's golf courses, but in recent years steps have been taken to remedy the situation. Now, everybody's happy with the San Diego setup . . .*

By **VERNE WICKHAM**

or show tickets being offered on your favorite golfer at two bucks a copy.

In Old Town in 1929 was built one of the early three-pars, the Presidio Hills course, and it is still going strong.

But along the line there were casualties. Names which once figured in the golf columns were Pine Valley, Del Mar, Sweetwater Valley Country Club, and others. More recent casualties were La Mesa CC, now subdivided, Coronado, which went over to military uses during World War II, and later was subdivided, and nine holes of Emerald Hills.

In 1932 the city of San Diego built Balboa Park Municipal course on rolling land in sprawling Balboa Park, site of the 1915 International Exposition. There had been a sand-green golf course in operation there before World War I.

## Attention Diverted

When World War II started, San Diego residents turned their attention from golf to warplanes and ships as San Diego became the base of Pacific operations. Navy recruits rolled into the huge training centers around San Diego and among them came Snead, Demaret, Thomson, Anderson and other professionals. Rohr Aircraft Co. took over the San Diego CC property, installed Ralph Guldahl as pro and

kept it alive to supply needed recreation for war-weary people.

The war over, there followed a long dry spell in new course construction. The population grew and grew as thousands of servicemen stayed on to enjoy the California climate. War plants continued to attract thousands of workers as the U. S. worked to keep its guard up. But no new golf courses were built.

Johnny Dawson and associates started San Diego's revival when they built Mission Valley, first as a public course, and now operated as a country club. San Diego CC became a club again. Long lines of frustrated golfers lined up at the munny layout waiting for a chance to play.

Then, a little over a year ago, Earl B. Hunter, Carl M. Rutherford and Fred Osborne obtained a lease on some filled land in San Diego bay where the city is in the process of developing a multi-million dollar aquatic and sports center, and opened a nine-hole course in June, 1955.

#### O'Doul Builds Course

Baseball's Lefty O'Doul and Mitch Angus leased 13 acres of canyon near the partially developed Colina Del Sol Park and built a Par-3 which they opened last summer.

Steve Fletcher and associates leased a portion of Gillespie Field, an abandoned World War II airfield and built Flying Hills GC. Also included in this county recreation center is a swimming pool and family recreation facilities.

Case Hollingsworth and Gomer Sims, who had been operating Alondra Park in the Los Angeles area, and Meadowlark in Orange County, bought the former Singing Hills ranch and are building the Singing Hills golf course, near El Cajon.

The Navy has Jack Daray, an architect from the Chicago area now living in Coronado, busy building a 27-hole course up Mission Valley to add to the string of Navy courses which include Camp Pendleton, North Island and El Toro.

The City of Coronado has two golf projects in mind. One is at Glorietta Bay where dredging is now going on to fill in additional land for a nine-hole course. The other is a combination Marina, swimming and golf project out on Coronado's silver strand.

The city of San Diego has plans, too! Freeway construction is due to whack away at the present Balboa Park layout, but in the opinion of Leo Calland, Park and Recreation Director, out of all the whacking



Gene Littler, erstwhile San Diego junior, returns as a big-time tournament golfer to give tips to the city's budding stars.

and cutting enough room may be salvaged for additional holes to make Balboa Park into a 36-hole facility.

#### City Council Cooperates

Recent action of the city council gave the long-awaited Torrey Pines golf project the green light. Once designed by Billy Bell, the course is being re-designed by his son, William F. Bell. Construction is scheduled to start soon. Located on a high cliff above the Pacific Ocean between San Diego and Del Mar, it promises to be one of California's more spectacular seaside courses.

San Diego officials know that with their present population, plus tourists and military personnel, they need a minimum of 10 golf courses to take care of the golfing needs of their people, to say nothing of the increase in population that is sure to come. They are planning for it. In their master plan for parks, which will cost 20 million and will take care of the city's needs until 1970, are five more full length municipal golf courses.

### 58 Pros Teach 3,156 Juniors in Northern California

A total of 3,156 juniors received free instruction from 58 Northern Calif. section PGA pros in 1955. Thirteen colleges and 30 high schools participated in the program which was marked not only by growing enthusiasm by young golfers for the assistance the pros gave them, but by improved quality of play.

Besides teaching, the pros promoted 176 tournaments including 25 at high schools and 9 at colleges. They also conducted 21 sectional meets and 116 club tourneys. The state Junior Championship held at Watsonville attracted a record entry.