



The 13th tee at the new Morristown, Tenn. club is roughed out (foreground) while in the background the sixth green site is being surveyed. (Inset) Alexander McKay (right) and Ralph Doyal, pres. of the Morristown club.

McKAY He Brought Bent Greens to Tennessee

By TOM SILER

ALEX McKay isn't Irish, but his favorite color is green, particularly the green of bent grass.

Old Alex, a fugitive from Scotland (where else?), is an acknowledged expert on bent greens.

As such, his contribution to golf in the Southeast, especially the hills of East Tennessee, has been tremendous. He has just completed a brand new 18-hole course at Morristown, a city of 20,000 east of Knoxville. The greens are C-1 and huge and undulating.

"I built them the way Bill Langford (Chicago architect) wanted them," McKay says. "Langford claims he knows only two men who can build the sort of greens he likes . . . me and a fellow who lives in Chicago."

Bumpy Bermuda

Until McKay came along every course in East Tennessee, except Holston Hills in Knoxville, had Bermuda greens, and

pretty bumpy Bermuda at that. Despite the success of bent greens at Holston Hills the belief was firmly held that Tennessee nights were too hot for bent grass.

McKay changed all that. He refurbished the Holston greens with Washington in 1945, later put in bent greens (C-1 and Washington — not mixed) at Cherokee, the oldest club in Knoxville and at River-view (C-1 and C-52 — not mixed), the oldest club in Chattanooga, and then began building new courses all over the area.

Alex, who will be 64 before the year is out, built a 9-hole course at Greeneville, Tenn. (with C-1 greens), an 18-hole course in the Smoky Mountains near Gatlinburg (also with C-1), the 18-hole layout at Morristown — which he says will stand as his best — and he is currently engaged in turning the Maryville, Tenn., course from a 9- to an 18-hole route.

McKay's theory is simple enough. He points out that bent of many strains will stand up equally well if greens are properly built.

Alex was a mere lad of 29 when he came

over from Scotland "without any sort of job." But he quickly obtained employment at East Marion, Mass., later moving to the Audubon club in Louisville, Ky., for 10 years. "I put bent grass in most of the courses there," he says. McKay spent another 10 years at Meadow Brook in Charleston, W. Va.

After World War II he went to Holston Hills as supt. Meanwhile, the doughty Scot began to wonder why only Holston Hills had bent grass greens. This eventually led the other clubs in the area to challenge him. He gladly accepted the challenge and he's been making golf more enjoyable in Tennessee ever since.

At Morristown — where the club financed its golf course by selling housing

kept after me. Riverview finally offered me an expenses-paid trip to Scotland. That did it. I had a wonderful time visiting my old friends. I hope to go back again some day and this time I want to take Mrs. McKay with me."

Meanwhile, he's still building courses, remodeling old ones, offering expert advice to supts. in the area. As for favorite theories, "Bent grass can 'go' overnight, you know," says Alex.

There's only one drawback to McKay's way of life — he's kept so busy that he hasn't played 18 holes of golf in the last four years.

Landscape Maintenance Is Supt's Responsibility

Sherwood Moore of Hollywood GC, Deal, N. J., one of the panelists who spoke on the responsibilities of the superintendent at this year's GCSA convention in Louisville, declared that course landscape maintenance is just as important as the care of greens, tees and fairways. Only, Moore added, not nearly enough supts. are taking this into account.

"Year after year," Moore said, "trees and plants at hundreds of courses are being lost because of abuse, insects, disease, storms and drought and little is being done to replace them. As far as I am concerned, supts. who allow this to go on are showing an indifferent attitude. As a consequence, many courses that could be real beauty spots have a sort of rundown look."

The Hollywood supt. pointed out that time, or the lack of it, plus insufficient funds in the budget account for the indifferent attitude that some greenmasters are taking in regard to the landscaping phase of their operations. To counteract this, he suggested starting at least a small scale program for the maintenance of or reclamation of flowers, shrubs and trees and then seeking a budget appropriation for it by showing members how their course can be beautiful through the expenditure of relatively little time and money.

Starts A Nursery

Describing his own experience, Moore told how after a Northeaster depleted his course of many fine trees and shrubs, he persuaded his greens committee to make a small appropriation for replacing them. After poring over nursery catalogs and some forgotten books on landscaping, the Deal supt. found that he could establish a small nursery with a quite wide variety of shrubs and trees even though he had

The McKay Formula for Greens

Before planting I use 300 lbs. of Milorganite, 150 lbs. of Golden Vigoro, 50 lbs. of potash, 50 lbs of phosphate and 50 lbs. of sulphate of ammonia (per 5,000 sq. ft.) raked in to approximately 2 ins. Fertilizers are mixed before spreading and watered in. When greens have been planted for two weeks, I apply 10 lbs. of sulphate of ammonia per 5,000 sq. ft. One week later greens are topdressed. The topdressing is washed in with another 10 lbs. of sulphate (liquid, of course) per 5,000 sq. ft. After that, you should see them grow! Usually, they are ready for play in six or seven weeks.

lots around the layout — McKay put grass on his greens in 10 weeks time. He used 45 tons of fertilizer as a starter.

"When the greens were two weeks old I put 10 lbs. of sulphate of ammonia per 5,000 sq. ft. on each green," McKay explains. "A week later I cut and topdressed them, and washed each one with 10 more lbs. at the same rate of the same thing."

He repeated the process, or variations of it, every two weeks.

"The greens were ready for play at the end of seven weeks," he adds.

At one time McKay became so much in demand in East Tennessee that several clubs began bidding for his services. Finally, the choice came down to Cherokee of Knoxville or Riverview of Chattanooga.

"I was having a devil of a time deciding," says McKay with a chuckle. "I thought the bidding business was bad, but they