

Pollock Prevailed in Spite of Rain, Heat and Humidity

*The Pre-Tournament Weather Wasn't
What They Ordered at Llanerch CC
But Everything Turned Out Fine*

ON Saturday, July 12th, Llanerch CC in Havertown, Pa., site of the recent PGA Championship, was hit by a heavy thunderstorm. The following evening there was another heavy shower and on Monday, the rain continued intermittently throughout the day, forcing Bob Pollock, Llanerch's venerable turf consultant, to close the course even though there were more than 100 pros on hand waiting to start their practice tuneups for the PGA event.

Just a week before the Championship got underway, Bob Pollock had the Havertown course in what he and club and PGA observers considered perfect shape. Bob was hoping the rains wouldn't visit him until after the 20th, the final day of the tournament, since he had his newly installed travelling sprinkling system geared to dole out the water precisely as he prescribed. But Nature, as so often happens, wasn't in the mood for cooperating with Bob in the five or six days preceding the tournament.

To add further woe to the situation, two or three days of extremely high humidity followed those on which it rained. The ninth green at Llanerch turned up in rather poor shape on the opening day of the tournament, becoming too spongy, and the 18th green became bumpy around the cup owing to the fact that pros were bombarding this close-in area with accurate approaches. And, of course, the traffic here was extremely heavy with more than 160 players concluding their day's work at this point.

There was some grumbling among the pros as to the condition of 9th and 18th greens, but the other 16 putting surfaces came in for little criticism. By the second day, all 18 greens were in excellent shape, thanks partly to the weather but due more to the fact that they had been brought along these many years by one of the game's great greenmasters.

Bob Pollock is as much a fixture at Llanerch as the 130 traps that were there

to harass the pros. He helped build the place in 1921. Six years later he supervised the construction of nine additional holes, bringing the course to a 27-hole layout. In 1948, when it was decided to revert to 18, Bob was in charge of the project. Late in the summer of 1957, when PGA officials visited Llanerch to look over the site as a possible choice for this year's Championship, they were so impressed that at least half of them were willing to settle on the course as it stood. Later, however, it was agreed that the course should be lengthened by about 300 yards, making it necessary for the Llanerch maintenance staff to build seven new back tees.

The PGA's willingness to go along with Llanerch, practically without change, was a fine tribute to Bob Pollock's skill as a maintenance man as well as a builder. This pleased him as much as the fact that the country's finest pros didn't tear his course apart, as pre-tournament predictions said they would. Only Dow Finsterwald and Bill Casper cracked par for the four rounds while Sam Snead equalled it.

Skills Thoroughly Tested

Pollock, as most supts. at eastern courses, has seen his turf management skills thoroughly tested in the last two summers. In 1957, a prolonged drought that lasted from mid-June through late September left practically every course from Ohio eastward withered and sere. Bringing them back was a task that tried even the most capable. So far this year, Eastern supts. have been surfeited by rain, especially in June and July. The fact that it has been possible for golfers to get in record volumes of play in the last two seasons, not only in the East but throughout the country, attests to the great ability that weather-wise supts. bring to their jobs.

Llanerch's burnt out acres were brought around this year through extensive cross drilling of fairways and four applications of organic fertilizers, two of which were made last fall and two this spring. Extensive re-seeding also was necessary. The fairways are a combination of Merion Blue and Kentucky 31 with about a 10 per cent portion of Highland bent. To cope with possible future droughts, the club installed

2,600 ft. of pipe last fall and winter to mount its travelling sprinkling system which is fed by a lake that extends from the practice fairway through the 18th fairway.

Home Pro Appreciation

There was great appreciation of the problems surmounted by Bob Pollock for the PGA Championship, especially by the many home pros who took part in the tournament. Since they are so close to the daily headaches of the supt., and have a better realization than their circuit brethren of the sweat and travail that is poured into the maintenance of a course, they probably speak with more authority concerning its condition. One home pro's remarks were typical: "There was a little grumbling about a couple greens the first day. But these pros are lucky that this is Bob Pollock's course. That rain and the heat and humidity could have knocked out a lot of places, but this course is beautiful. The boys aren't tearing it apart because it's tough — the openings to the greens are narrow and so are these fairways. You can't splatter shots around here and get away with it."

As for Llanerch being tough, the circuit travelers agreed with the club pros. Several conceded that they had underestimated the course and the scoring throughout the tournament and particularly on the first day, reflected it.

Bob Pollock is one of those transplanted Scots who has done so much to make American golf great. He came to the U.S. in 1913 from Troon, the nesting place of many a great pro. His first six years in this country were spent on a farm which is now the site of Philadelphia's Manufacturers' CC. In 1920, Pollock was employed by T. M. Fitzgerald at what was then called the Field Club. Among other things it had a 9-hole course with flat greens and, in reality, was an oversize Par 3.

Fitzgerald wanted a regulation 18 and Bob, who never had taken any particular interest in golf courses as a boy in Scotland, assured him he could build it.

"I think Mr. Fitzgerald figured I could do it because I was a Scot," Bob recalls with a bit of a chuckle.

Bob Builds A Course

So, with a half dozen workmen, Bob set out to build the new course. He studied other courses in the area, sought out advice where he could find it, and using common sense and taking advantage of

the excellent topography Nature provided, built Llanerch substantially as it is seen today. So when the PGA tournament bureau decided to go along with the Philadelphia club with hardly any changes, it is easy to see why that facet of Bob Pollock that is a builder and course architect was considerably inflated.

Oldtimers around Philadelphia recall an added feature at Llanerch which was a

In the driving contest held at the PGA Championship, Lionel Hebert won the honors with a poke of 307 yards. Runner-up was Mike Souhak with a 301 yard effort. Mike Fetchick won the sandtrap honors, coming within an inch of sinking his shot. In the approach shot competition, Al Smith discouraged all challengers by holing out a 95-yard pitch.

sightseers' attraction some 20 years ago, the remains of which are located at the far end of the practice fairway. It was called "The Plantation." An animal compound, it had sheep, ducks, swans and even peacocks. A great lover of animals, Pollock included it in the original Llanerch plans as a kind of back to nature project. Golfers loved it and so did Philadelphians, many of whom visited the course to watch the ducks and swans glide around the nearby lake and see the peacocks strutting in all their splendor. The Plantation became such a showplace, in fact, that during the Depression, the clubhouse stayed in business on the revenue that came from persons who drove out to watch Bob's animals cavort and then stayed for dinner.

Retained as Consultant

Bob Pollock's preparation of Llanerch for the PGA extravaganza probably was his swan song. The club retired him last year after 37 years of service and then retained him as a consultant when the PGA Championship was booked. But the maintenance of the course will stay in the family as Bob's son, Hugh, was named supt. when his father relinquished the position. Hugh has 20 years' experience behind him and at least a few fertilizer bags full of tricks the elder Pollock has taught him, so nobody at Llanerch is worrying about what rain, heat and humidity can do to the course.

PROS

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