

# WATER!

## *It's Feast or Famine on Courses in the West*

By OMER CRANE

**B**UILDERS of western golf courses have their own peculiar problems. They may come in the rain forecasts of the Northwest or in the arid lands of the Southwest. In each, water — more often the lack of it — is crucial.

"A golf course is no better than its irrigation system," says Bob Baldock, golf architect who has been exposed to many climates and the common demand: "Grow us some grass."

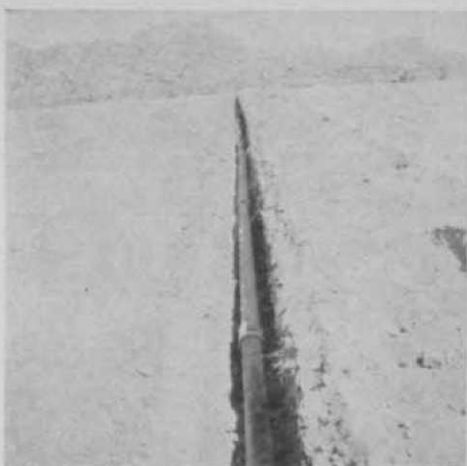
Heavy machinery, knowhow gained from research, and trial and error where unique problems exist, have made possible golf layouts in some of the most unlikely places of the West.

In Nevada, the most water-short of the 48 states, Baldock has built eight courses in its several cities and cow towns. Where there were only four courses, all in the state's "population" centers, three years ago, now there are a dozen.

### **Expensive Pumping Plant**

Albuquerque, in neighboring New Mexico, has no moisture to spare. The new Four Hills CC will be an emerald on the

Where water isn't a problem, giant redwoods are. They have to be blasted, bulldozed and buried to make room for fairways.



A great deal of money is spent in installing water systems to reclaim semi-arid land for golf courses.

brown landscape summer. This will be possible because of a 1,200 foot well and a \$100,000 pumping plant. It was necessary for the club to buy up equal acreage of water-producing land, then retire this land from future pumping operations as required by New Mexico's riparian laws.

Baldock had a problem quite the opposite to be solved in Eureka, which lies athwart the Northern California storm belt and gets 36 inches of rain annually.

"We had to spend \$20,000 just to get rid of the redwoods," Baldock said of Eureka's Baywood CC.

### **Clearing 22 Ft. Stumps**

Redwoods, some of whose stumps were 22 ft. in diameter, were blasted, bulldozed and finally buried. The non-flammable quality of Redwoods, such a selling point in the industry, was just a big headache to the course builder.

Oddly enough, in spite of the heavy rainfall, Eureka's water supply was a problem. Seven wells were drilled; none produced. The area is one of stratified granite and most of that yearly 3 ft. of rainfall quickly runs off to the Pacific.

The solution was to build a million gallon reservoir, trapping the rain. It will be dispensed at the modest rate of 25,000 gallons a day in the dry months of July, Aug. and Sept. Compare this with the 750,000 gals. daily needed at Four Hills CC in Albuquerque, or the 1,000,000 gals. pumped on Las Vegas' Desert Inn course.

"At the same time we were burying the redwoods in Eureka," Baldock says, "we had another crew hauling 3,000 pines (at

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## Feast or Famine in West

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a cost of \$21,000) a distance of 180 miles to plant on Four Hills."

The irony of Las Vegas is that while its thirty acres soak up so much water there is so little of it. The plush desert spa's annual rainfall is only 4.35 inches. Baldock built an 18-hole Par 3 course for the Hacienda Motel. There were water rights available for only nine holes. The other nine holes must remain unirrigated.

### Lucky In Water Supply

Sometimes, Nevada water is not so hard to come by. Winnemucca's 9-hole city owned course gets water for the pumping, thanks to a reservoir built some years ago by the Southern Pacific Railroad. It was intended to quench the thirst of the road's steam engines. The switch to Diesels made the pond a liability.

In Carson City, Nev., the last state capital in the union to get a golf course, a nearby rancher had a deep well and a water surplus.

Fallon (Nev.) Soparovan ("meeting place of the tribes") course has a steady supply, pumped out of the Carson River.

Perhaps the extreme in lack of and surplus of water are to be found in Turlock, Calif., and Flagstaff, Ariz.

"In Turlock," says Baldock, "we had to put in a pump to lower the water table; otherwise it was too muddy underfoot."

"For Flagstaff's Coconino CC (at 7,500 feet the highest 18 hole course in the country), two lines were needed, one for drinking water, the other for irrigation. In such short supply, it was a case of using processed sewerage water, distributed from a reservoir built on the first 9 — or no golf course."

### Limit on Trade-Ins

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pression that he is buying inferior goods which sometimes is the result if you put the sale to him on "take it or leave it" basis. Every club we re-sell is, of course, cleaned and completely reconditioned.

I feel that every pro should try to set a limit on the amount of time trade-in clubs are kept on hand. In my case, I try to keep it to two weeks or less. But even though I have my profits from the sale of a new set of clubs tied up in the return set, and although I may theoretically be paying interest on money I have

not yet realized, I still try to refrain from selling the used clubs at a figure lower than the one I allowed for them. In fact, I expect to realize a profit on the trade-in clubs to cover my expenses in handling and re-conditioning them.

I think this latter point is important. Too many pros, according to what I have seen and heard, regard trade-ins as something to get rid of as quickly as possible, and in doing so, sell them at ridiculously low prices. It should always be kept in mind that a loss on used clubs reduces the gross profit on the new clubs that were sold when trade-ins were taken in.

## Book Review

**Better Golf Through Better Practice.** Jules Platte and Herb Graffis, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 70 5th ave., New York 11.

This book is the outgrowth of a bull session involving a group of pros. It was agreed that even though golf instruction has evolved into something of a science, nobody has been able to go beyond the teaching of the mechanics of the swing to transmit the true feel to the student golfer. The feel, it was decided, can only be acquired through practice. This led to the statement, "Rare is the golfer who knows anything at all about how to practice," and from it, the book which Jules Platte has written in conjunction with Herb Graffis, editor of *GOLFDOM* and *GOLFING*.

The Platte-Graffis opus is the first ever written on the subject of practice.

Platte, summertime pro at Knollwood in Lake Forest, Ill., and wintertime master at Sundown in Scottsdale, Ariz., apparently is convinced the golfer will never get a grip on his game until he learns to grip the club. He thinks a faulty grip causes more than 50 per cent of those errant shots and a considerable chapter is devoted to getting it straightened out.

A history of practice is woven through the volume. Practically every chapter offers practice checkpoints that are emphasized by being set in bold face. Platte points out, by the way, that you don't necessarily have to go to a course to practice, but can do it at home.

There are a number of sage pieces of advice sprinkled through the book. One is to concentrate on only one thing (not club) at a time; another is to practice only when you're alert and have definite objectives in mind.