

**Play Increases by 80 Per Cent;  
Pro Sales Show 60 Per Cent Gain**

## ***Moose Run Rolls With Quake, Then Has Its Biggest Year***

**T**he earthquake that last winter shook Alaska to well below its foundation might have occurred on another planet so far as the golfers at Moose Run GC in Ft. Richardson are concerned. The farthest north layout in the U.S. wasn't completely immune to the ravages of one of the severest tremors ever recorded, but it escaped with relatively little damage. A huge stone fireplace in the clubhouse was badly mauled and had to be replaced, and several fissures of no more than finger-width proportion were detected on the course. Otherwise, Moose Run proved to be quakeproof.

So, it would hardly be accurate to say that the Ft. Richardson course snapped back in a hurry. But in 1964 it has had its best season since it was constructed 13 years ago. According to Mac Taylor, pro, supt. and manager of the GI layout, play as of early September was up 80 per cent over the previous season, pro shop sales were running 60 per cent ahead of those of 1963, and from a turf or agronomical standpoint, the course never was in better shape.

Being north of the 61st parallel, Moose Run isn't plagued by high temperatures and high humidity and turf disease is literally unknown. But this plus factor is counteracted by low soil temperatures, the makeup of the soil itself, and winterkill, which more often than not, has a devastating effect.

Low soil temperatures inhibit early germination of seeded bent, induce a deep freeze in the winter and consequent slow thawing in the spring. Soil in the Ft. Rich-

ardson area is glacial silt, which is similar to clay, and it isn't conducive to deep root growth. On a tract such as a golf course a constant battle to loosen the soil structure goes on. Taylor aerifies frequently during the playing season and, in his estimation, applies enough of a 3-1 sand-soil topdressing mix to make a continuing elevation change from year to year. But he is still a long way from approaching soil conditions that prevail in the "south 48", as he refers to the southern states.

Most winters Moose Run is afflicted



Mac Taylor (l), who runs the Moose Run club, and Dr. Harlow J. Hodson, Alaskan agronomist, are looking for a turf that will hold up through the winter, snap back in the spring.

with a series of freezes and thaws which build up solid ice sheets to a depth of five to six inches. Air simply does not circulate under the ice layer and winterkill becomes almost intolerable. But they say that Nature has a way of compensating for its misdeeds and that is what it did in 1963-64. Terrain that wasn't bulldozed by the earthquake came through in excellent shape. Nothing worse than sponge ice

covered the Moose Run layout, winterkill was superficial and in the spring the course was ready for play several weeks earlier than usual.

### **No Sub-Drainage**

Taylor explains that winterkill is aggravated because it is impossible to install sub-drainage in Moose Run greens because the average depth of freeze usually exceeds six feet. Water lines in the city of Anchorage are installed 15 feet below the surface so there is no danger that they will freeze during the winter months.

In 1963, Taylor experimented with polyethylene as a cover for greens for the first time. He covered half of the putting surfaces on the 18-hole course late in October, anchoring them with brush. But because of a relatively mild winter and since only sponge ice covered the greens, the Moose Run factotum isn't sure that it was worth going to the bother of covering any putting areas at all. Those that were not covered came through almost as well as those that were.

### **He Was Surprised**

But Taylor did make these observations: When the greens were uncovered on April 20, which may have been a week or so too soon, the thaw depth was a rather spectacular 15 inches. On greens that hadn't been covered, it was no more than three inches. Total recovery of covered greens came about a week or 10 days ahead of those that weren't covered. The Ft. Richardson area gets no more than a 60-inch depth of snow during the winter and much of this is dissipated by thawing.

The Moose Run greens are overseeded each spring with Highland following aerifying, verticutting, a heavy application of 10-20-10 and topdressing. *Poa annua* comes in quickly and stays all season, thriving through the entire summer because there is no disease to waylay it. Summertime temperatures in the Ft. Richardson area rarely exceed 70 degrees. Seed bents don't survive through the winter, but Northland, a vegetative strain, holds up well. But Taylor says it's too expensive to plant and anyway golfers wouldn't stand for his tearing up the greens to do so.

For the past few years, Taylor and Dr. Harlow J. Hodson, research agronomist

for the Alaska Agricultural Experiment Station, have been trying to develop a turfgrass that will overwinter satisfactorily. Hodson has found a native fescue that seems to have all the requisites, but its commercial development is several years away. He also has experimented with two Scandinavian strains that show promise. Another fescue strain, Duraturf, holds up well through Alaskan winter but, according to Taylor, it is hard to obtain. Unfortunately, Hodson has only a passing interest in bentgrasses and so it is up to Taylor, his maintenance foreman, M/Sgt. Paul Sessions, and a crew of nine men to look after their propagation and protection for the whole state of Alaska.

Moose Run's temporary greens were put in play early in May, but it is usually mid-June before the permanent putting surfaces are ready. Through Labor Day, approximately 20,000 rounds had been played on the Ft. Richardson course. It will remain open until the last week in October.

### **Harmon Breaks A Record**

Every year, Moose Run is the site of the Alaska State Amateur. This year it was won by Claude Harmon, Jr., a GI who assists Taylor in the pro shop. Young Harmon, who learned the fundamentals under his father at Winged Foot and Thunderbird in Palm Springs, captured the State title, shooting a record breaking 64 in the process. What makes that total even more imposing is that if a player strays off the fairway at Moose Run, he finds himself in rough that is worthy of being called that. It is cut at kneecap level. The women's course record of 75 is held by Mrs. Peter Koeniger, who played in this year's Trans-Mississippi. In the 1964 All-Army tourney at Fort Benning, Ga., Harmon, Jack Vollstedt and Col. Art Makhholm finished among the top ten.

Mac Taylor, as has already been mentioned, is Moose Run's pro, supt. and manager. He wears another helmet, too — that of budget officer for Special Services. The latter department runs the golf show at Ft. Richardson, and like most service courses, Moose Run is strictly self supporting. The Army won't permit it to spend a nickel more on maintenance than it takes in.