



If you dry up everything on your golf course except the greens for two weeks (with help from a record breaking hot spell), haul in 225 tons of road rock, dump it onto the playing area and then, over a four-day period, park 26,000 cars on 14 fairways, how soon can you start playing the

course again? Check one: a) Never; b) Six months; c) 10 days; d) Why try?

The answer: c) 10 days. The case history: the Ocean Course at the Olympic Club in San Francisco, companion to the Lakeside Course where the 1966 USGA National Open was

played. (You remember, Palmer blew a seven shot lead in the final round, and then lost the playoff on June 20 to Casper.)

Parking just doesn't exist at the Olympic Club beyond the normal member demands, and the tournament committee had no choice but to turn most of the



After being used as a tournament parking lot, the second 18 "looked like a hay field . . . in the dead heat of summer." Ten days later, it was ready for play. A miracle? No, just hard work

By **DON CURLEE**

Olympic Club Comeback

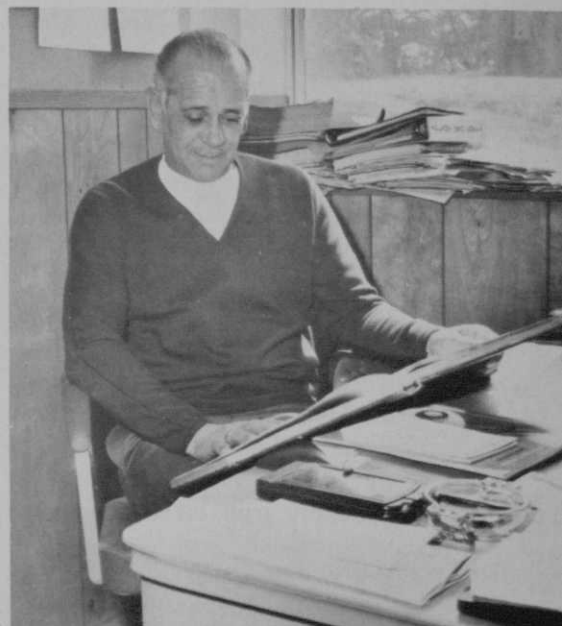
auxiliary Ocean Course into a parking lot, as painful as it was to superintendent Al Caputa. Caputa winced as the cars churned up to their hub caps in the loose, sandy base under the turf and he wondered silently if golf would ever be played there again as he hauled in the rock to turn parts

of his fairways into roadways.

"My fairways are 85 per cent annual bluegrass," Caputa says. "Any man in the business can tell you what happened to my course. It looked like a hay field two weeks after mowing in the dead heat of summer."

continued

Spectators' cars, parked on the Ocean Course (left) for the 1966 U.S. Open, made the fairways unfit for play. But Al Caputa (right) sprung into action with a 10-day restoration program.



OLYMPIC CLUB COMEBACK

continued

The cars were not out of the temporary gates, cut into the Olympic Club fences on June 20, before Caputa had water belching out of his quick-couple sprinkling system onto baked-out fairways. The water ran without interruption for three weeks, 24 hours a day on some parts of the Ocean Course—a half million gallons a day.

Assistant superintendent Joe Siriani recalls that more water was pumped than the Olympic Club's four wells could supply. "We had to tap the water supply of neighboring Daly City, since we were pumping 250 gallons a minute. That's more than twice the amount of water normally applied to the courses during the summer."

After the rock, used to create roadways across a number of fairways, was removed and the topsoil replaced, some of these spots were sodded. "We tried to sod in the middle third of the fairways," Caputa says, "and seed the outer thirds." He explained that the sod supply from his nursery was limited because "they parked on part of that, too." Foot and golf car traffic were limited to the sodded areas to allow the reseeded portions to gain a start. This was a major reason for play returning to the Ocean Course 10 days after Casper dropped his final putt on the 18th at the Lakeside Course.

While bringing the Ocean Course back to life, Caputa had the added task of returning the Lakeside Course to its normal, flawless condition after the trampling it received from the crowds and the hard use by participants in the Open. Before the tournament, he hired four additional workers, bringing his crew to 26, for both courses, and he retained them until about four weeks after the Open. He then began to gradually trim his crew until it



The Ocean Course's 18th fairway was scarred by tire tracks (top), but only a few weeks later (bottom) it was restored to its previous good condition.



Caputa (right) checks the club's aerator, which played a major part in the recovery program.

returned to the normal size of 22.

He explained that two of his crew are full-time gardeners in the clubhouse area, who never get on the course. At that time, another member spent all of his time repairing cars (a car leasing system has been adopted since

and another crew member does only mechanical maintenance. Thus, the need for four more men.

As the fairways on the Ocean Course began to soften under the constant water barrage, Caputa began a concentrated fertilization program. On June 27, three days after the playoff round, a 46-0-0 application of urea was spread at 2-1/2 pounds actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. A month after the Open, on July 21, the fairways were aerated and verticut. Three days later fertilizer was again applied, this time 10-10-10 at 1-1/2 pounds nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. And the water kept flowing.

By August 15 Caputa recalled that the Ocean Course was 75 per cent restored to its former condition, and the irrigation

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schedule was practically normal. On August 30, it rained. Caputa recorded in his daily log book, "lovely, lovely rain."

He said that on September 1 the course could be considered back to its normal playing condi-

tion, except for a few isolated and very small areas. "By then it was almost impossible to believe that our fairways had taken as much punishment as we gave them."

Caputa's efforts were not overlooked by members of the Olympic Club. In its monthly publication the president reminded members of the speed with which

the superintendent had restored the Ocean Course to its original condition and urged them not to take it for granted. "The compliments we received," Caputa says, "generally were greater for our work on the Ocean Course, than for returning the Lakeside Course to the shape the members are accustomed to."

After the summer of concentrated conditioning and fertilization, Caputa didn't apply fertilizer to the Ocean Course again until October. Annually, the course received its usual five applications, but two of them were scheduled within less than a month. He adds that the Lakeside Course normally receives six fertilizer applications annually.

Although the log shows only one complete aerating treatment, Caputa explained that many stubborn spots had to be aerated and verticut five or six times, especially the dry areas on the sloping fringes of some of the greens. These are reached by fairway sprinklers, which were not operated during the drying up period. "We had to apply some water before we could aerate," Caputa says, "or the equipment would have bounced right off of those spots."

Three years later Caputa says he can still remember what his Ocean Course looked like on June 21, 1966—dry, burnt and lifeless. "And I still get the shakes."

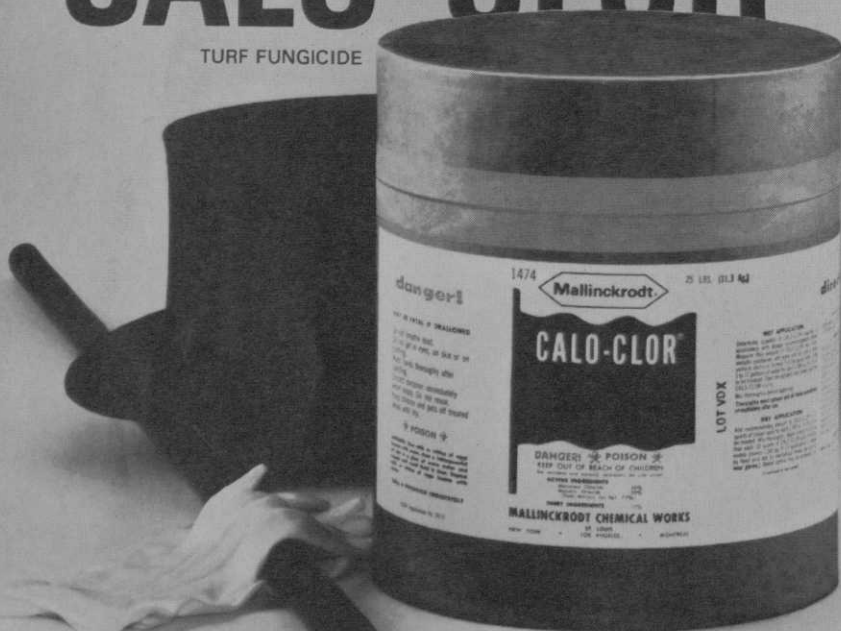
But what does he think of the whole experience, now that the course has made a complete recovery, and the uninformed can't even guess where temporary roadways ran? Does he favor hosting another major tournament, working sun-up to sundown for weeks before and after?

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