

Building Golf Courses In Japan

The unique conditions which prevail in the Far East are well described by the author, who is an American greenkeeper. Captain C. H. Alison was the architect of the Tokio Country Club.

By GEORGE PENGLASE

BUILDING a golf course in Japan is much more of a job than many people are able to realize. The implements used by the Japanese are so different from those used in this country that it is necessary to entirely change the method of construction. The American golf course builder encounters the same difficulty in building a golf course as he does in trying to eat with chop sticks. He doesn't know exactly how to go about it.

My biggest surprise came when I went to work for the first time, and began to look around for the teams and tractors. Teams and tractors seem to be as much a part of building a course in this country as is grass seed, and I was at a loss when I found that the Japanese do all their work by man power. If you ordered a crew of men in this country to build a mound ten or fifteen feet high with shovels and baskets, they would undoubtedly think you were crazy and leave the job immediately. The Japanese are accustomed to working in this way, however, and think nothing of digging a sand trap with shovels, and hauling the dirt away in baskets.

The entire area of the golf course, which was covered with trees, had to be cleared by hand. A man was given a certain section of land to clear for which he received the timber on it, and so the cost of doing this was negligible. This man would cut the trees down and then dig the stumps out and haul all of it away with his oxen and cart. It took a crew of 300 men three months to clear the land.

The topography of the new Tokio Golf course was very flat, thus making it necessary to build

many mounds and bunkers. This was an exceedingly big task as the dirt, for short hauls, was carried in baskets which held about eight shovels full each. The Japanese balance two of these baskets on a long pole and carry them on their shoulders. For long hauls, they use small dump carts that run on small narrow-gauge tracks. It takes two men to push one of these carts and they usually hitch eight of them in a line each car holding about a yard of material.



BUILDING NO. 18 GREEN AT THE TOKIO COUNTRY CLUB
The Japanese do most of their work by hand labor and at one time Mr. Penglase had 600 men working on the construction of this course. The details as he describes them are extremely interesting.

After the land was cleared, I employed about 600 men all the time. These men worked ten hours a day, seven days of the week, for one yen a day, which is about fifty cents in our money. With a crew of 600 men working on the construction of a golf course in this country, one could complete it in a comparatively short time, but the conditions in Japan make it a diffi-

cult and long task.

Plows are not used in Japan. All the fairways and greens were cultivated with forks, picks, and shovels. One can easily understand why it takes the time it does to build a golf course under such conditions as these.

FAIRWAYS SEEDED WITH BLUE GRASS

THE fairways were seeded with blue grass, yarrow, and red top, and the greens were planted with Cocos bent. Viscount Soma, of the Imperial University and chairman of the Green committee of the Tokio Country Club, experimented with the common seeds used on golf courses in this country and found that they were adaptable to the soil and climate in Japan.

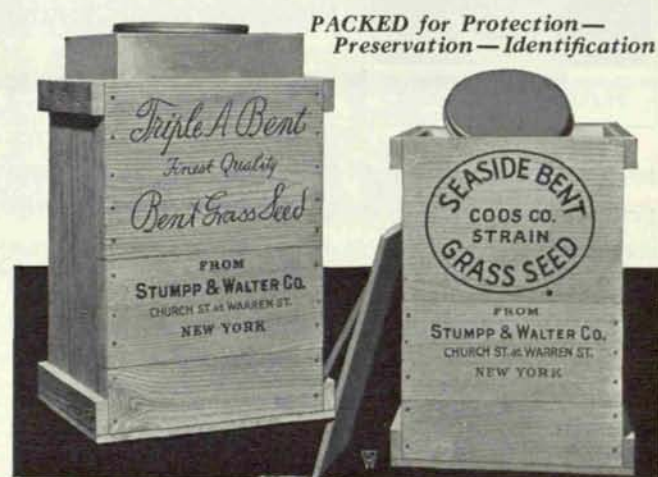
The course is equipped with an automatic watering system. It was necessary to sink a 400-foot well to obtain sufficient water to serve the course. There is also a water hole which was built to make the course more sporty. As the soil is of a sandy nature, it was necessary to make a cement base for the pond.

Another great handicap that I worked under was not being familiar with the language. If you have ever attempted to learn the Japanese tongue, you realize what a hopeless task it is. Of course, it is possible to pick up a few words here and there that are of use, but to attempt to learn the language intelligibly enough to be able to direct a force of men is practically impossible, unless one spends years studying it. I was therefore forced to write my instruction in English to my foremen, who were able to translate them into their own language by the aid of a dictionary. This was a very inconvenient and cumbersome means of giving orders, but it was the best I could do under the circumstances.

The Tokio Country Club is 6,700 yards long, and is one of the championship courses of Japan. It was designed by Capt. C. H. Alison, who has laid out many courses in this country and in Great Britain. Practically all of the other 60 courses of Japan were designed by the Ahaboshi brothers, both of whom have been amateur champions of Japan. They have also played a great deal of golf in Great Britain and the United States.

The officers of the Tokio Country club are planning on planting flowers along the roughs of each fairway, and then naming the holes instead of numbering them. For example, if they planted

rose bushes along number one fairway, they would call it the Rose Hole. Although this will not add to the sportiveness of the course, it will add considerably to the beauty. I am afraid, however, that some non-aesthetic golfer will raise havoc if his ball happens to land in a clump of rose bushes. Unless the patrons of this club are of a very even disposition, I fear that the yearly dues will have to be raised in order to replace the flowers dug out by the non-nature-loving golfers who spend most of their time in the rough.



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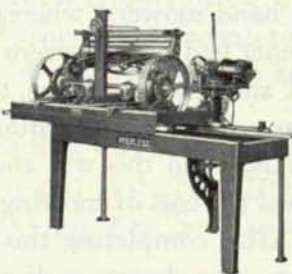
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