

Desert Golf Courses In Egypt

New type of sport offered in sand courses. Fast links on desert put any player on his mettle. Perfect record of putts found on sand greens.

By HAMILTON M. WRIGHT

PERHAPS you have never heard of desert golf courses. But golf in the desert is played on sand courses. Although of sand, hard-packed and daily tended, the golf-minded Englishmen who introduced the right royal game into Egypt, have been very clever in their handling of the sand.

Several types of sand are used for fairways, for greens, or the rough as the case may be, to assure a difference in the speed of the ball commensurate in some degree with the difference in the movement of the ball on the greens and fairways of a grass course.

Of the five golf courses in the neighborhood of Cairo, three are desert courses, located at Heliopolis, Helouan and Maadi, in the near vicinity of the city and all are full eighteen holes. In addition, there is a fine 18-hole grass course on the grounds of the Gezira Sporting Club in Cairo, and the small nine-hole grass course of the Mena House, located at the very base of the Pyramids of Giza.

GOLF ON A DESERT COUSE IS FAST

GOLF on a desert course is very much faster than golf on a grass course. Playing on the sand is a very interesting experience for golfers who have never tried it. Most people at first find it very difficult. The ball requires very keen hitting. You play the same shot on a desert course, but you must take it exactly right or your shot will be far more a complete failure than it will on grass. And on the "green" of the desert course (which is, as a matter of fact, not a green at all but a "brown" or "white") a finely swept brown or white sand is used on which is left every trace of your putting.

The surface is necessarily flat, no "borrow" is required and if a putt does not sink it is your own fault. How interesting it would be to see written in the sand the evidence of the putting of Bobby Jones or any other famous golfer—or, to bring it nearer home, to see even our own errors clearly disclosed in such matter as to admit of no argument.

In your shots "through the green" there is a unique opportunity to test the rhythm of your swing. In desert golf you must wear flat-soled shoes, no nails, and unless your rhythm is absolutely perfect you are apt to get a slip. Not that the course is actually slippery, yet it is smooth enough to put off balance one who has acquired the habit of relying too closely on the grip of his feet, to save him from the bad results of a jerky and uneven swing.

HELIOPOLIS IS AN OUTSTANDING COURSE

IN MANY respects the desert course at Heliopolis, seven miles from the heart of Cairo, stands alone in the world, though all the desert courses have their individual points. It is a sand course throughout. The fairways consist of watered and rolled sand, and the sand greens are very carefully looked after. They consist of white sand brought from a distance of five miles in the desert and calculated to give a very true medium-paced putting surface.

The fairways are smooth and hard and balls after landing will travel about forty yards further on this 6312-yard course than they ordinarily would on grass. The course is longitudinal and extends out to a billowing rise in the desert from which one obtains a sweeping view. Players never cross their tracks. It's all out and back. Par for the course is 68.

Less than thirty years ago the Heliopolis course was a stretch of desert as real as any you will find in the Sahara or Nubia. The late Baron Empain, former financial adviser of King Leopold of Belgium, and who took a large part in financing the King's vast enterprises, accumulated a huge fortune. The climate of Egypt delighted him and in the early nineties he built a handsome villa in the desert, near Cairo. From this villa spread a suburban city, of now 35,000 population fostered by the Baron, a really dazzling architectural work of stately flats and homes in the Saracenic style, enhanced by a modern race course, a handsome resort hotel, ranking among the finest in the world, and the expensive

ground of the Heliopolis Sporting Club, of which the golf course is a part.

The Baron has been succeeded by his son, one of the wealthiest young men of Europe. The young Baron is President of the Heliopolis Sporting Club and a keen sportsman himself. He is intensely interested in its program. One of the prized trophies for golf is the Baron Empain Cup.

MAADI COURSE IS ON THE NILE

IN AN opposite direction from Cairo, that is, South, is the Maadi Sporting Club, seven miles from Opera Square, where you will also find another fine 18-hole desert course. The Maadi Club was formally opened by Lord Allenby in 1920 and is therefore one of the newer courses of Egypt.

The club grounds are at the edge of the beautifully built up town of Maadi, comprising modern brick and stone homes, well-shaded streets, and lovely gardens. The fine stone club house is situated near the entrance to the grounds and straight out one-fourth of a mile from the railway station. The course leads out from the low plateau above the Nile Valley on which Maadi is located up toward the hills so that from the ninth tee one obtains a beautiful view of the city of Cairo and the Citadel on the one hand and the Pyramids of Giza on the other, with the vivid green valley of the Nile in between. Indeed you can get a lot of Egypt's best scenery from any of her desert golf courses.

The course at Maadi also has very fast fairways. The greens are made up of very fine sifted brown sand from the desert which is continuously being watered by the greensman to give a sort of pull back on the ball and make the surface true. The ball travels so fast on the fairways that it would run over the bunkers and consequently short stalks of sedge that have been placed on top of the bunkers to prevent the ball from rolling over. After all, the bunker is meant to stop the ball and so this device has been adopted to keep the ambitious pellet in place.

The bogy of Maadi golf course is 70. The length of the course is 5857 yards, the previous length being 5300 yards and the bogy 74.

HELOUAN HAS A DIFFERENT SOIL

THE next desert course to the South is the 18-hole course at Helouan les Bains, seat of the well-known health baths of Egypt which are said to have been

patronized in the days of antiquity. This is generally accounted the finest of all desert courses. It is, however, somewhat different from the courses at Heliopolis and Maadi, for the reason that the soil becomes heavily impregnated with salt and also a very slight amount of muddy silt works up through the sand, giving a slight amount of hold back to the fairways so that the course is not quite so fast as the other desert courses.

The course is splendidly bunkered and lays at a slight elevation of, say, perhaps forty feet above the valley of the Nile. The seventh and ninth greens are on this lower elevation making very interesting play down from the "hill."

Coming back to Cairo—we find on Gezira island, which divides the Nile, the Gezira Sporting Club, about eight minutes by tram from Opera Square in the heart of Europeanized Cairo. The club was established by British Officers during the British occupation of Egypt and by three years will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. The spacious grounds occupying the center of Gezira island and extending almost to the Nile on either side, have provision for horse racing, polo, tennis (there are 28 courts), golf and for almost every other outdoor sport except baseball.

The afternoons at the club house are great social levees. King Fuad of Egypt is patron of the Club and Sir Percy Loraine, Bt.K.C.M.G., British High Commissioner of Egypt is the President. Capt. D. P. Hope Johnston is the Secretary and Treasurer. The golf course 5940 yards, bogy 72.

GRASS COURSE AT FOOT OF PYRAMIDS

THE last golf course in our list of Cairo courses is the little 9-hole grass course which lays at the foot of the elevated plateau from which rise the Pyramids of Giza. In summer this course is covered with water by the inundations of the Nile, but in winter it is hard and well rolled and kept cropped cleanly by sheep. Playing on this course one thinks of Napoleon's admonition to his troops "soldiers of France, forty centuries look down upon you," which applies equally well to a golfer who plays on this course.

LINCOLN, NEB.

New corporations announced from the state capitol offices are the Fremont Memorial park with an authorized capital of \$25,000. Incorporators are A. F. Christensen, W. W. Moore, E. K. Lee and A. C. Sidner.