

The Greenkeeper's Job

By JOHN R. INGLIS

Fairview Country Club, Elmsford, N. Y.

PERHAPS it is not to be expected that all who play golf should find the maintaining of the golf course a matter of absorbing interest. It is surprising, however, how very few there are, out of the several hundred members of a golf club, who bestow even the most cursory attention on the really vital matter of keeping the course in the condition which affords them their golfing pleasure.

The Green committee, to be sure, is aware of the hundred and one items that must come under the heading of maintenance, but even Green committees seem prone to allow the bulk of the committee work to fall on the shoulders of the chairman. And to whom does the Green chairman look for the successful condition of the course? To one man—the greenkeeper, on whom rests the entire burden of keeping the course in such shape as will afford every player the greatest possible enjoyment from every round played—which, it may justly be claimed, is no mean task.

What, other than keeping the grass at proper playing height on greens, tees, fairways, and rough, constitutes a greenkeeper's work? Well, while grass cutting occupies considerable time during Spring and Summer, it is, really, the least of the greenkeeper's worries. Power mowers have, of course, simplified the grass cutting business everywhere on fairways and rough, and in many instances they are now used on greens and tees, but then these important items of equipment demand on the part of the greenkeeper a knowledge of tractor and mower mechanism. Tractors, for example, during the season of quick grass growth, are run from ten to thirteen hours a day, all in second speed, and this strain on machinery calls for constant expert care.

At that, grass cutting is not merely a matter of sending a machine out to do the work—season and weather conditions call for adjustment of these machines at various heights, and in this the greenkeeper must know just what is right for all conditions. Subjected to this constant hard usage steadily throughout the season, all golf course machinery and equipment has to be thoroughly overhauled during the winter months—worn bearings, reels, etc.,

replaced, knives ground, and so on, and the whole repainted in readiness for next season—and during overhauling the greenkeeper must make a careful inspection of each machine.

Cutting is not the only care needed on greens during summer. Periodic top-dressing has to be done—this is merely the artificial feeding and “pepping up” of the greens weakened by constant cutting, exacting weather conditions, and heavy playing traffic throughout the busy summer season.

During the summer months, too, the greenkeeper has to turn out as something of a chemist. Our summer climate often proves a very severe strain and test for golf course turf, and grass disease is very rarely wholly absent all of one season. Preventives and remedies, any number of them, are on the market, but all of them call for quite a bit of skill and knowledge as to their application. Their composition and action must be known to the greenkeeper, and he is called upon in

each individual case to exercise his own judgment as to their application—when to apply, in what manner, and at what strength, etc., etc.

Throughout all his work the greenkeeper is shouldering the responsibility of handling labor, more or less skilled. Time was when golf course labor was virtually casual, but the tendency of recent years has been to standard-



John R. Inglis has been professional-greenkeeper at Fairview Country Club for over 20 years. Under his direction Fairview has been unique as a training school for successful golfers, among whom are numbered Johnnie Farrell, National Open Champion, Joe Turnesa, Elmsford, N. Y., Joe Mathews, Merton Matthews and John Madden, all of Kansas City, Walter Madden, St. Joseph, Mo., Louis Costello, Broadmoor, N. Y., and Fred Decker, Knollwood, N. Y.

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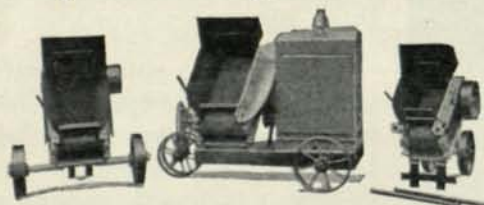
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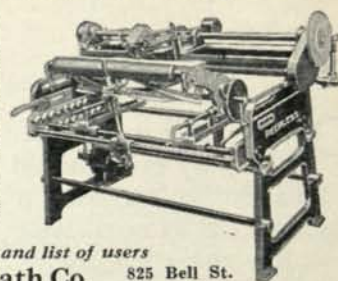
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ize golf course employment as a specific occupation. Skilled greensmen, however, are not yet plentiful enough to relieve the greenkeeper of much care and concern in the training and retaining of good workmen. Here in the east, for instance, the greenkeeper employs a more or less cosmopolitan gang, and frequently their training and handling is something that taxes patience, forbearance, and executive ability.

Summing it all up, the man who has to maintain, in excellent playing condition, the golf course of today, has a worthwhile, though exacting job, on his hands. His varied activities, of course, prevent his coming in contact with the majority of club members—that being a privilege which the professional, on the other hand, does enjoy through the very nature of his work.

In estimating the importance of the greenkeeper in the field of present day golf, it may be argued that club members spend about three and one half hours right in the greenkeeper's department each time they play a round of golf, so that, working it out comparatively, golfers are really greatly indebted to the greenkeeper for the enjoyment they derive from their golf game, and the return they get from country club membership. The steward may provide an excellent lunch, the professional may evolve a perfect style, but the golf course is what gives the player the greatest pleasure in any golfer's day.

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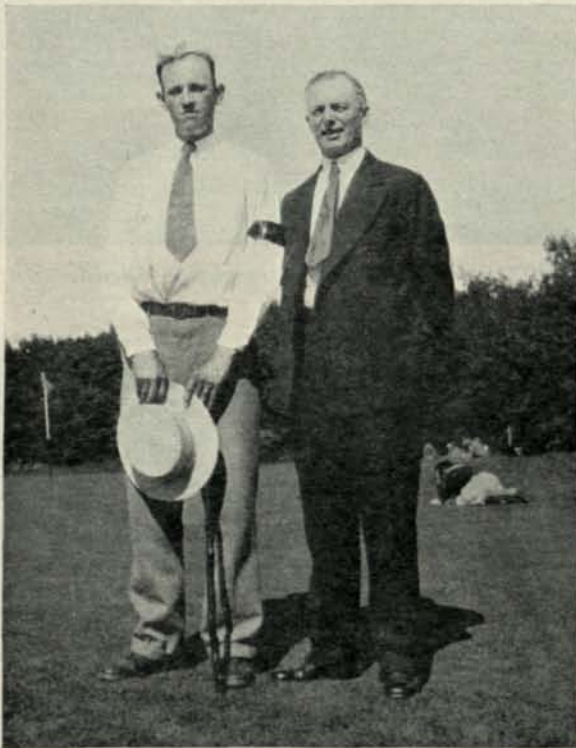
How About It?

By ALEX McWHINNIE

Greenkeeper Morrison Country Club, Morrison, Illinois

JOHAN MORLEY, writing in our last issue of the NATIONAL GREENKEEPER says, "It is up to the greenkeepers to find the cause of the brown patch disease." At the same time he contributes a very interesting article on the subject, and requests the greenkeepers to follow his example.

When you stop to consider the very large number of golf courses we have, the difference in location, soils, construction, methods of maintenance, watering, fertilizing, topdressing, etc., and all, or most of them attacked more or less with the brown patch, it makes one wonder what else there is to try in order to find the cause and



BOB FARMER OF WINNETKA AND ALEX McWHINNIE OF MORRISON

Who acted as marshals at the Walker Cup Matches, Chicago.

prevent it. Everything considered it looks like a big task, but, if the members of our association will tackle it with the same persistency that the brown patch attacks our greens, we will eventually win out.

We must not be timid or sensitive, for many times alarming and beneficial results have been obtained through experiments that at first seemed foolish. At the present time I am changing the construction of a green that has not done very well because of faulty construction. The location of this green makes a very good golf hole, and is also excellent for the brown patch, being close and muggy day and night for weeks at a time. Be-

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fore finishing this green, I explained to my Green committee chairman, Mr. E. A. Smith, the aim and object of our association, told him of John Morley's request, and asked him if I might be allowed to use a part of that green for an experiment. Mr. Smith readily agreed saying it was the only way to get a solution of the problem.

On this green I am topping a part of it with a mixture of equal parts of top soil and cinders that have been screened through a one-quarter inch mesh, to a depth of about eight inches. This structure being very granular the pore space is increased and air and water will pass more freely. At present I have a plot of practically the same structure that I planted recently with both bent stolons and seed that is doing very well. Whether it will produce a good turf remains to be seen.

My object in using so many cinders and what I am hoping for through this experiment, is to decrease the density of the turf, and increase the rigidity of the plants, at the same time believing that when we can produce a turf of good healthy rigid plants that will stand up and breathe under all weather conditions, our troubles may be over. Who knows?

Heretofore our interest has been in how to control the brown patch. Our president has asked us to do something toward preventing it. "How about it?"

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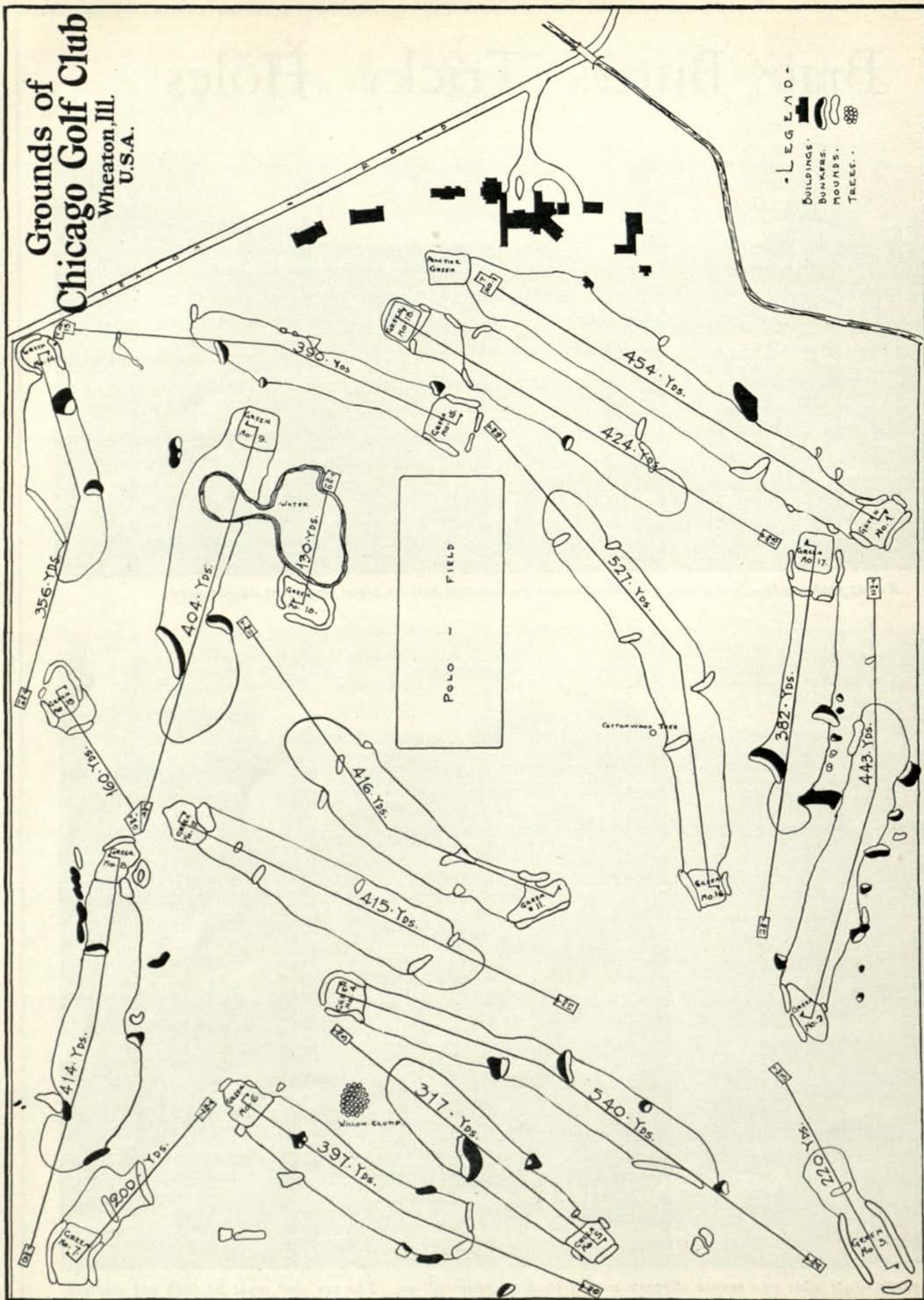
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Grounds of Chicago Golf Club Wheaton, Ill. U.S.A.

-LEGEND-



Bobby Says 'Twas Perfect

How the Chicago Golf Course looked during the Walker Cup Matches

By ROBERT E. POWER, Editor

WHEN Charles Blair MacDonald rebuilt the Chicago Golf Club in 1923 he made it tough for the greenkeeper, John MacGregor.

The putting greens at Chicago Golf average ten thousand square feet. Some of them are fourteen thousand square feet in area and MacGregor had brown patch to fight all through the months of July and August to get ready for the Walker Cup Matches on August 30 and 31.

The fact that he had his course in what Bobby Jones said was, "the finest condition of any course that the Walker Cup Matches were ever played on," speaks volumes for John's ability as a greenkeeper. Bobby made this statement publicly at the presentation of the Walker cup as the shadows were lengthening across the first tee at Wheaton late Friday afternoon. Considering that previous matches have been played over historic St. Andrews in Scotland and the almost equally famous National and Garden City courses on Long Island, one may well pause and lift his hat to the president of the Mid-West Green-

A BIT OF HISTORY

Charles Blair MacDonald, now president of the National Golf Links of America, at Southampton, Long Island organized the Chicago Golf Club and built its first 9-hole course at Belmont in 1892. The following year this was increased to 18-holes. As the representative of the Chicago Golf Club, Mr. MacDonald won the first U. S. G. A. National Amateur Championship at Newport in 1895. He came back to his home town in 1923 and built the present 18-hole Championship course at Wheaton.

keepers Association and third ranking officer of the National Association of Greenkeepers of America.

It was my pleasure to be present at Chicago in company with Fred A. Burkhardt, greenkeeper of the Westwood Country Club, Cleveland, dur-

ing the Walker Cup Matches. Having attended all the big tournaments for many years I saw nothing particularly new in the shots of the amateur stars. In fact the scores did not interest me but what happened to the ball between the teeing ground and the cup gave me plenty of mental and physical exercise. That's why golf clubs spend about twenty-five thousand dollars a year on maintenance and that's why the greenkeeper is in our opinion the most important employee of the golf club organization.

Bobby Was Right

BOBBY JONES was right—as he most always is with his golf shots as well as his public statements. I have never seen St. Andrews, but I played over both the National and Garden City layouts. Bobby's statement gave the Britons an awful jolt because



JOHN MACGREGOR, GREENKEEPER, AND ERNEST P. WAUD, VICE-PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMAN OF GREEN COMMITTEE, CHICAGO GOLF CLUB



JOHN MACGREGOR (at Left) AND FRED BURKHARDT (at Right)
With a group of greenkeepers at the Chicago Golf Club

St. Andrews is their paradise, but they did not offer a word of dissent and joined in praise of the Chicago course.

The fairways were broad green ribbons of velvety turf soft to walk on and ideal for all kinds of wood and iron shots. Much of this is due to the black gumbo soil which has the moisture retaining properties of humus. Every two hundred feet there is a two-inch outlet for sprinkling in dry weather and it was evident these had been used together with the necessary amount of fertilizer.

To see fairways in the middle west on August 30 green and growing just like early June gave me a distinct thrill. I can now see some of the dreams of our golf club officials come true as they pray for relief from the droughts and burning suns of midsummer. There is no question about it in my mind after tramping about Chicago Golf Club for two days. Given a good natural soil, proper seeding, intelligent care and water and you can have marvelous soft green fairways throughout the playing season.

Fairways Were Outstanding Feature

I STRESS this point because in my mind the fairways were the Chicago Golf Club's outstanding feature. True the greens were unusually fine, but I know of other courses with good greens but I know of none with fairways so perfect for golf shots in late August. I did

not see a single bad lie nor hear of one. They were cut every night with a pair of Worthington tractors and 5-gang units equipped with front and rear searchlights—that's one for the book! I talked with the tractor men and they said they liked it better than daytime mowing; it was cool and there was no interference from players. Certainly the quality of the work was 100%. And I am not sugar coating what I actually saw the least bit.

If night mowing is practical as it apparently is, many of the greenkeeper's problems will be solved. I know of many city clubs where morning play begins as early as seven-thirty, mostly women and juniors, and they are fussy about tractors. Counting the time lost and gas burned waiting for players to make their shots, night mowing would more than pay for extra wages if necessary. I hope to hear of other greenkeepers trying it out and letting us know just how it compares with day mowing in cost and quality of work.

Chicago Course Almost Flawless

A STORY of a golf course seems flat without criticism. I would rather find fault with a course than praise it. But honestly the Chicago Golf Club Course was almost flawless from a greenkeeping standpoint. There were three greens which had been badly hit with scald or brown patch or whatever you want to call it. The scars were there but MacGregor had skill-

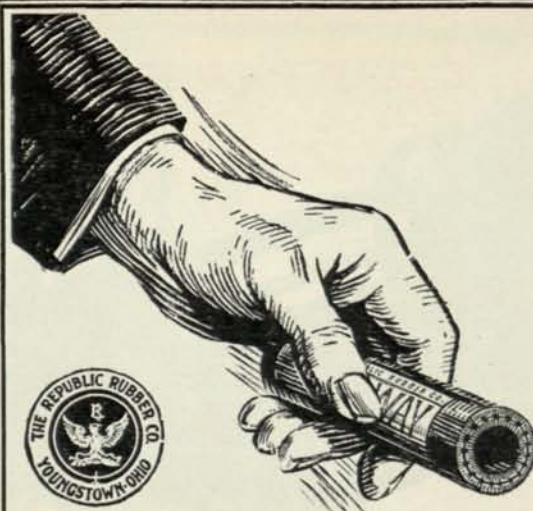
fully plugged the bad places and they responded well to the putting efforts of the players. I saw only one putt go astray and that was a short one of MacKenzie's on the 17th green. Evidently it was deflected by the remnant of a worm cast and these pests certainly kept the greenkeeper crew busy all week.

On Thursday morning after the heavy rain of the previous afternoon, the greens were streaked with black soil where the worm casts had been brushed off by the mowers. Naturally, the greens seemed a little slow and heavy after Wednesday's rain. They are seeded bent of the old time variety with patches of light



HARRISON JOHNSTON OF ST. PAUL
Playing from the edge of the green in the Walker Cup Matches in Chicago

and dark strains but very uniform as to texture. The seed bed like the fairways holds moisture well and they were soft and smooth. On Friday they were a bit faster but nothing like many courses where championships have been played. The players (and I talked to many of them), liked them very much. They could hit their putts firmly up to the cup without danger of sliding off the line or running too far beyond to get back. And with the pins in the corners behind bunkers it was safest on the long second shots to go for the opening rather than the pin. This meant that fifty and sixty-foot approach putts were quite the rule rather than



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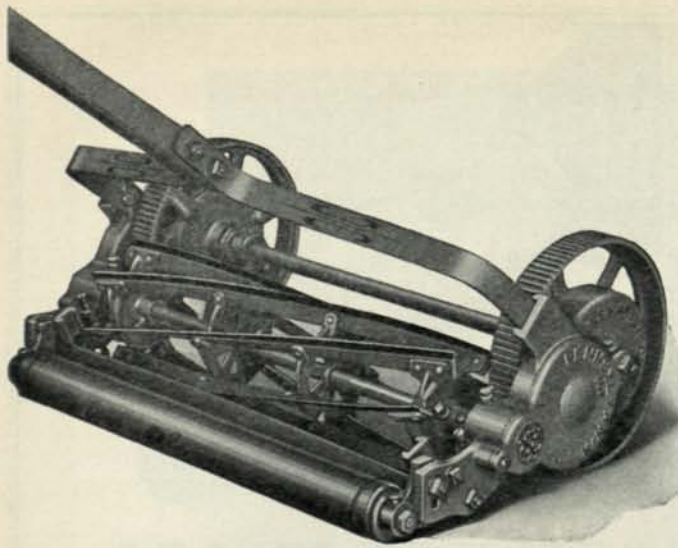
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the exception. As a result there were not as many birdies as one usually sees in major championships and no one broke 70.

Bobby Jones equalled it in his morning round Friday against Thomas P. Perkins the British Amateur Champion, but he was on one of his scoring sprees that have made him the golfing marvel of all time. O. B. Keeler of the Atlanta Journal, his amanuensis, told me that Bobby's last ten 18-hole medal scores beginning at Asheville on his way north and including four Chicago courses averaged thirty-five under fours. He played his best golf against Perkins and just equalled 70—so you know how hard the Chicago Golf course can be made when MacGregor fixes the pins.

Just picture a 6700 yard course with one hundred and eight bunkers as big in proportion as the putting greens and all groomed to perfection. I was told that three hundred yards of new sand had been spread in them for the tournament. Certainly they looked fine and a force of men kept them raked in the furrow style so generally used now on all championship courses. However, the Chicago Golf bunkers were not furrowed as wide or deep as on some other courses. Even so I didn't see any mashies or putters used to get the ball out of the sand.

Bunkers Are Beautifully Constructed

THE faces and tops of the bunkers were evenly scythed to a length of about four inches and they not only looked fine but the play seemed very fair. Credit should be given the architect and constructor for the beautiful manner in which the cops of the bunkers were streamlined gently out into the fairways. This sort of work means labor and care but the difference between the Chicago Golf bunkers and those on most courses is like a custom-built and a square-cornered stock automobile. Nowadays too many golf courses are slapped up in any old way to get them done and right away they lay claim to greatness. While they may equal Chicago Golf and others I might mention in casual appearance and design, the man who knows how golf courses should be built and recognizes quality sees the difference at once.

Say you saw the ad in The National Greenkeeper