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Scioto Country Club

By George Sargent

All eyes of the golfing world will be focused on the Scioto Country Club, Columbus, Ohio, during the three days July 8 to 10 this season, when the National Open Championship of the United States will be in progress. From the present outlook the Open this year will be more popular and full of excitement than ever.

The majority of the golfing public are under the impression that the club which is to be host to a national tournament has a big and costly job on its hands in preparing for an event of that importance; but this is a mistaken idea.

At Scioto plans for reconstructing the putting greens were adopted and under way some months before any thought of holding the National Open was conceived, after being invited to put in a bid for this event and knowing that it was fairly sure to be held at Scioto. These plans were in no way elaborated; in fact, the only extra construction we have undertaken because of the National Open was to extend two tees and build three others, at a cost of about one hundred dollars. All other work that has been done or is being done is routine work, which would have been done regardless of the National Open Championship.

Players who take part in the National Open Championship are not looking for anything impossible or extraordinary. All they ask is a reasonably good test of the game, and conditions fair, so that the element of luck be not too great a factor in deciding the winner of the event.

From a golf course standpoint, the dates July 8 to 10 are somewhat problematical. Nature is beyond the power of man; and conditions may be such at that time that the fairways will be a trifle faster than we would wish. Scioto has wintered very well, and at the present moment everything seems favorable for its being in pretty good condition for the Open.

The putting greens are creeping bent, of the Columbia strain, seven of which were planted by the vegetative method and eleven of which were sodded with bent sod which had been grown by the vegetative method. Bent putting greens that have been grown by the vegetative method have been roundly criticized on account of a tendency to form a grain which runs in all directions and makes it difficult to putt over. Playing the National Open on this type of green is surely putting them to the acid test; but we do not believe they will be found wanting.

The fairway at Scioto is about 50 percent red fescue and 50 percent Kentucky bluegrass. There are a few patches of creeping bent here and there, which are slowly becoming more numerous. Originally the fairways were almost solid red fescue, and were among the best I had ever seen. Scioto, however, is situated on a stratum of lime rock, which is encouraging to bluegrass, and it is gradually crowding out the fescue, and no doubt in the course of a few years bluegrass will be the predominating grass.

The rough is largely of fescue, where it apparently thrives better than in the fairways or putting greens, due to the fact that it is not cut so close. Fescue makes a rather severe rough; and unless Scioto is badly burned out by a long siege of hot, dry weather, we are advising the boys playing in the Open to stick to the fairways.

Eighth hole, Scioto Country Club, viewed from back of green. Length, 480 yards. A fine 2-shot hole. As the green is at a slight angle to the left with a water hazard behind it, lots of courage is required to go for the green on the second

The course was designed by Mr. Donald Ross in 1915 and was built during the years 1915 and 1916. There was a lot of rain during the construction period, which made it imperative to particularly well drain the wet spots in order to go ahead with construction work. This resulted in Scioto being a very well-drained course, and it can be played on at almost any time of the year; even after an extremely heavy rain it is in good playing condition very shortly after the rain ceases.

The course was very well laid out, and little or no changes have been found necessary from the original plans. The topography is rolling without being severe enough to make playing laborious. Splendid advantage was taken of the natural hazards of the rolling ground and of the creek which zigzags through the entire length of the property.

Scioto at first glance presents a very different appearance from most of the well-known courses. Altogether there are not more than seventy artificial hazards or sand traps; and in this day and age,

when we are apt to rate courses by the number of its sand traps, Scioto, until after it has been played a few times, might appear as minus a few teeth.

All the holes are of fine length, and call for good second shots, which must be accurately placed. The total length is close to 6,700 yards, from the center of the back tees to the center of the greens. There are four one-shot holes, varying from 135 to 235 yards, all of which are greatly diversified and very interesting.

In conditioning Scioto for the Open we expect to follow more or less the well-known methods in caring for the bent putting greens—topdress lightly each 30 to 40 days and frequently fertilize with ammonium phosphate or ammonium sulfate.

Seventeenth hole, Scioto Country Club. Length, 115 to 150 yards. A postage-stamp type of putting green. The angles are such that a practically unlimited variety of shots is possible. Behind the green is a sand-trap, and at the right a water hazard

The fairways have been well topdressed the last two winters. This was not done especially for the National Open Championship, but is part of the program to rejuvenate the fairways, which became thinned out because of lack of fertilization and a severe drought which visited this section three years ago. Fine results have been obtained from this dressing, and it should be a big help in retaining the moisture next summer and thus stopping the fairways from becoming too fast. In addition to the manure, we have also for the last two years fertilized the fairways with sulfate of ammonia; this is for feeding and stimulating purposes, and we also find it has been discouraging to weeds such as dandelions. Teeing grounds have received the same treatment as the fairways, with the addition of a little sulfate of ammonia during the playing season.

There has been a lot of discussion among players regarding bunker treatment. Some clubs believe in filling the traps with grooves for important events. Worcester last year during the National Open left the traps smooth, and the players were apparently more puzzled

than if they had been grooved. As a matter of fact, traps that are left smooth require a greater variety of shots than traps that are ridged or grooved. If the traps are left smooth, the player may be faced with any one of three shots; the ball may be lying perfectly clean, where it can be chipped out; it may be under the face of the bunker, when a cut shot would be required; or, as is very often the case, it may be resting in a footprint, where an explosion shot would be demanded. With the grooved or ridged type of treatment, it is invariably an explosion shot that is required, and variety is almost entirely eliminated. The British rarely, if ever, smooth or manipulate the sand traps, preferring to let the element of luck be the deciding factor. Nothing has been definitely decided as to how the bunkers will be conditioned at Scioto for the National Open Championship. In my own humble opinion, however, any hazard, no matter what its nature, if well placed is, regardless of conditioning, perfectly able to give a good account of itself.

Seed of Common Grasses Sold Under New Names

In THE BULLETIN for September, 1923 (page 234), the Green Section warned golf clubs against purchasing meadow fescue seed under the name "Turfing Fescue," which was then being offered under that name. Again in THE BULLETIN for January, 1924 (page 19), a warning was issued against purchasing seed of the same grass under the name "Herbae Prati." It is now learned that a Southern golf club has recently made a purchase of a seed mixture which is being marketed under a name perhaps still more attractive than "Turfing Fescue" or "Herbae Prati." An analysis of this new mixture made by the United States Department of Agriculture indicates that it consists of Italian rye-grass, timothy, and meadow-fescue. It is indeed true that each of these three grasses is a turf former. For certain purposes Italian rye-grass forms a suitable temporary golf turf. Turf of timothy and of meadow-fescue would be a disappointment on any golf course even for fairways. Moreover, from information received it would appear that the price at which this new mixture was sold was triple the actual market price of the several ingredients.

The Green Section for five years has been giving readers of THE BULLETIN full information on all of the known golf turf grasses which can grow in the United States and Canada. It has tested these and observed them to determine their relative merits. Botanists know of thousands of species of grasses, of which a dozen or so are adapted for use on golf courses, and many of these only under restricted conditions.

In the purchase of seed, as in the purchase of anything, quality is what you want, and not a trade-name. Buy pure seed and make your own mixtures.

Do the chairman of your green committee, and your greenkeeper, get The Bulletin? Frequently these men change, and we are not notified of the change, so that the new occupants of the positions do not see The Bulletin.