HARD COURTS MAKE TENNIS CHAMPIONS

Concrete Displacing Grass and Clay—California Leads in Innovation.

With amazing rapidity the vogue of the hard-surfaced lawn tennis court has swept over the world during the past few months. The universal answer to the momentous question, What makes for a great lawn tennis player? is development of the game upon hard courts. Maurice E. McLoughlin, the peerless young American who has succeeded to the crown of William A. Larned, brought his game to its perfection of rapidity and hard hitting upon the asphalt courts of California. McLoughlin nas defeated every great player in this country, together with the foremost Britons, and has yielded to Norman E. Brookes, the great Australian, only after five sets.

In England every club of any pretensions is laying hard courts. This action of the conservative Britons, wedded so firmly to their splendid turf, has caused such amazement that The London Times obtained a consensus of opinion as to what advantages the hard courts offered, and has printed several editorials upon this most momentous change in the game.

In this country the whirlwind speed as displayed by McLoughlin, Thomas C. Bundy, Melville H. Long, May Sutton, Hazel Hotchkiss, and Mary Browne, all Californians, has been the marvel of the Eastern courts. The fact that the National title and every championship of note was won by Californians during the past season set the students of the game to discover the reason. McLoughlin and Bundy declared emphatically that the rapidity, agility, and general forcefulness of action which play upon the asphalt courts of California had put into their game was the real foundation of their success.

England learned to respect the hard court player in a manner similar to that in which the ability of the Californians was brought with compelling attention to the players of the East in this country. For the past two seasons younger Europeans, chiefly from Germany and France, have invaded the English tournaments. A along the line the young Germans and the Frenchmen have bowled over the tried veterans of England to the amazement and consternation of the British. The "Johnny Bulls" argued with their usual conservatism that this was against all precedent, for every one of the invading Europeans had been trained and developed upon hard courts and knew practically nothing about playing on turf. They have only just begun to open their eyes to the fact that the hard court training is the key to the situation, and the result is that a revolution in English lawn tennis is in progress.

Not only has this change been begun in England, but it is beginning to make itself felt in the Eastern section of the United States. Its forerunner was the establishment of the so-called clay court championship of the United States, which was decided the past season upon the courts of the Pittsburgh Athletic Association.

In this city Park Commissioner Stover has begun the work of laying asphalt courts to replace the more than 300 acres of lawn tennis fields under the jurisdiction of the Park Department. A field of ninety-two acres is nearing completion on the west side of Central Park, near Ninety-sixth Street. How large this field is may be ascertained by any one mathematically inclined by the fact that three lawn tennis courts cover approximately an acre of ground. Several of the clubs have laid wooden courts out of doors, and one of the advantages of such courts is that they allow for play excepting in the most severe Winter weather, as the surfaces are solid and are easily cleaned for action.

The opinions advanced in The London Times are especially interesting to American players. The British attitude toward the problem which has just reached this country is in part as follows:

"For some years past Continental players have been winning lawn tennis tournaments, and it is now usual to ascribe much of the credit for these victories to the hard court on which the winners received their early training. The hard court possesses some obvious advantages; it requires comparatively little tending; it can be used all year round, and above all, its surface is true. It is not to be wondered at, then, that the number of hard courts has been steadily increasing in England, although here the hard court was regarded until recently as an understudy for the superior grass court. But this attitude seems to be changing; there must now be a considerable body of players who regard a grass court as a horse omnibus—to be used when a newer and better article is not available.

"Hard court lawn tennis has diverged considerably from the parent game evolved on the uneven grass of this wet and windy England. Here—to judge from the laments of players—the grass court is much like the rural Greece of the school books—all thickets and pools with a sprite in each. The pixies on the player's side of the net are malevolent; those on the other are benign and must be allowed to touch the ball as often as possible. At any rate, the irregularity of the bounce is a dominant factor in the grass court game; the Englishman must wait until the last moment before deciding upon his stroke, and knowing that his opponent also has to reckon with the surface he is apt to content himself with drives which the Continental player would consider irresolute."

All of the foreign publications devoted to lawn tennis are praising the manifold merits of hard surfaced courts. The snap and dynamic power that it puts into the player's game is realized to be the winning factor in the skill of the youngsters who have suddenly leaped into the topmost ranks, and another season promises a vogue for the hard courts such as they have never before enjoyed.

To Play Lawn Tennis on Ice.

Paul E. Mead, the former Yale player, was re-elected President of the Hamilton Grange Lawn Tennis Club at the annual meeting held at the clubhouse on the courts at Convent Avenue and 149th Street. This club now has the distinction of being the only member of the United States National Lawn Tennis Association having courts upon Manhattan Island. From the reports of the officers it was shown that the club was in a flourishing condition with a substantial fund in the treasury against the day when building operations will compel the members to seek another site. Because of the success of Winter play, the members voted to keep the grounds and clubhouse open through the Winter. When freezing weather sets in the courts will be flooded as last year, and lawn tennis on ice attempted on a more ambitious scale than last season. The officers elected were as follows: Paul E. Mead, President; Julio M. Steinacher, Vice President; Henry M. Cleaver, Secretary; William M. Fischer, Treasurer. Board of Governors, until September, 1916: Arnold S. Sayer, Edward W. Libaire, to succeed H. M. Cleaver and Clark E. Dailey.

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