

The Public Links Championship

By JOSEPH C. DEY, Jr.

USGA EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Eddie Kleteke had a starting time of 7:45 A.M. for his first match in the USGA Amateur Public Links Championship at Los Angeles last month. His opponent failed to appear—he overslept and was the only man in the field of 210 who didn't keep his engagement.

So there was Eddie, all set to go—but no opponent. He was disappointed at not having a game. You felt rather badly that Eddie had had to get up with the

larks, even though he went into the second round by default; so you mildly sympathized with him.

"Makes no difference to me," said Eddie. "In my business, we have to get up at all hours."

Eddie, you see, is a city fireman in Chicago.

His is the sort of spirit that makes the Public Links Championship one of the most refreshing events on the USGA calendar. It is a competition among true lovers of the game, "the amateurs without tarnish," as John Maynard of the LOS ANGELES EXAMINER described them.

No competition is more truly in the spirit of the game than this one. An atmosphere of good fellowship prevails, the local hosts always provide abundant entertainment both on and off the golf course, and the players contest stroke for stroke keenly. In the first four rounds at Rancho 193 matches were played, and 23 went extra holes. The contestants are always avid to learn more and more about the Rules of Golf and to play by the Rules. An unusual number voluntarily submitted iron clubs for examination of face marking before play began.

One of the nicest things of all is the surprised modesty of several contestants when, unexpectedly, they find themselves well along in a national championship. Take Lou Barnes, for instance, a 36-year-old sales engineer from Alhambra, Cal. "Can this really be me?" said Lou when he reached the semi-finals at Rancho. "Why, I'm a 5-handicapper, and I've been planning to go back to work from day to day."

Quality of play is high. The new Champion is Kenneth James Towns, of San Francisco, and in most of his eight matches he was better than Rancho's par of 71.

Ask Ralph Vranesic, of Denver. Ralph met Ken in the fifth round. Ralph played



City of Los Angeles

William E. Betger, 26-year-old San Francisco policeman, reveals the left-handed form that took him to the final of the Public Links Championship.



City of Los Angeles

Ben Hogan received a tremendous ovation when he appeared unexpectedly at the Riviera Country Club in Los Angeles, scene of his 1948 Open triumph, to speak at a dinner for contestants in the recent USGA Amateur Public Links Championship. Pictured above, left to right, back row: Harold Harvy, George Cronk and Win Austin of the Los Angeles City Council; Maurie Luxford, President of the Los Angeles Recreation and Park Commission and General Chairman of Los Angeles' Committee for the tournament; Joe Novak, President of the PGA; C. Pardee Erdman, member of the USGA Executive Committee; George Hjelte, General Manager of the Los Angeles Recreation and Park Department. Front row: Totton P. Heffelfinger, a Vice-President of the USGA and Chairman of the USGA Public Links Committee; Mayor Fletcher Bowron of Los Angeles; Ben Hogan; Joseph C. Dey, Jr., USGA Executive Secretary; C. Tony Pereira, member of the Los Angeles Recreation and Park Commission.

the first nine in 35, even par, having eight 4s and one 3—but Ralph found himself 4 down. Ken Towns, you see, went out in 31. He finished off the match by 6 and 5, playing the 13 holes in five birdies and eight pars. There were eight 3s on his card. Rancho measured 6,805 yards for the Championship and was watered throughout.

In the semi-final round, Towns holed a birdie 3 on the 36th green to establish his winning margin over Philip J. Kunkel, of Salt Lake City. For the 32 holes of the final, Towns was one above par in winning by 5 and 4 from William E. Betger, a fellow San Franciscan.

Twenty-year-old Ken Towns is a player of real promise. He is a sturdy young man cast in an athletic mold. He has an excellent temperament for golf which is reflected in a modest and quiet de-

meanor. He has a game of great power and a keen putting touch.

San Francisco monopolized main honors not only in the Individual Championship but also in the Team Championship, winning the Harding Cup with a three-man score of 221 for 18 holes stroke play. The San Francisco sectional team comprised Paul A. Millett, 69; Martin Stanovich, 73, and John M. Maughan, 79. There was a tie at 225 among Denver, Honolulu and Toledo. Thirty-three teams entered the competition, played two days before the all-match-play Individual Championship.

Los Angeles did an outstanding job in arrangements for the Public Links Championship. Its committees were wonderfully organized under the general chairmanship of Maurie Luxford, President of the Los Angeles Recreation and Park Commission.