

EAST-WEST CROQUET

Hart beats Zanuck in bitter clash

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEAN FELDMAN

TEXT AND CAPTIONS BY MOSS HART

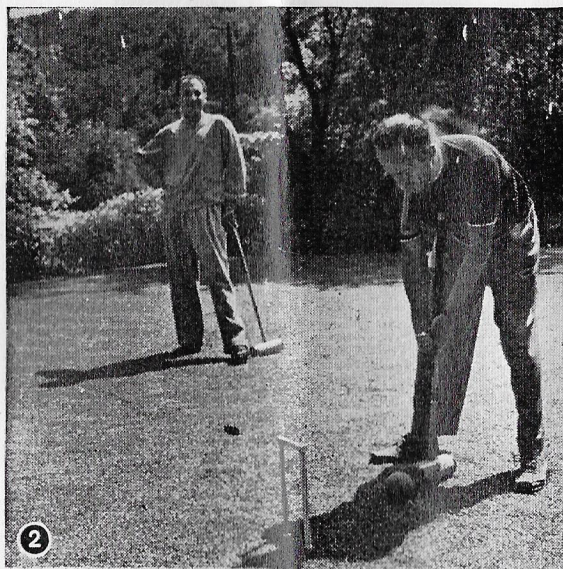
(The following account of the recent East-West Croquet Match in Palm Springs, Calif., including picture captions, was written for LIFE by Playwright Moss Hart, one of the contestants.)

Croquet hit Hollywood last winter and, in typical Hollywood fashion, it hit hard. "Discovered" by Producer Darryl Zanuck, it swept over the glamour boys and girls like a brush fire. Last week, when the East-West championship was played off between

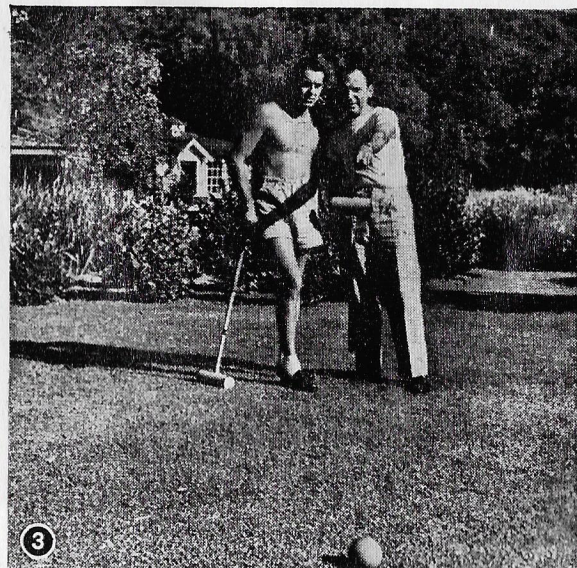
Zanuck's team for the West and Moss Hart's for the East, all work stopped and the betting was high and handsome. Far from a child's diversion, croquet played correctly is a fascinating adult game, requiring skill, stamina and iron nerves. For years in the East its high priest was the late Alexander Woollcott, who ruled croquet with an iron hand. It is played with bitterness and passion by such competitors as Herbert Bayard Swope, Averell Harriman,



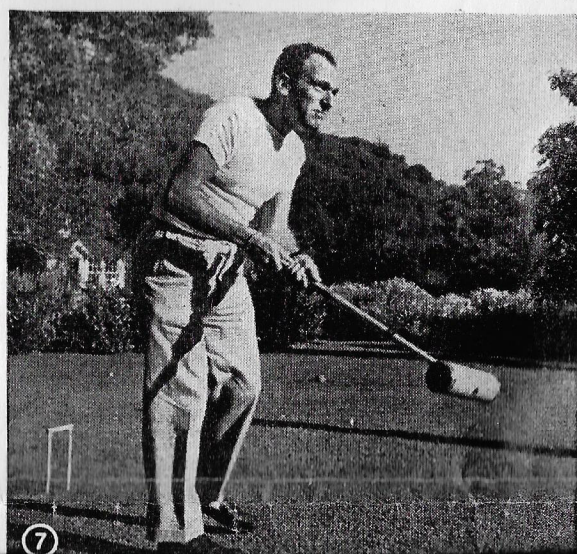
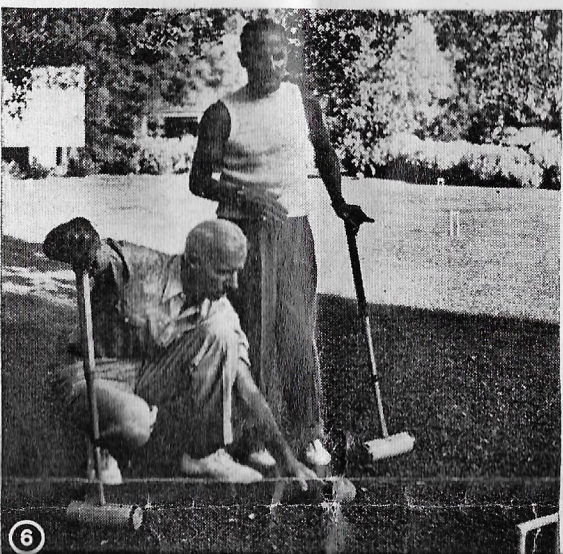
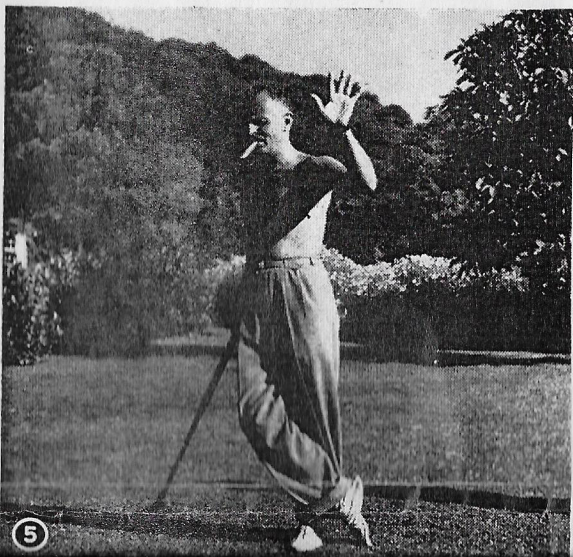
TEAMS POSE before match. Darryl F. Zanuck and Director Howard Hawks (*left*) played for West against Agent Fefe Ferry, Moss Hart, Tyrone Power. Match was played at the Hawks ranch with gallery of 300 of the movie set.



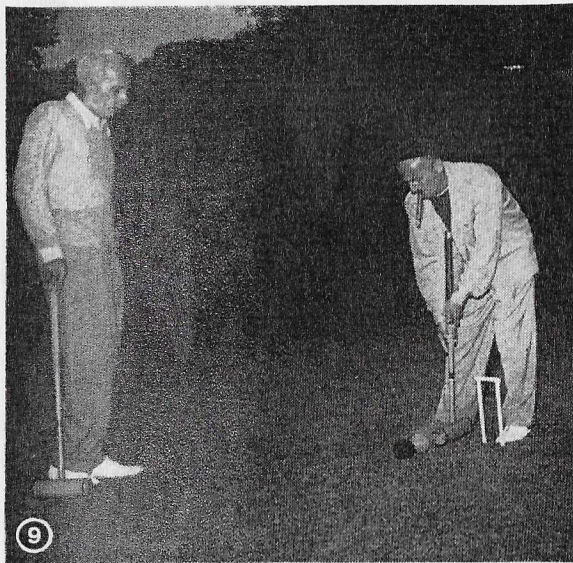
ZANUCK SHOTS for his first wicket with Hart standing well away to avoid upsetting his aim. Zanuck always insists on complete silence, though Hart was heard to mutter several times, "Well, he can't retake *that* shot!"



HART INSTRUCTS POWER on an intricate bit of strategy. Croquet requires chesslike planning as well as accuracy. Each team has a long-range plan of attack and defense, may easily lose if an important shot goes wrong.



"CROQUET PAIN" is felt by Zanuck. He is called the Terrible-Tempered Mr. Bang of the game, savagely questions each and every move of his opponents and passionately rejects any explanation they may try to give.



IN NIGHT GAME, played under floodlights, Hawks and Zanuck lead off for West. After winning first game, they became drunk with success and lost control very early to Hart and Power, never regaining it thereafter.

HAWKS AND ZANUCK have decided on a tactic and Hawks is about to drive an East ball away. Every shot was a D-day for them, every wicket a life-and-death proposition. It took more than 11 hours to play two games.



CLIFTON WEBB (center), a loyal Easterner, talks strategy with Hart and Power. After Zanuck complained, he was stopped from advising, became a Westerner whether he liked it or not. Webb bet and won on East, however.

HART DRIVES a ball. Once last summer he attempted a "tight croquet"—placing his foot on his own ball and driving an opponent's ball away. Hart swung hard, missed the ball, hit his foot and spent six weeks on crutches.



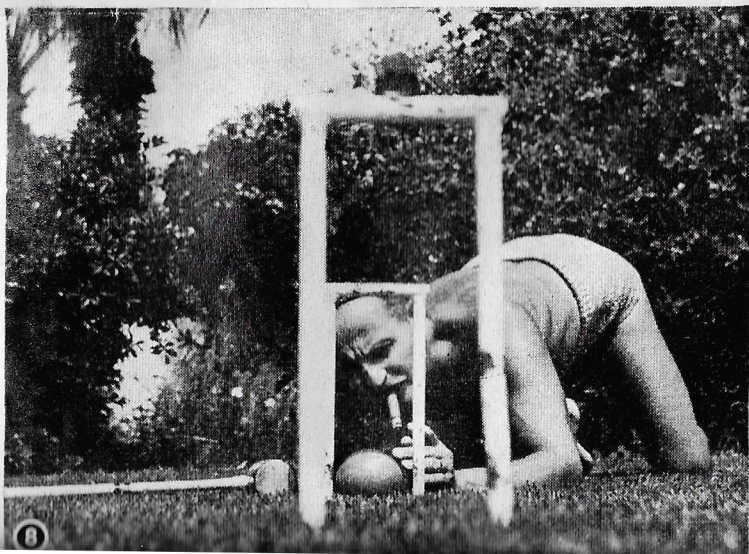
WINNING DRIVE to the stake is aimed by Hart. Toward the end every shot counts. Power had already finished and West would have won had Hart missed. He claimed stake was over near Pasadena, but hit it anyway.

George S. Kaufman, Vincent Astor, the Richard Rodgers'. English sets are used, with wickets just wide enough for the ball.

The East-West match was set off by a letter from Hart to Zanuck which insultingly questioned the merits of Western players. Hart was quickly challenged to defend or eat his words. Three games were played and East, astutely led by Hart, won two of them. The victor complained bitterly about the size of the championship cup, which is hardly visible to the naked eye. Covered with shame, Mr. Zanuck has promised to donate a proper symbol of the historic victory.



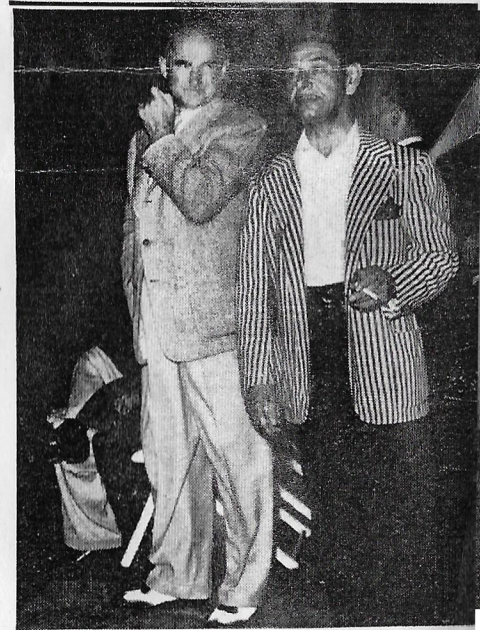
POWER MAKES THE SHOT discussed in picture No. 3. It was a crucial play. To make sure Power would drive the ball as far as possible, Hart softly whispered, "Remember *Daytime Wife*," a very bad picture produced by Zanuck with Power as star. Aroused, Power really whacked the ball.



POWER MARKS UP each team's "deadness" on the scoreboard. In the East croquet always is played without a scoreboard, for the players trust each other's memory. Not so in Hollywood. There no one is trusted by anyone and sometimes even the scorekeeper is challenged.



HOWARD HUGHES (right) was in the gallery with Peggy Cummins, once cast as Amber. This was the day before his plane crashed. Reginald Gardiner is at left.



SAMUEL GOLDWYN and Restaurateur Mike Romanoff (right) were heavy betters. Goldwyn won on East.

DISTRUSTFUL ZANUCK examines opponent's ball to make sure it is through the wicket. Though a neophyte at the game, Zanuck has true croquet spirit. He trusts no one but himself, never concedes—no matter how far behind he may be—and hates his opponents with an all-enduring hate.



CUP IS PRESENTED to victorious Moss Hart by barefoot Mrs. Howard Hawks. Note microscopic size of the trophy. Hart complained loudly and remarked that, coming as it did from the land of ermine-lined swimming pools, a cup of this size was a gratuitous insult to the proud East.

CLIFTON WEBB AND DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS JR. JOIN ZANUCK-HART POST-MORTEM SESSION

