

COURSES IN PLAY—IV

John Stobbs

IN the last month I haven't travelled to any course not already mentioned in this series: so this time we might look at the general field of club golf—the real, important, and toughest part of the game.

I've often wondered what the average club and its members look like to the greenkeepers. There must be a fairly wide variety of recognised types of bug-bear which besets them everywhere. I've met quite a few of them, I think: so why not start a collection?

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1. *The Perfectionist*. When I was a smallish boy, in the early thirties, I once heard an old member come into the club and explode at the Secretary: "Mr. Secretary, there's a plantain, as big as a sixpence, right in the middle of the 14th green. Had to putt over it. Quite spoilt my morning!" The amazing thing was that he seemed to be perfectly serious about it. The Secretary diverted him diplomatically towards the bar. Such men are probably rare, now; though they certainly used to abound. At least there was a certain integrity of purpose about them.

Nowadays the perfectionist is much more likely to be a man with a complete obsession with one particular element of the course. I knew one, an admirable chap whom I liked very much, who had somehow got it into his head that the nasty little patches of heather amongst some hollows by one green were left there especially to spoil the hole. It was his idea that the hollows ought to be

fair grass, not variable heather. Most members didn't care twopence either way; but the Head Greenkeeper was a kindly man and when the member eventually gave up the battle, he suddenly went out one day and mowed away the heather. I've never seen a golfer look so surprised and pleased as the old protester did the following Sunday morning. His usual shot was in the usual hollow. When he got there he stared at it amazed. Then he said "I've been waiting thirty years to be allowed a fair shot out of this damned hole!"

Then he fluffed it.

Other perfectionists are rough-specialists: the sort of men who think that the sole purpose of rough should be to slow up the progress of their ball and prevent it entering anything thicker! To them anything less than an evenly trimmed rough amounts almost to an obvious plot by the Committee to drive them out of the club. Their greatest hate is the small casual bush, left neatly in the middle of mown rough. They always go into it. Or if they don't, the sight of it puts them off. "Can anybody maintain," they demand, "that one little bush all by itself is anything but an unfair, fluky hazard?"

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2. Then there's the *Tee-angle Maniac*. He will maintain, bitterly, until his sight fails him, that his whole game is ruined if a tee is not exactly squared off along the edges and left as a perfect rectangle *exactly* aiming up the centre of the fairway. If the tee happens to aim a bit right, then he insists that that must make him aim right too. Other men may look only at the fairway in taking their aim. He has to take aim by the cut edge of the tee. Why he has to, no-one can imagine. Moreover, it is a fact, some sort of golfing optical illusion maybe, that if you ask three men to draw out the correct edge-line for a tee, they will all angle it different ways. There's just no answer to this chap at all.

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3. The *Hole-basher* is usually a bad player; but occasionally just a man who can't see what's difficult about putting. He'll slam the pin back without looking

at what he's doing, tearing half-an-inch of the edge of it in the process, having already pushed the other edge of it out of shape by hiking the ball out of the hole with the head of his putter.

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4. He is followed round the course, inevitably, by the *Hole-Fusser*. The hole fusser is a low handicap player, who suffers perpetually from the jitters on the short ones. He will examine each hole minutely for its comparison with a perfect circle; then complain bitterly that no-one can possibly get short putts in when all the holes are out of shape. He also hates the little thicker growth that a hot day may bring round the very edge. He also claims that the greenkeepers always cut holes on top of a small hill, so that whichever way he putts at them, the ball rolls to one side or the other. He also claims that the holes are $\frac{1}{4}$ in. too small, which they probably are after the passage of . . .

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5. The *Hole-Treader* (often female), whose illusion it is, and has always been, that the correct way to hold the flag is to stand with both feet together, the outer edge of the sole of the nearer foot just overlapping the edge of the hole. They have a habit, strangely, of standing on the side of the hole which their own subsequent putt will be aimed at. This, of course, is just co-incidence.

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6. The *Hole Treader* usually behaves in a neat and careful manner, unlike the *Bag Dropper*, who often, for good measure, throws his recalcitrant putter in the air and then fails to catch it.

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7. The *Idle-Trolley-Ghosts* ignore all notices and signs diverting them round bunkers etc., and pull their trolleys directly over the shortest possible route across the edge of the green. Their traces are everywhere, but their identity—unless caught in the act—remain obscure. Hence "ghosts", since they must be the double-lives of some of the angels complaining about them in the club.

8. The *Divot-Sprayer* holds that crows remove divots from their proper places all the time, and therefore there's no point in him putting his back. He doesn't.

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9. The *Desperation-Man* putts with a 3-iron—and leaves nice little chip marks all over the place to prove it, often three to a green, every time round.

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10. The *Olde Body-Englishe Dancer*. Any sort of putt sets him off; gesticulating, capering, twisting, stamping, and finally falling flat on his face. He wears shoes with the longest spikes he can find. He thinks his pirouettes help to keep the greens aerated.

Have you any more types you can add to this collection?



NEW LEAFLET ON GRASSCUTTING FOR GOLF COURSES

A new leaflet on rotary grasscutting for golf courses is available from Hayters (Sales) Ltd. of Spellbrook, Bishop's Stortford, Herts. Of interest to Greenkeepers, this leaflet describes the advantages gained by using the Hayter 6/14 tractor-drawn p.t.-o. machine which will top grass to any height between ground level and 6 ins. in any conditions—will not choke or clog in wet weather, and gives an even cut all over. Ideal for trimming the rough, the 6/14 has a 6 ft. width of cut and is fitted with special side stone guards. Already in extensive use on sports grounds, parks and fields, the Hayter 6/14 has been proved on many golf courses in this country.

Hayters also make a range of hand-operated powered grasscutters. These include the popular 18 in. Hayterette, the new 21 in., and the 24 in. and 26 in. rotary scythes which are available with wheel or roller trailer seats and a wide range of accessories.