

TEES ON THE MODERN GOLF COURSE

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IT all starts on the tee and there can be no denying that the facilities offered on the starting point can make or mar a round of golf.

The golfer requires an area which presents a level firm surface from which he can assess the problems and the traps which are between him and the hole—an area which preferably blends in well with the surrounding course and is not too obviously artificial. The greenkeeper requires an area which is readily accessible to machinery and on which it is possible to carry out regular and routine maintenance with a minimum expenditure of time and effort.

A series of pocket handkerchief tees, perhaps raised a foot or two above the general levels of the area, often terraced and extending well into the fairways, pleases neither the golfer nor the greenkeeper—particularly the latter. What effort is required to mow those pocket handkerchief tees and their banks twice a week! Especially, as is so often the case in this country, when the greenkeeping staff is below strength. And consider the space wasted by those small terraced tees.

To meet the demands of modern golf and busy courses larger tees are essential—an area of at least 200 sq. yd. will enable wear and tear to be evenly spread—and, most important, will give the greenkeeper an opportunity to carry out progressive renovation and even rest sections of the tee as necessary during the main playing season. On short holes where iron shots cause so much devastation to tees even larger teeing areas should be considered.

The maintenance advantages of one large teeing ground as opposed to the motley collection of pocket handkerchief tees which was—and in some cases still is—evident on many of our courses, are readily apparent. Operations such as mowing, weedkilling and fertilizer distribution can be more readily, evenly and quickly carried out

despite the possible increase in overall area.

In short, the greenkeeper is being given more opportunity to implement the type of maintenance programme required to produce teeing surfaces of good standard and one hopes that his interest in the tees will thereby be increased.

To achieve the conditions which the golfer nowadays expects maintenance of tees must be regular. A sward which will make regular and steady growth and which will withstand heavy wear is required and appropriate fertilizer treatment in spring and again if necessary in mid-summer will encourage such a sward. A suitable granular fertilizer is satisfactory and is easy to apply—alternatively a general fertilizer dressing such as is used on the greens but at a somewhat lower rate of application may be used. Excessive fertilizer application must, however, be avoided since it will lead to a too lush growth which in turn may well result in too soft surfaces.

Mowing twice a week during the growing season is necessary but on no account should tees be mown too closely, a height of cut of $\frac{1}{4}$ in. being regarded as the minimum. Although it is time-consuming, boxing off clippings is advisable—the constant return of clippings will certainly encourage soft surface conditions.

Solid tine aeration in autumn will relieve the compaction caused by the season's play as well as encouraging deeper and more vigorous rooting. Further aeration in spring preferably with slit tines will again improve rooting. A strong root system will improve resistance to wear and drought and the sward will recover more readily from the effects of play.

Tees must be level and firm, a condition which can be brought about by top dressing in autumn and during the season. The autumn top dressing is perhaps the most important since a greater quantity of material can be

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safely applied and worked in at a period when the course is quieter. A good quality medium loam soil—or alternatively a well made screened compost—and a sharp lime-free sand mixed in equal quantities (or more or less according to circumstances) is ideal and should preferably be applied immediately after aeration.

During the season progressive maintenance will mean that teeing grounds can survive the main season without ending up resembling the goal-mouth area of a football pitch in April. Such renovation may be carried out by seeding or by turfing after worn areas have been scarified and aerated—where seed is used further light top dressing could beneficially be applied before sowing. A seeds mixture containing the compact and harder wearing grasses such as crested dogstail, smooth stalked meadow-grass, creeping red fescue and bent is to be preferred but if ryegrass is present in the sward a proportion of a suitable strain of this grass, e.g. S. 23, should be included to maintain a sward reasonably uniform in composition. If turf is used it must match as closely as possible the existing sward and the establishment of a turf nursery solely for the renovation of tees is something which many clubs in this country would do well to consider. If possible renovated areas should be

rested to allow at least initial establishment.

Progressive renovation during the course of the season does not mean that end of season renovation can be avoided and major renovation should be carried out in autumn.

Golf is played all the year round and although there is much less play during the winter months weather conditions are such that tees suffer badly as a result of winter play. Special winter tees—which could even be areas of the fairways or artificial surfaces—should therefore be considered particularly on courses where teeing space is limited.

Drainage, worm and weed control are further points which must be considered when discussing tees, and all are important. There is a tendency for many tees to be situated in close proximity to trees and tees in this position are at a disadvantage from the start. The construction of tees under a tree canopy should be avoided but if, for specific reasons, tees are sited near trees overhanging branches should be cut back and root pruning carried out where necessary.

It is realised that the establishment of teeing grounds as described will not be practicable in every case—especially on existing courses—but there are very few holes on most courses where some useful modification cannot be achieved, to the satisfaction of both the golfer and the greenkeeper.

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