

# WHAT MAKES A GOOD GOLF COURSE?

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**T**HE architect and the greenkeeper would hardly answer this question in the same way. A course may be a good one so far as the layout goes, but a poor one from the point of view of the general condition and upkeep. I suppose most golfers would prefer to play on a course which is interesting and challenging in its design though badly maintained rather than on a dull course in tip-top condition. The ideal, of course, is a combination of both — good design with good maintenance.

Taking the good design for granted, and looking at the different courses all over Britain throughout the year, we at the Institute concerned mainly with the greenkeeping side of the picture, have noted the distinguishing features of the course which stands out above its fellows in this respect.

## **Unspotted Greens**

Greens first of all, since these are the greenkeeper's shop window. Putting surfaces will be true and smooth, not too hard and yet not too soft (although there is, of course, some controversy at present as to how soft we should make our greens, some people preferring the very soft "Target Golf" conditions that are said to prevail in America). The greens will be completely free of weeds. So many otherwise good greens are spoilt by just occasional small plants here and there of plantains and daisies which could be removed in two or three minutes with a fork. The greens will have no blemishes caused by petrol or oil, or by careless application of materials which can scorch like selective weedkillers or mercurial fungicides. The hole will be neatly cut, and the condition of the turf around it will show that the pin has not been in the same place too often. Mowing, of course, will be well nigh perfect — clean, straight mower lines, no skinning and no biting into the surrounds.

On the immediate surround and on the approach, the turf will be as smooth and uniform as on the green itself, and will be mown with a motor mower fitted with box — no running up to the edge of the green with the gang mower, spraying the green liberally with grass clippings!

## **No piles of grass**

Another mark of the good golf course is the absence of nasty little heaps of half-rotted grass clippings dotted about like miniature pyramids. These clippings are valuable and should be collected up straight away and put all together in some central heap away from sight (and smell) so that they can rot down and later on make a useful addition to the compost heaps.

Good compost, incidentally, helps to produce good greens, and the planned production of annual supplies of mature natural compost is another indication of the "super" course.

## **Neat bunkers**

So is the condition of the bunkers — trim bunkers with a minimum of four inches clean non-binding sand. Air-cushion mowers and more appropriate grass and weedkillers are helping to take some of the sweat and toil out of bunker maintenance.

## **Usable temporary greens**

Temporary greens to which play can be transferred when the main greens are not fit due to frost, excessive rain, or work which is being done to improve them (re-laying, forking, top dressing, etc.) are desirable on every hole where it is practicable to make them. On the good course sufficient work will have been done on these temporary greens to make their condition passable, so that it

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is really no great hardship for the members to have to use them occasionally.

### **Dry, firm, clean tees**

Tees are a "give-away" on some courses — uneven, soft, weedy and smothered with wormcasts. On one of the "alpha plus" courses the turf on the tees will be practically as good as on the greens, especially on the first tee which is often something of a show-piece. Clippings will be boxed during mowing, surfaces will be dry and firm, and scars and divots promptly repaired.

### **No bad lies on fairways**

No golfer likes to play a good shot from the tee and then walk up to find his ball lying in a little hollow on the fairway where the grass is about three inches long. These small pockets where the grass escapes the knives of the gang mower will seldom be found on good fairways. Nor will those ugly bumps which get skinned by the mowers.

### **Well-maintained fittings**

The most obvious feature of the well-managed course is the condition of the golf fittings and furniture like tee markers, benches and shelters. On a good course they will be maintained in perfect repair and those that require it will be given a fresh coat of paint during the winter. Ball washers will be kept topped up with water; litter baskets will

be frequently emptied. These are simple things but typical of a course which is in good hands.

### **Well-ordered equipment**

Less obvious to the casual visitor, but almost invariably found on a well-managed course, are equipment sheds stocked with clean, well-maintained machinery; tools with their unpainted parts bright and shiny, each in its allotted place; the sheds themselves dry and clean with uncluttered floors.

### **Sufficient staff**

Before the angry letters flood in to the editor, I hasten to add that on these first-class golf courses there will also be an adequate staff and sufficient funds to provide the necessary materials and equipment. Labour is difficult now, as everyone knows, and the breathalyser legislation is hitting the bar sales and depleting golf club incomes. Still, let us hope that somehow standards will be preserved and that there will always be golf courses in this country which will continue to reflect the abilities of the British Golf Greenkeeper.

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