

EIGHTEEN HOLES

WITH

HAWTREE

No. 2

by Fred Hawtree

From the first tee of the Old Course at Sunningdale, the big, well-shaped bunker sets the scene, irrespective of its function in play. One is tackling a golf course in the grand manner. There is another, still shorter, on the left of No. 1 at Fairhaven, and an elegant little clutch of bunkers under the tee shot on the first hole (West Course) at Moor Park. Useless, strategically, they may be, but their landscape value has preserved them so far. Apart from personal views, this group is a happy memorial to the talents of Mr Harry Colt. He began his career in golf, probably by no coincidence, as secretary at Sunningdale, and knew more than most of us how to get the best golf out of any given piece of land.

But, if the design of the first hole is strongly governed by extraneous factors

and its effect on the player is limited by his subjective reactions, the tee shot at No. 2 must command his full attention.

Ideally, a par-3 or par-5 might still be considered premature, so I put forward a par-4 of 440 yards as the next element in the pattern we are building up. An ideal pattern could, admittedly, be a very great bore on a dull site where an unexpected combination of lengths might itself stimulate interest. Moreover, few championship golf courses are conformist. The land itself always has the last word. But if the layout is well fitted to it, the pattern of lengths on the card is as much part of the total effect as the quality of the holes individually. In the same way a game of chess has a certain coherent design, even if more dependent on the opening. The individual moves

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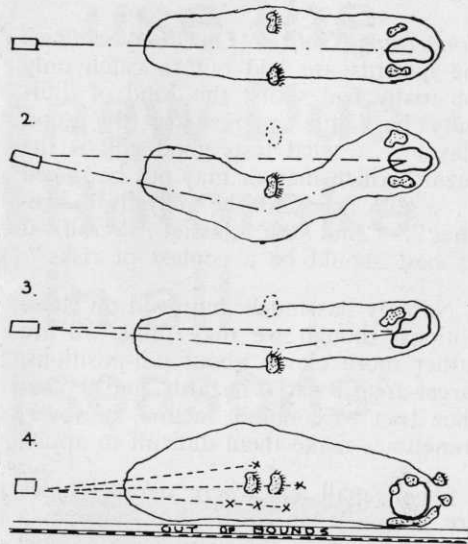
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have a separate existence, determined either by immediate considerations (bunkered) or future gain (no difference).

The par-4 is particularly apt for this analogy because it normally demonstrates at least one elementary principle of bunkering, and we had better tackle this question before you make up your mind how to play the hole.

The broad view of bunkers has generally divided them into those which are "penal" and those which are "strategic". These terms are not ideal, because they are not mutually exclusive, so we will describe them as negative and positive. Figure I illustrates the penal or negative type of design. The player is invited to hit a straight shot and no special advantage or disadvantage results after a reasonable deviation from the central line. Thus no forward thinking to the second shot is demanded, and the hole degenerates into a series of isolated incidents concerned with striking the ball.



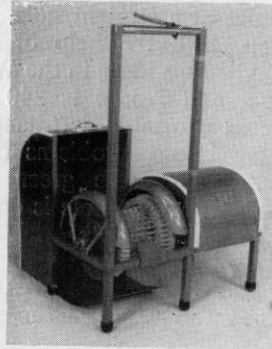
Strategic or positive design (Figure II) allows the same or even wider margin for error but halves or quarters the area from which the second shot can comfortably be played. In principle all we have done is move the fairway to one side, though, where space is limited, the same effect must be achieved by angling the green (Figure III).

Now the player is invited to sail as close as he deems prudent to the single fairway bunker if he hopes to place his second shot close to the flag-stick. He must therefore think forward, thus uniting the business of making shots with the mental process involving a whole series of shots.

There are infinite variations on this theme which we shall discuss later. Clearly the basic notion is eventually related to the dog-leg (No. 5 in our round) but that, as we shall see, needs space which some sites do not allow.

None of this is new. In 1903, John L. Low was saying in his book,

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Eighteen Holes with Hawtree continued

Concerning Golf: "On many courses the hazards are laid out to catch only the really bad shots; this kind of difficulty has little interest for the good player . . . what tests good golf is the hazard which may or may not be risked . . . golf need not be played in bee-lines". And the classic: "Golf at its best should be a contest of risks".

Nobody has much improved on those notions, though we may think we are rather more clever about pin-positions, target-areas, water hazards and horse-shoe tees. Economic factors, however, sometimes make them difficult to apply.

On a small site where parallel holes are frequent in order to achieve a standard length, their application must be tentative. If the bunkering or green orientation is too aggressive, there will be too little margin left of the fairway to give a reasonable tolerance. Discussions about whether the rough should be short or long then become more complicated. Even worse, the wrong fairway can become the right line for a hole.

Figure IV is probably about as far as anyone can go in both presenting and limiting choice at a straight hole. John Low himself, with the help of Stuart Paton, embodied his ideas in the Woking Golf Course, and No. 4 is 340 yards long. The comfortable left-hand line from the tee brings problems beyond those seen, because the green slopes from left to right. The hole is downhill and presents itself without guile on the tee. Apart from an increase in length, it has not altered since the first bunker was made, at 180 yards in those days.

If you are in doubt about how to play it, one professional golfer well known for his teaching confesses to taking aim exactly on the first bunker and hoping to slide by on one side or the other.

We may as well admit that neither playing the game nor designing for it are yet exact sciences. If only they were! We could walk in now.

R

and

K

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