

# 18 HOLES WITH HAWTREE

## No. 18 — Climax or Anti-climax

By F. W. HAWTREE

The last hole, more than all others, is likely to suffer from the fact that it has to be there. But it gains immensely from the memories of hard fought matches which it has decided. A great 18th will be doubly successful. A poor one may still pass muster.

If there is any choice, should we aim for a par 5 or a par 4? On championship courses, great occasions suggest greater length. On the other hand, the shortness of the last hole on the Old Course at St Andrews actually heightened the drama at the close of the 1970 Open Championship. For the rest of us a par 5 may be daunting at this stage especially if it is uphill. And clubhouses situated on high ground for outlook often entail this drawback. But a par 5 should not be uphill in any event so we can eliminate that one. A downhill par 5 where the extra run increases the chance of a birdie would be acceptable and a flat one if local feature is especially interesting.

I took this chance at Pals to the north of the Costa Brava, which was originally designed as a shortish 9-hole course in 1966. Then the golf course seemed to do better than the sale of housing plots round it and members persuaded the owner to extend it to eighteen. Fortunately, the original design enabled this to be done rationally and, in fact, the Spanish Open Championship will be played there next year.

The 18th started from the idea that the green would be enormous. This is generally a good feature of any 18th hole. It seems to continue the interest (or prolong the agony) right up to the last moment.

The fairway had to be cut out of pine trees. Tree clearing is an awkward job for the golf course architect. He has to define the area to be cleared without any absolute certainty as to how it will look when it is finished. He, therefore, tends to underestimate

at the start and touch up the margins later. A splendid group of pines, all good specimens with young ones coming on for the future, were thus preserved. This group became the second feature of the hole, bunkers were fitted into the picture and it eventually looked like the illustration. The pine trees, incidentally, are of a height which can be played over from a sufficient distance and of a density which can be seen through at eye level. They thus do for the second shot what the screens replacing the Black Sheds do for the tee shot at the Road Hole at St Andrews but the comparison ends there, if it is a comparison at all.

I asked some Pals members the other day how it had turned out. "Much better than we expected", they said.

As I hope I said earlier in the round, it is often the exceptions to any rule which we try to make about the form of eighteen holes which turn out to be the most successful. Mr Tom Simpson would deliberately put in a 'bad length' hole if the total layout did not otherwise produce one. It would be safe to make a rule that the 18th should not be a par 3 if avoidable. I am breaking that rule at Lisburn near Belfast. The land to the south of the clubhouse (the proper side for the 18th green, rules or no rules) is flat for sixty yards then rises sharply to a brow some 250 yards away. Too steep to play uphill but an admirable approach downhill. The alternatives were a drive up to the brow and a second shot down to the green or a short hole of about 220 yards from the brow.

As a par 4, there was some possibility of out of bounds on the right—no danger to property now, but if houses appear there in the future, it is no legal argument to say we were there first. There was also the recurrent problem of the difference in performance between golfers good and bad. A drive fifty yards short of the brow left no sight of green or approach though at 200 yards all was perfectly visible. The shorter

player would be tempted to continue with his second shot, unaware of whether players were just over the brow, rather than walk another hundred yards up and back. If, to overcome this snag, the tee were brought forward so that the shorter player reached the brow, the longer player would be well over it involving the same danger or possibly more as the ball kicked forward on the down slope towards the green.

The answer in 1971 was not a bell to be rung when the coast is clear. It was a par 3 hole. Firstly, the long par 3 is a severe test and even frightening at the climax of the round. Even Mr Michael Bonallack said last month "But I am not a good 2-iron player". If he isn't, who is? Secondly, the scenic effect, looking down on the green (a large one again, naturally) with the clubhouse a little higher beyond it, will be agreeable. Lastly, for the spectators in the clubhouse, the view of the players on the tee, the tee-shots and the full play of the hole will be ideal.

The 18th green is very much the link between life indoors and out. It should be seen from all the main rooms and preferably when sitting fairly well back in these rooms. Windows often are not deep enough, balconies or terraces often obstruct the view. There is always need for earnest consultation between the golf architect and the proper architect. Then the pleasures of the course can somehow pervade the building and the two aspects of golf club life are unified. In another sense, this is what the perfect golf club secretary is achieving.

Thanks for the game. At least, it went to the last hole.

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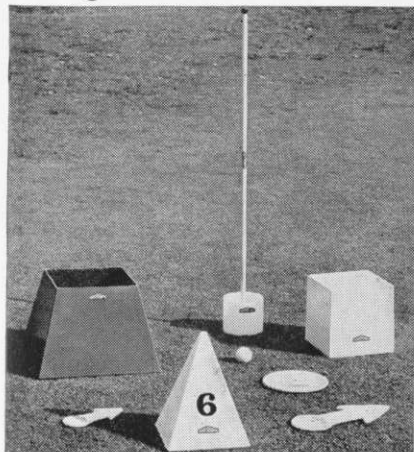
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