

ARTIFICIAL TURF ON GOLF GREENS?

The golfer, it seems, is one of the sports world's last ecological purists. Football and baseball enthusiasts—players and spectators alike—offered no resistance whatsoever when their once lush playing fields were covered with lifeless artificial turf.

But the golfer steadfastly refuses to accept, or even consider, artificial turf as a substitute for nature's living, breathing grass. Experts contend that an acre of grass performs the same function as a 70-ton air conditioner.

The grass, trees and other plant life on a golf course act as an oxygen factory, and trap and filter out airborne dirt, cinders and grime.

In a recent poll, members of the American Society of Golf Course Architects were asked the question: "Should artificial turf be used on a golf course?"

May be on Cartpaths

The members, the leading golf designers in the United States, Canada and Mexico, responded with an overwhelming and resounding, "No!"

Only a few suggested that artificial turf might be used sparingly in less vital areas of the golf course, such as cart paths. In an extreme situation, several said it might be used on the tee.

But none of the architects would tolerate the use of artificial turf on golf's hallowed ground, the putting green.

"The game of golf is too closely tied to nature's green earth to allow any substitutions," says Ellis Maples, president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects.

"Much of the skill of putting comes in reading the green, calculating how the grain of the grass, its texture and length, its moisture content, will affect the roll of the ball," Maples points out. "Greens constructed with artificial turf would be too constant . . . too easily reckoned with."

But there are other problems with artificial turf.

Frank Duane, Port Washington, NY, immediate past president of the Society, reveals that the artificial turf is too costly, and too unwieldy.

Can't Contour Artificial Grass

Because the artificial turf can't be contoured, green would have to be built flat, without dips and rolls . . . an unthinkable situation for the architect; although, the idea of a flat green might appeal to the chronic three-putter.

Several architects—including Marvin Ferguson, Bryan, TX, Geoffrey Cornish, Amherst, MA, William Mitchell, West Palm Beach, FL, and William Amick, Daytona Beach, FL—agree to the use of artificial turf on heavily played daily fee courses, *but then only on the tees.*

"Where you have extremely heavy traffic and cannot afford constant maintenance of the tees, you're probably better off using artificial turf, rather than playing from a mud hole," they contend.

Gerald Matthews, Lainsburg, MI, who also approves of the use of artificial turf on heavily used tees, points out another drawback:

"If you talk to golfers who have used artificial tees, you find a very negative attitude," Matthews claims.

"Most golfers will opt for the natural tee every time, even though the grass might be rather sparse. You just don't get the right 'feel' hitting off plastic grass."

And architect Mal Purdy, Livingston, NJ, reports still another problem with the artificial turf.

"Some people get their kicks by slashing the stuff up with knives," he claims.

Who would do such a thing? Vandals, perhaps! Or, may be it's ecology nuts who prefer that golf course forever remain the way Mother Nature—or, the golf course architect—intended them.

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Form from The Manager of Recreation, Langholm Lodge, 146 Petersham Road, Richmond, Surrey (01-940 8351), returnable by 26th April 1974.

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