

To play - or not to play?

Alexander Radko of the USGA's Green Section has advanced an extraordinary theory designed to solve one of golf's eternal problems: "When is a course playable and when is it not?"

Radko—together with colleagues Stanley Zontek and William Buchanan—has put forth the idea of a "course within a course" in a recent article written for the USGA's *Golf Journal*. The subject came about as a reaction to the ever increasing demands of the player to enjoy golf in the winter months on northern courses. For years the superintendent has been faced with the testy situation of allowing play on regular tees and greens at a time on the calendar conducive to enticing turf damage. Now, Radko thinks he has the answer.

The course would incorporate all the less susceptible parts of the golf layout into an inner course which could be used for golfers who don't mind the restrictive elements of winter weather and who just want a playground where their games can be kept in shape. Naturally, the course would be shorter than the regulation spread, but Radko offers a few tricks in placement of greens which would give the player almost as strong a test as the one he faces in summer.

The inside track takes all the worry out of using regular tees and greens. They are divorced from the design and are saved the pain of absorbing those beefy footsteps that often lead to extensive damage which shows up in the customary months of play. There is nothing so deceiving as a green which is coated with a layer of dripping frost. While it may appear play

on it is harmless, the eventualities of future damage far outweigh the pleasures found in using it out of season.

The all-weather course would take much of the soul-searching out of the superintendent's annual tug o' war with members . . . when to allow them to play the full course. This problem has been the source of much debate and often unfair harassment of the superintendent. The inside track is a means to elimination of both.

Radko also proposes that the inside track become a permanent part of the layout. He contends that the winter golf allowance could be carried over the summer at breaks in the weather when excessive rainfall or other natural semi-catastrophes place a questionmark on the advisability of using the regular course.

"Why not use the short course on a year-round basis," Radko asks. "During adverse weather of any season it would take all the arguments out of the picture. There would be no decisions to be made by management. At the sign of conditions which might lead to turf damage, the shorter course could be set up and the regular course closed to play."

Although he might have overlooked it, Radko fails to note one little fly buzzing around this ointment: What about the decision laid to the superintendent as to whether or not conditions call for use of the short or inside course? After all, just as there are members who believe the golf course is theirs to play and command; there will surface some flak when it comes time to decide whether the regular or short course is to be opened on a given day.

Then, too, the design of an inside track places another burden on "guess who?" In effect, it presents the superintendent with two courses to condition . . . although the short course is not supposed to be the epitome of top-conditioned layouts. It does pose a labor problem because its greens and tees will have to be kept in playing condition at all times so as to be ready when the rains or snow come.

On the whole, however, the idea deserves further study by the country club administration. Its detail would have to be ironed out and plans made so as not to increase the superintendent's pressures. It's worth a look-see all right.

Gerry Finn

With grateful acknowledgement to the "Newsletter" of the GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION OF NEW ENGLAND, USA.

NEWS

Problems arising from the scarcity and high cost of labour and the relative immobility of expensive specialised machinery have been discussed at a Conference organised by the National Association of Agricultural Contractors. Participants were the manufacturers of land drainage pipes, specialised machinery manufacturers and drainage contractors. All agreed on the need for more rapid adoption of mechanical handling methods.

Problems faced by contractors—in particular, unnecessarily high costs entailed by existing methods—were explained by Mr. Dick Hughes, Chairman of the National Land Drainage Contractors' Committee, and its immediate past Chairman Mr. Paul Wiles.

Systems already in use involving packaged pipes were described by

various manufacturers; machinery manufacturers indicated where certain equipment limitations exist.

Mr. Brian Trafford, Ministry of Agriculture, set out the broad guidelines within which any future developments in pipe specifications that may be considered desirable must lie. He described an experimental new type, now under investigation, which may be easier to handle.

Although no revolutionary new system is at the moment in sight, the contractors strongly urged the advantages of packaging pipes in a convenient module which can be easily divided for handling by machines ranging from the smallest to the largest.

The Conference agreed that, whilst each contractor must evolve his own on-site handling system according to conditions, the suggested module must provide the flexibility to make this possible.

"Job Well Done"

Many of our readers will have played on the splendid golf course of Ashridge, Little Gaddesden, Berkhamsted, Herts., and may therefore be interested to learn that Mr. Jack Wayman has recently retired after 42 years of service on the Green staff.

Mr. Wayman was involved in the construction of the course at Ashridge from 1928, became a member of the staff in 1932, and Head Greenkeeper in 1967. He has worked harmoniously with his successor, Mr. Bob Goodwin, who is Hon. Secretary of our Midland Section, who will no doubt, benefit from the extensive local knowledge acquired by Mr. Wayman over 46 years.

For his loyalty and capability, Mr. Wayman has received due appreciation from both the Club and his staff colleagues, and he is provided with a comfortable pension from the Club he has served so well.

We wish him a long and happy retirement.