

# PIN PLACING

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I WONDER how many people ever view a hole in reverse - from green to teeing ground. I have found that this, inexplicably, makes the second shot appear to be shorter than when playing the hole.

This thought arose from a practice of which the average member has little or no experience - the placing of the pins for the club's annual amateur open meeting, or a county match. The position of the holes in the green under everyday circumstances seldom has their interest, except when the siting has been left too long and the surroundings have become worn.

In what follows is set down the personal view of a one-time secretary, when engaged in the task of selecting hole positions for the meetings mentioned above. We are not concerned with the Open, or the important sponsored tournaments though they will doubtless creep in. As in the manner of the amateur golfer attempting to emulate the world class golfer, committees are liable to place the hole in a portion of the green that calls for the highest class of stroke. That is patently stupid even if it be a county championship.

The Rules of Golf require that. "On a day on which a stroke competition begins (thank heaven not 'commences', my interpolation), and at such other times as the committee considers necessary, provided all competitors in a single round play with each in the same position." There was a story that during the Open of 1937 at Carnoustie, when Henry Cotton was leading the field which included the might of the entire U.S.A. Ryder Cup team, the father and mother of a rain storm broke.

the course discovered Bernard Darwin, who was on the Championship Committee, taking shelter in a hut. The story had it that flooded cups were moved to higher ground. I have never believed that Darwin of all people would sanction such an action. Research led to his book "Golf Between Two Wars." Therein he states that green staff was marshalled, and armed with brooms and squeegees dispersed the water.

Siting the holes for an open club meeting is not just a matter of plunking them in the middle of the green. We are dealing with low handicap players, and we are not going to cosset them. Tease them, yes, but as has already been said to plan the intimidation indulged in by championship committees on both sides of the Atlantic would be ridiculous.

Our competitors will hit the ball well, and furthermore can manoeuvre it. Thus a nice balance has to be observed. In support of this idea let me lead you to a short hole. It is but 135 yards long. The teeing ground is becalmed by trees, and the sensible take notice of the direction of the wind while playing the previous hole. At one time a spacious green, to the right of the entrance was a shallow grassed bunker, to the left was a large deep sand bunker, banked high and reminiscent of the type you find on links. Two new thin bunkers, geranium beds as the great John Ball would have called them, are now in the right hand quarter of the putting surface. Their purpose? In the vernacular "Search me."

However, in the days before their intrusion, for the big occasion we set the hole behind the big bunker.

BUT, leaving room to pitch over it and sufficient space to pull up before or a little past the pin. There was no watering then and at 600. feet up the ground was usually fast. Another feature is that being a pre-century course there was, and is, severe trouble at the back if the ball runs through the greens. This has always struck me as being wrong. It dictates defensive play. And so our pins must not be too far back.

Anticipating grumbles from the expert Greenkeepers: "What is all this waffle about?", the salient point must be made. My old and revered friend, who has been mentioned before, the Head Greenkeeper, did not play. There are self-opinionated people who will not seek aid from others who may have equal acquaintanceship with the subject. Which is why I enlisted the help of a member, who had won the India Amateur, and in our Amateur had taken George Dunlap winner of the American equivalent in 1933 to the 20th hole where the American holed a No. 6 iron to win.

There is the team. Our problems were increased because the greens undulated. There was a legend in the club that you could spend ten years studying the line and still be wrong. And so we three chose that time in the evening when the sun was casting shadows, and to use an Irishism, high-lighting the dips. One is ever finding a new experience. Practically every green was built up. Lying prone on the bank, eyes at ground level there was a very different picture from that gathered when ranging like a dog sniffing for a scent, or dangling a putter in front of the eyes . . . which gave me a squint the only time it was tried.

Before reaching that stage, the layout of the hole has to be considered and the topography of the ground. Yes, I know we have played it many times, which is why we take things for granted. The first because the archi-

tect, or even before their time, has either set the green at an angle to the fairway or introduced bunkers guarding the entrance. This to make the player place his drive tactically and make his second the simpler. We know then in general from which point of the compass the ball will come. The topography i.e. any slopes will cause the ball to run from them. Once again it is to be remembered that there are no 'pudding' greens to play to. That, one might hope, was the last of our problems, that is if you can ever expect it in golf.

It is not inopportune to recall Bobby Locke's dictum that every putt is a straight one. In judging a borrow a spot is chosen over which the ball should answer the slope. It is a straight putt to that spot.

The time has arrived for our little party to return to the green. The Greenkeeper with his hole cutter (an act that requires more skill than supposed), my friend with his putter and myself. A custom was to pick an area offering level putting ground for three feet round the hole. That was out of the question on our greens, and probably many others. There is some comfort to be drawn from television in the Open and other important occasions. Many a time a ball is seen to curve off line a foot from the hole. Only a borrow or nap can make it do that. An ill-struck putt is on the wrong trail from the start.

Well, there we were. Myself in the lying-load position (does the army use that today?), our good golfer putting or hand-rolling the ball. Eighteen holes is a full day's task.

The percipient will have remembered that the pin never rested in a certain part of the green. It would be at a club that held an important meeting, and a seasoned Greenkeeper was nursing that piece until the time came when he wanted to do his Pin-Placing.