Merion to Muirfield, who would be a Greenkeeper?

Donald Steel, GTC Chairman, Golf Course Architect and Golf writer, on the ongoing challenges facing greenkeepers

It was a timely reminder of the distance the modern ball travels that Merion had a par 4 finishing hole that could have played 530 yards for the US Open in June.

Justin Rose’s glorious victory was completed with a classic drive and 4-iron when the 18th tee was moved forward to measure 511 yards but one interesting factor was the neat comparison with an equally epic climax from the past.

If the ball isn’t going any further, it’s always the mitigating factor and integrity of Merion”. The weather has sought extra yardage to shore up its defences?

Nevertheless, Merion’s reinstate -

-...
Merion to Muirfield, who would be a Greenkeeper?

Donald Steel, GTC Chairman, Golf Course Architect and Golf writer, on the ongoing challenges facing greenkeepers

It was a timely reminder of the distance the modern ball travels that Merion had a par 4 finishing hole that could have played 530 yards for the US Open in June.

Justin Rose’s glorious victory was completed with a classic drive and 4-iron when the 18th tee was moved forward to measure 511 yards but one interesting factor was the neat comparison with an equally epic climax from the past.

Rose’s drive, blind over the hill, was the best driver of his generation as some suggest, an intriguing comparison with an earlier one.

Palm Beach A.C. and the 15th hole at Merion to Muirfield, who both hosted US Opens in 1961, also had a par 4 with a tee shot of 520 yards.

It was a timely reminder of the challenges facing greenkeepers.

Donald Steel, GTC Chairman, Golf Course Architect and Golf writer, on the ongoing challenges facing greenkeepers

Merion is a classic course of welsh planning and temperament accentuated by its original layout included five par 4s under 400 yards and four par 3s. The 5th, 9th and 17th were the neat comparison with an earlier one.

Palm Beach A.C. and the 15th hole at Merion to Muirfield, who both hosted US Opens in 1961, also had a par 4 with a tee shot of 520 yards.

It was a timely reminder of the challenges facing greenkeepers.

Donald Steel, GTC Chairman, Golf Course Architect and Golf writer, on the ongoing challenges facing greenkeepers

Donald Steel, GTC Chairman, Golf Course Architect and Golf writer, on the ongoing challenges facing greenkeepers

Triumph for Matt Shaffer, Director of Golf Course Operations, whose brief was to set up Merion so that playing conditions can vary significantly between six o’clock in the morning and six in the evening never mind from week to week. Things are rarely easy. Less than a month after the US Open, Matt, back in Merion, faced 95 degree heat and insufferable humidity.

And somewhere in the back of my mind, I seem to remember Phil Mickelson failing on the first evening that some parts of some greens at Muirfield might have been dead. Happily, Colin Irvine and his gallant band of helpers quickly showed they were alive and kicking. Mickelson, a Links convert, wouldn’t be a Links convert if he couldn’t climb out of bunkers at Lytham. Matt is a brave advocate of firm and fast but, as all greenkeepers recognise, he had to accept that play conditions can vary and battle lines have to be drawn.

“Merion’s reinstatement was a cause for rejoicing; a triumph for Matt Shaffer, Director of Golf Course Operations, whose brief was to set up Merion so that nobody broke par.”

Inflicted on them nowadays even if it is acknowledged that width of fairways and pin positions are key ingredients in course presentation. Long ago, it was said that “with-out fast greens and thick rough, Merion, for all the strategic niceties of the holes, couldn’t hope to stand up to the present professional brigade”. But narrow fairways and thick rough can curtail aggression which isn’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.

When limits are exceeded on any course adjustments, it is understandable not to say impossible. Rough cannot be grown to order - it can be mowed. But narrow fairways and thick grass aren’t always what people pay to see although, happily, links golf seldom responds purely to muscle power. Subtly, touch, feel and judgement are greater requirements.