

THE GOLF COURSE

A MONTHLY BULLETIN DEVOTED TO THE DIS-
CUSSION OF MODERN METHODS AS APPLIED
TO GOLF COURSE CONSTRUCTION AND UPKEEP

Golf Architecture

By A GOLFER

THE flood-tide of golf which has swept over the country during the past four or five years has brought with it a higher standard of play. It has also brought the demand for courses of a testing character and of a more artistic standard than those in the past.

The day of the dreary, straight bunker in front of the tee, and its equally dreary brother short of the green, which in the old days satisfied the longings of the new golfing convert, is now a thing of the past, and you have only to visit a newly-designed course to realize the enormous strides which have taken place in the refinement and beauty of golf architecture.

Thus it comes to pass that the Green Committees which have inherited the uncomely design of the nineties are anxiously striving after higher standards, and those which have charge of the newer courses are endeavoring to improve them all the time. Some succeed and others fail. It is purely a matter of the skill of the golf architect and of the person who carries out his designs.

There are, unfortunately, persons who do not yet realize that the laying out of a golf course requires a much higher degree of artistic ability than the designing of a clubhouse, and thus clubs will spend their thousands to make beautiful the place where they eat and keep their clubs and will grudge a few hundred dollars for skilled advice in the beautifying of the course, upon which, after all, the success of the club must depend. If there is to be any question as to the allocation of available funds, the perfection of the course should surely be the primary consideration. Which counts first with a golfer (I mean, of course, a *real* golfer), an elaborate clubhouse or an up-to-date, artistic golf course, and which will determine his choice of the club he will join and support?

Assuming that we are agreed upon this point, we may go a step further and inquire into the principles which should guide a committee in the laying out or modification of its course.

First, it is only a high-class architect

(Continued on Page 130)

Golf Architecture

(Continued from Page 125)

who can design a high-class course. He may be known or unknown, an amateur or a professional, a scratch player or a 20-handicap man, but he must be gifted with imagination and have studied and practiced his subject, just as an artist or a church architect has done. His object must be to make every hole a complete picture, full of individuality and character and yet quite unlike every other hole on the course. It is the same with the greens and the bunkers. Each one shall be a separate study and each one should fit naturally into its environment. It by no means follows that the scratch men of a club or the best golf professionals in the country are the persons to consult in such matters. It requires something more than a good stonemason to design a church.

What is a good golf hole? The primary consideration is that it should require the accurate placing of every shot; it should have character and individuality, and the green and its environment should be as artistic as possible; it should test the skill of the expert, and yet present no unfair shots for the duffer.

The up-to-date standard championship golf course to-day has at least three and usually four "one-shot" holes of varying lengths, from 130 to 230 yards; six to eight "two-shot" holes from about 380 to 430 yards; two long holes from 510 to 550 yards; one to three holes from 430 to 460 yards, depending on the nature of the soil sometimes, and three or four "drive and difficult pitch shot" holes from 300 to 360 yards. It is always important to

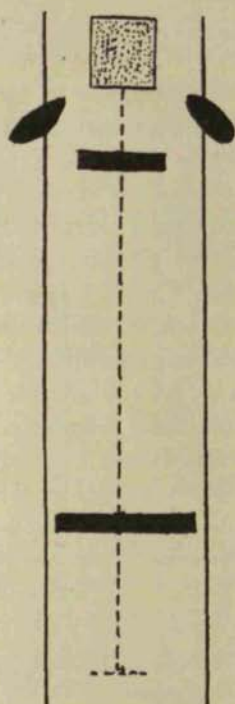


FIGURE 1
Length of hole, 270 yards

start off on a course with two or three good long holes, say 430 yards, 450 yards and 360 yards, before arranging a short hole that would cause any congestion of play at the start.

The finish in the last three or four holes should always be the hardest test of the game on the course, ending up with a very fine "two-shot" hole to the clubhouse.

A course can be correctly laid out as far as the distances and arrangement of the holes are concerned, but to create a first-class finished proposition of championship quality, it requires much personal supervision of the construction work by the architect and the services of a competent and experienced foreman.

The moulding out of a course after it has been laid out to the best advan-

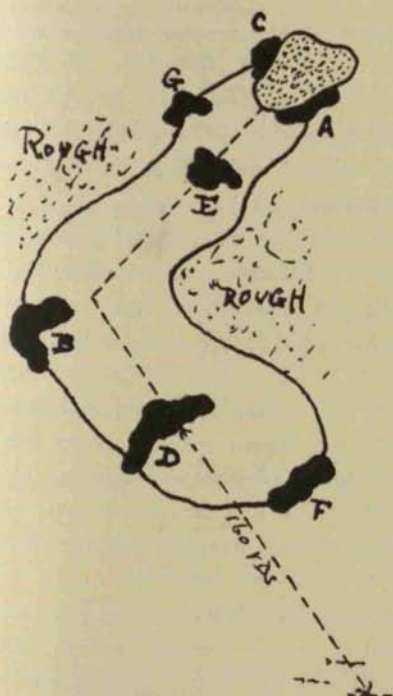


FIGURE 2

Same hole as figure 1, lengthened to 330 yards

tage is, in a way, the most important part of all.

The Improvement of Old Courses

Owing to introduction of the rubber-cored balls, it has been necessary to lengthen out most all of the courses of the old design. It is not, however, simply a question of added distance that makes a change necessary, but a general rearrangement of all the tees, bunkers, traps, etc., as well as the reconstruction of many of the putting greens.

What were formerly "two-shot" holes are now "drive and pitch" holes. The bunkers for the short driver have ceased to be bunkers at all and those for the long driver have lost all their terrors. Further than this, the principle in bunkering the approach to a long hole is totally different from that of the

"drive and pitch" variety, while the green is larger, so that the good "two-shot" hole has now become a bad "drive and pitch" hole. These difficulties can often be overcome quite well without a reconstruction of the course.

It is astonishing how many holes can be lengthened by placing the tees back and then constructing two or three tees at every hole, using the back ones during dry weather and the front ones in the early and late seasons.

Another method is to make the holes into the dog-leg variety (or to place the tees on the extreme side of the course) and introduce bunkers which will compel the player to place his ball on the far side of the fairway and the second shot diagonally up to the green, as shown in Sketch 2.

Either process results in the lengthening of a hole, such as in Sketch 1, which is a fair example of hundreds of holes found on the older courses in this country, ranging from 290 to 350 yards.

Two parallel holes may be lengthened by poaching upon each other (see Sketch 3). The greens must be constructed and bunkered to compel diagonal play and the fairways cut in irregular lines. The ground between the two courses should in such cases be kept as rough as possible, and one or two groups of mounds in between help to disguise the scheme and make it look natural.

Where none of these means exist for lengthening the hole, and the course cannot readily be reconstructed, the only thing is to take "the bull by the horns" and reduce the size of the green, perhaps, bunker it well and make it a genuine "drive and pitch" hole. A big hollow at the approach of the green,

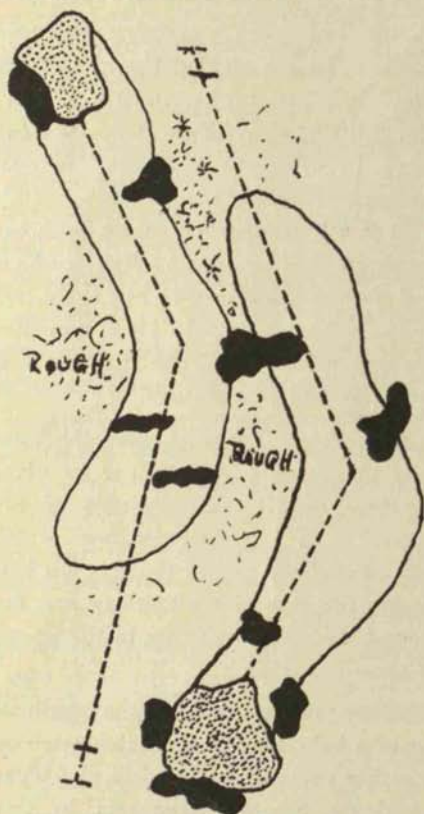


FIGURE 3

Formerly two parallel straight holes, about 30 yards in length added to each

with soil thrown up to make it a plateau green, demands a rather more delicate shot and gives character to the hole. In this case, the green should be bunkered at the back to punish the over-played shot.

The scheme of bunkering should really start at the green and work backwards, and seeing that the standard of a course must ultimately depend upon how far it is a test of good golf, the holes should be built for the scratch player.

A course with interminable bunkers at 100 to 120 yards from the tee may be a very good test for the 20-handicap player, but those bunkers are non-

existent to the scratch man or to the long driver, and, therefore, are devoid of interest to him. He wants something to go for, or to avoid, and every drive should be a test shot of some description.

On the other hand, the big handicap man is entitled to consideration, and in laying out a "two-shot" hole, say of 380 to 430 yards, it is better for the second shot to avoid a cross bunker, which the short player has no chance of carrying and which leaves him no option but to deliberately play short. He can get up with a drive and two irons, it is true, and do an easy five, but this affords him not the slightest pleasure.

Sometimes, if there is a reasonable opening between traps, he can, after a fairly long drive, get "home" in two. He will get caught in a good many cases, but the shot that comes off affords him infinite pleasure, and he is playing golf all the time.

In Sketch 2 the bunkers are lettered, and starting at the green we mark out bunker A. The mere existence of this bunker alters the entire character of the hole. The green can now only be approached from the left, and this necessitates the accurate "placing" of the drive if you want to get "home" in two shots. We then add bunker B, to punish a "hooked" drive from the tee. These two bunkers alone make it a testing hole. We go on building it up by placing C to make it difficult to stay on the green from the right, D to carry from the tee at 160 yards, E if you like a trap to carry on the second shot. All that remains to satisfy the short player is F, and then G can be placed to catch his badly-placed second shot.