

The Making of a Model Golf Course

THE making of a new golf course is by no means as easy as it seems to be on the face of it—and as the proposition is so often tackled in such a light-hearted way, I think my twenty years' experience may be of more than passing interest to those who are about to take the plunge.

CHOOSING THE SITE

If possible, choose a site that is easily accessible—otherwise a good proposition may fail for adequate support.

THE AREA OF THE GROUND

This depends to a large extent on the configuration of the ground, but generally speaking 120 to 150 acres are required for a really first class course.

THE CONFIGURATION OF THE GROUND

An ideal piece of golfing ground should be boldly undulating, without being hilly—and should contain as many interesting natural features as possible.

If the ground is wooded, so much the better, as it will then be possible to isolate each hole with belts of trees and so obtain that delightful feeling of seclusion which is lacking when one plays over a prairie course.

THE SOIL

A golf course can be made on practically any class of soil, but best results, both from a golfing and turf-growing point of view, are obtained on light to medium soils.

DRAINAGE

This is an important point, especially on heavy soils, and should be carefully considered when choosing the site.

If the ground is undulating, the drainage should not present any difficulties, but if it is more or less level or inclined to be marshy, such serious difficulties may crop up that it is advisable to employ a competent engineer to report on the ground before buying or leasing it.

FREEHOLD VS. LEASEHOLD

The wisest course to pursue is to buy the land outright, so that the fullest benefit is obtained from all money invested in the making of the course and in the buildings.

Generally speaking, there is little or no risk in buying the land, if the site is properly chosen, as it is sure to appreciate in value and be an extremely valuable asset. As a matter of fact, I know of several clubs that have paid for the land occupied by their courses, the making of the courses, and the building of the clubhouses by purchasing large estates and selling off the surplus land to members and others.

Leasehold propositions, on the other hand, are always dangerous, and at the end of the term the club is faced with several unpleasant alternatives; that is to say, it either has to pay a much higher rent, go out of existence, or else find a new site and start all over again.

FINANCE

It is impossible to say much on this subject, as the capital sum required to finance a club depends so largely on the character of the land, the class of course to be constructed, the size and style of the clubhouse, etc., and, in consequence, it differs in almost every case.

There are, however, two important points that should be remembered.

It is worse than useless to start a proposition of any magnitude unless it is adequately financed, and sufficient money should be definitely "earmarked" for making and sowing the golf course. If a start is made with insufficient funds, everything is skimped, and as estimates for building and furnishing clubhouses are invariably exceeded, a separate and sufficient sum should be put aside for making and sowing the turf.

If this is not done and money runs short, the course will suffer in some way or another. It will not be properly fertilized, or it will be sown with cheap

seeds, or skimped in some other way.

To put it in a nutshell, if there is a shortage of money, it is always the golf course that suffers and not the clubhouse.

EXPERT ADVICE

A wise committee will engage the services of the following experts:

An architect who is used to clubhouse designing.

A golf architect of proved ability.

A turf expert of repute and integrity.

An engineer, if necessary, to take care of the drainage.

All of these experts are of equal importance, and each one should be given a reasonably free hand in his own department.

THE CLUBHOUSE AND OUT-BUILDINGS

This subject is too big to deal with in tabloid form, but I have noticed that the most popular clubhouses are those where simplicity, convenience and comfort have been placed before elegance, splendor and luxury.

THE GOLF ARCHITECT

Choose a man of proved ability. Give him a free hand and do not worry him with too many suggestions.

Examine his plans carefully, and accept them more or less as they stand, or else turn them down altogether and get another opinion.

THE TURF EXPERT

Go very slowly when choosing your turf expert—otherwise your turf, which is all important, may be a constant source of worry and expense. Choose a man, or rather, a firm, as this class of work is usually taken care of by the best class of seed merchants, and give them as free a hand as you do your golf architect.

There are a great many men who claim to be turf experts simply because they know the names of a few grasses. They should be avoided as the devil avoids Holy Water. These so-called, or rather, self-styled turf experts do more harm to golf in this country than anybody else, as they persuade com-

mittees to sow fancy prescriptions, which in many cases cannot under any circumstances produce a first class golfing turf, for the simple reason that they often advise grasses that are totally unsuitable for the production of fine turf, and even if they avoid the fundamental error, they are at sea in regard to the proper proportions in which the various grasses should be used.

If you are wise, you will put your trust in a firm that specializes in the production of golfing turf and one that has produced results—and then, if you are still suspicious, ask them to give you the name and address of the president of a club or clubs that have trusted them, and so obtain an absolutely unbiased report.

MIXTURES AND NAMED GRASSES

Those who recommend the use of named grasses to be used in a home-made mixture do so because they have no confidence in themselves and simply want to make a profit as easily as possible quite regardless of results—whereas, those who recommend their own mixtures and object to giving their composition do so because they have confidence in themselves, their mixtures and in the results.

To put it shortly, the mixture man wants to make and maintain his reputation by selling a branded article, and the named grass man wants to make a profit without any responsibility or brain work.

A FAIR DEAL

If you ask a firm for the make-up of their mixtures and then proceed to buy the named grasses in the open market—are you giving either them or yourself a fair deal? Emphatically no! You are simply sucking one man's brain and then placing yourself in the hands of the unscrupulous.

The unscrupulous men, who have given the seed trade such a bad name in this country (abroad the trade is honored and trusted), know that the buyer is quite ignorant of this very technical subject, and he is quite ready

to give impossible percentages of growth and purity—knowing that the buyer cannot check him, and he often substitutes a cheap variety for a more expensive one—again knowing that he cannot be checked, as it is impossible to identify some seeds even by microscopic examination—and by the time the grass is grown and can be identified, it is too late.

Sour Soils, Their Causes and Treatment

By PETER LEES

THIS is a subject that applies more to inland courses than those situated by the sea, as the soil is of a heavier nature and consequently apt to get into a sour condition. There are several reasons for soil becoming sour and the following are some of the principal ones:

The first and most important is want of proper drainage. It is absolutely essential, if the soil is to be kept in a sweet condition suitable for the maintenance of a good healthy turf, to have proper drainage. In making a new course this is a very important point that should be carefully gone into and a systematic scheme of drainage carried out.

Grass will not thrive on wet sour soil no matter how much money and labor may be expended on fertilizers, etc. It will gradually and surely go back and weeds of all kinds will soon take its place and in a short time the greens will not be fit to play upon. The second cause of sourness in soils is one that is brought about by injudicious watering.

It is most important to have a liberal supply of water at hand, but this does not imply that it should be used indiscriminately even if there should be a good system of drainage, as time and again even on sandy soils where drainage was perfect I have seen the surface turned into a wet, sour condition simply because the watering had been overdone. As it does not rain every day then why should it be necessary to water every

day; it is not natural. It is this *sprinkling* that does the harm and creates a sour surface. Soak the green well, say twice a week if it should require water, as by thoroughly soaking it the water will get down to where it is wanted, at the roots, and the surface will be kept open.

Another reason for soil becoming sour is too much rolling. Especially when the surface is wet a great deal of harm can be done by rolling. Grass, like a human being, must have air, so if the surface is rolled into a condition resembling cement, sourness will soon appear and the grass, especially the finer varieties, will soon die out.

There is another reason for ground becoming sour. It has been said that worms are the natural drainers of the soil and if exterminated the turf will assuredly suffer. I have proved this to be absolutely wrong and have arrived at this bold assertion from years of experience. Take a putting green or fairway that has been used for a few years and observe how the worms have multiplied as compared with the sides that have had no attention bestowed on them. They have thrown up their casts all over and to make play at all possible sweeping and rolling has to be resorted to. This continual sweeping and rolling must undoubtedly change the character of the surface and sourness will set in if continued. My advice in this case is get rid of the worms and kill them entirely if a good healthy grass is desired. This cannot be obtained if they are allowed to burrow and throw up their casts all over the surface.

In conclusion I may say that if grass is to thrive the ground must be kept sweet and yet so that the air can reach the roots; this can only be done by drainage below and proper treatment above. Roll with light wooden roller if rolling is necessary, use plenty of *lime*, *feed* the grass well to keep it strong and healthy and water discreetly. If these points are carefully seen to, no trouble need be feared from sourness in the soil and a fine carpet of turf should be maintained at all times.