

THE GOLF COURSE

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

Courses of Today

By OBSERVER

OF course my name is not "Observer," but inasmuch as the habit of looking at things in a very critical way is one which has clung to me all my life, I think that I may find an ample excuse for assuming it as a *nom de guerre* over the series of articles which I have been requested to write for THE GOLF COURSE.

I have seen golf courses of our first vintage gradually change or be supplanted by new ones of modern type. At first I was rather inclined to believe that modern construction was driving us to an extreme, but as I schooled myself to analyze new holes, new greens, new hazards, and new types of fairways, I began to realize that modern course construction was not a madness or a fad, but rather something which added considerably to the game of golf.

Twisted fairways, dog-leg holes, diagonal hazards and putting greens of unusual shape, all appealed to me at first as expensive features which scarcely were warranted.

"All well enough for the ultra-scientific player or the scratch man," was the comment which was heard on many sides. And indeed it seemed as though this criticism was not very wide of the truth until, becoming an observer, I be-

gan to realize that with the building of a thoroughly modern course the game of golf was taking a distinct step forward and upward to a plane which must place it on the heights of permanency and ever above the grade of an interesting, alluring fad.

After becoming an observer and, if I may say so, a real student of the courses of today, I found a new pleasure in playing the game, and certainly a far greater pleasure in anticipating the playing of certain holes which I had studied. In past years there was the rather monotonous playing of certain holes day after day. Possibly the changing wind was a great factor in changing the character of a hole, but aside from this feature always we played from the same small teeing ground over (or, alas! into) the same precise bunker, facing a mathematically correct fairway and to an equally mathematically precise, featureless green. To be sure, I found pleasure in this, but certainly none which may be compared with the pleasure of playing an ever-changing hole as provided by modern golf architecture.

Large teeing grounds and several on each hole have helped matters considerably. Teeing grounds of today are

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Greenkeeping Notes for the Late Winter Months

IF not already done, now is the time to paint and repair tee boxes, hole and tee markers. The various implements should be examined and put into shape for the Spring. As a rule, most of the machinery around a golf course will stand a good cleaning and oiling. If any parts are broken or found to be defective they should be replaced, and if the machines are in very bad shape they should be sent to the factory or at least to a good local repairman.

Now is the time to order all Spring seeds, humus and fertilizers. If not done at once the club runs the risk of being forced to put up with the delays in shipment which are inevitable in the early Spring and will suffer on this account. Plenty of time should be allowed for shipments to be made and also for transportation. Wise Green Committees will not lose a single moment from now on in placing orders for the necessary materials.

Much valuable time will be saved later on if materials such as sand are hauled out to the bunkers where needed. It is also a good idea to manure any bare spots with stable manure or compost and allow to stand until the weather opens up.

Many clubs did very little work on their courses last season, and the results of this policy will be very noticeable when warm weather comes. An early start and sufficient materials this Spring will repair much of the damage caused by the neglect of the past year.

With the near approach of Spring it behooves the greenkeeper to be on the lookout for weeds. If these are removed as fast as noticed, a great deal of trouble later on will be avoided. Weeds are often a sign of poverty or neglect and if this is found to be the case, steps should be taken to eliminate the cause.

Lime is of great value of course for correcting acid conditions in the soil, providing the causes of the acidity are looked after before applying it. It breaks up and changes the structure of the clay particles, and improves the drainage. In heavy clay soils, such as are found in the neighborhood of Chicago, investigation by the different clubs has shown that lime may be safely applied in the form of air or water-slacked lime, or by powdered limestones and marls. The experience of these clubs has proved that in no case should the variety known as land plaster be used. It does not neutralize acidity and it has a tendency to still further compact the clay soil.

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considered huge as compared with the tiny platforms we used to drive from. The diagonal pit which has to be encountered presents an optional carry which the bunkers, dead across the course of other days, failed to provide. Now I know that if I succeed in carrying the hazard at a point where my best effort should take me, my reward is well worthy of that effort.

I know, too, that if my shots are placed properly the modern green will surely offer an inviting approach. In past years golf did not provide this finesse, and I find a new charm in playing over a thoroughly modern course.

I realize that I am not alone in my opinion. Many other humble players freely admit that they enjoy their play nowadays far more than they used to, and these very men are those who were prone to smile indulgently when modern golf construction was mentioned only a few years back.

Now, while I am sure of my own appreciation of the benefits of up-to-date courses, I am not at all sure that every man who swings a club has been so observant as myself. I recall a case of

only two years ago. It was my privilege to be one of several gentlemen who walked over a course which had just been laid out by one of the best known architects, and with us happened to be the representative of a prominent sporting goods house. Evidently he felt obliged to express an opinion, but, unfortunately, he picked out one of the best holes on the course upon which to direct his observation. I was amazed upon hearing his comments, and curiously enough the very feature which he criticized as undesirable and badly placed was brought to my notice, and as an observer I felt that he was wrong; that this very feature was that about which a very excellent hole had been constructed. I have always remembered that criticism of the golf club salesman, and today I know that he was wrong, for that same hole, after considerable test, remains unchanged, and certainly it is one of the most interesting of the collection.

I still am an observer; the garrulous golf salesman is still peddling clubs, and the man who laid out the hole is still laying out courses.

It has been my privilege to talk with the members of many green committees and they have freely discussed their successes with pardonable pride, and for the most part they have freely admitted their errors. I found it interesting to keep the notes of these discussions and these notes will provide themes for subsequent articles in *THE GOLF COURSE*. Our green committees are those who have the future of golf in their hands. Golf in America will be excellent or mediocre to exactly the same extent as our courses may be good, indifferent or bad. Gradually these men are becoming observers and students of the game. After a few years of grumbling from members who found little pleasure in playing their home courses after visiting others, the green committees found it necessary to investigate and study conditions. Once started in this they have found keen enjoy-

ment and satisfaction in it, and for the most part American green committees are possessed of but a single thought, to provide for their members courses as near perfection as possibly may be. And I have observed that the players in general are becoming very analytical, too. It is surprising to find so much wisdom often expressed by those who play a comparatively inferior game. They may not be able to play in par figures, but they always have par figures to play for in these days of graded carries. No longer are they forced to contend with obligatory efforts which really were quite beyond their powers. Yet the holes of today are far more exacting when attempted by scratch players. In following articles I shall attempt an explanation of why the sufferer today finds harder courses less exacting to himself. In this first article the intention only has been to show that the observing ones really have appreciated the vast difference between the courses of the present and most of those completed only five years ago. The rank and file know in their hearts that the new courses are better and more interesting, and to some extent they are analyzing the new holes to determine the reason. Almost to a man they will tell you that turf is of far better quality than of old. They will tell you, too, that some of the boldly undulating greens of the modern course prove vastly more interesting than the billiard-like greens of other days. They accept these improvements as the just due of the golfer who has labored to improve his game and incidentally paid his dues in a club whose course should improve with the years, yet how few give the observing, studious green committeemen their just due! Volumes might be written of modern golf and modern courses, but comparatively few players would read it. As *THE GOLF COURSE* is devoted principally to members of green committees, it is likely that if the Observer's observations are directed principally to them they may be received with greater sympathy.