**New construction and management techniques needed for approach areas**

**By KEVIN ROSS**

While greens, tees and bunkers receive the bulk of construction and maintenance dollars, green approach areas are beginning to become an equally important playing surface.

There is no debate that the most important area on a golf course is the green surface. During a round of golf, anywhere from 25 to 50 percent of the strokes played per golfer are on the green surface.

When it comes to construction, greens are the most complex of areas to build behind tees and bunkers. In maintenance costs, tees are second only to greens in per unit area of expense. But should teeing areas be considered that important?

While 18 shots during a round are played from tees, none of those shots land or re-act off those surfaces. You never hear golfers complaining, "I can't get any roll on these tees." Tees are the only area of the golf course not receiving golfers’ scrutiny.

**APPROACHES AND PLAYABILITY**

Many architects, builders and superintendent are beginning to rank approach areas above tees. Why? Because the approach area is highly visible to golfers.

Approaches are the first thing a golfer sees when they come into the green area and are the first part of the hole a golfer encounters. A poorly constructed approach area can ruin a golfer’s confidence and make the approach and the putting surface work to its full potential.

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the renovation of his maintenance facility.

The Palo Duro Creek Golf Company signed a 100-year contract with the city of Nogales, located south of Tucson and just minutes from the Mexican border, to operate the facility. Three million dollars was invested by the company back in 1996 to add nine holes to create a full 18-hole layout, install a new irrigation system with pump house, and renovate the clubhouse and maintenance building.

During the renovation of the maintenance facility, the money ran out. "They had the basic maintenance structure put up with the office semi-finished and the chemical room finished, but the plans called for a lunchroom/conference center and restroom," said Orozco. "We finished the project in-house."

"The entire facility is relatively small, less than 4,000 square feet," according to Orozco. "I put in my own time in the afternoons and on weekends with some of my crew and we finished the building in about two months," he said. The company estimated about $7,000 to finish the building, we spent only about $1,900 total in materials.

'A REAL MORALE BOOSTER'

Orozco admits that the added workload wasn't so much for the company, but for the employees. "There are no real benefits, not even insurance, for my employees," he said. "The company basically only provides uniforms. As a superintendent, I had to find a way to help motivate my employees."

"They now have a nice lunch room. In the summer, it was almost unbearable trying to eat lunch outside with flies hovering around," said Orozco. "The employees had to eat on top of the machines or under a tree."

With the new restroom, the employees don't have to go out to the desert or under a tree somewhere, said Orozco. "There's only one restroom at the pro shop, and that's usually closed early in the morning when the employees arrive. Besides, they shouldn't have to go over to the pro shop or restaurant all the time. The whole project has been a real morale booster for the employees."

The lunchroom also is utilized as a conference room to help train employees. "We're currently in the process of trying to buy a television and VCR in order to show instructional videos," Orozco said. "We've been selling the pallets we have left from our ryegrass orders every year and placing the money into a bank account. We sell about 30 pallets each time, and we almost have enough to buy the television and VCR."

Orozco has a background in electrical and plumbing work, and the building has been inspected and passed all code requirements. The superintendent doesn't have an assistant, so his mechanic Al Quintero helped out acting as foreman for the project. They even tackled the job of finishing the renovation work on the pro shop and clubhouse.

"We have to make do with what we have," said Orozco. "It's a slow process, and our company doesn't provide a large budget. We have our hands full on the golf course already with just eight employees and my mechanic. But we're planning to build more. "We've got more equipment than storage space at the moment," he explained. "I'm looking to build a storage area for our fertilizers next, as well as an area to wash our equipment. We want to eventually put in a filtration system and collect runoff water in order to recycle it."

Maple Leaf GC

A semi-private club, Maple Leaf was built in two phases. The first nine was constructed in 1976 and the second in 1980. Designed by Lane Marshall and Ward Northrup, the course is a par 62 that plays to 3,915 yards.

As many as seven IGM-maintain courses have already received certification, and the more than 90 courses contracted with the maintenance outsourcing company are all enrolled in the ACSP.

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MAINTENANCE