Bag Cart Traffic Is Course Wear Problem

By VERNE WICKHAM

THE GREENKEEPER and golf course architect on the postwar golf course have a new problem to consider—the bag cart.

There can remain little question but that the two-wheel buggy is with us to stay. It is now almost as much a part of the golfer's equipage as his clubs, shoes, and bag. And along with this new wrinkle in golf has been added many wrinkles in the greenkeeper's weary brow.

The design of the future golf course will be planned around the bag cart traffic as well as the topography, direction of the prevailing wind or type of golf course desired. Traps may be located differently, standard type of green designs altered, fairway contours planned to handle bag cart traffic. Clubhouses and pro shops must be constructed with storage space for the buggies. Local rules may be changed.

West Coast golf managers began to worry about the buggies when they first hit. Methods of legislation were attempted to protect the pro and the course from the "outlaw" cart which began to appear. This wasn't too successful because in municipal or public golf it is difficult to legislate the type of equipment a man is going to carry while on your golf course. Then much spade work was done to govern the size and type of the wheel. The manufacturers carried along with this idea and rubber tires with at least 1 1/4 in. tread became standard. But this limit on size of tread doesn't affect the weight of the golf bag, number of balls, shoes or personal accoutrements carried, so that carts loaded down with 50 to 70 pounds circle golf courses every day sustained on two tiny wheels. Slide, roll and pull these heavy weights over soft fairways from daylight to dark and it spells trouble. Particularly on courses not so designed to handle the traffic. The new golf course design must make allowances for this tonnage on wheels.

After several years operation under bag carts it becomes obvious that several types of greens can take it—others can not! You can almost cut that number down to two types and no golf course can be interesting with just two kinds of greens. It is up to the architect to come up with some new designs.
Greens Escape Cart Traffic

The two major types of greens which have stood bag cart traffic best are those with a large trap square in front and the table-type green which is elevated enough from the surrounding fairway that the golfer just doesn’t lug his cart up the incline.

The green with the trap in front naturally splits all buggy traffic in two—cutting down the wear and tear around the green. If wide enough approaches are left around the green the players split the load. Traps in back of the green, if properly designed, serve the same purpose as far as the traffic to the next tee is concerned. Trees and shrubbery must be given full consideration, leaving many openings away from the green toward the next tee to split the traffic again or else concentrating all traffic in a narrow lane or path and making local rules to govern.

The table type green is a “natural” as far as bag cart players are concerned. They just don’t drag the carts up the incline. Rather they leave the cart on the fairway and after putting out return to head to the next tee in many different paths. This type of green is seldom heavily trapped; that allows free choice of direction or path to the next tee.

No golf course would be interesting with just two type holes. So, let the golf course architect come up with some new designs and other clever methods of directing bag cart traffic without removing the sportiness from the game. That’s the architect’s business. But there are other features which should not be on the postwar golf course if traffic of bag carts is considered.

No more narrow approaches between the traps and the putting surface particularly on the side of the green toward the next tee. This directs all bag cart traffic to a narrow opening, usually about 6 feet wide. The grass is worn down in a few months leaving hard rutty ground. Neither can traps be placed flush with the putting surfaces because, rules and regulations notwithstanding, the bag cart golfer will drag his cart across and around the green between the sand and the putting surface and wear out a path in the green. So, perhaps the traps best be moved farther away from the greens and a sloping approach of at least 20 feet left between the sand and the green. Traps might be long and narrow running with the green so that the golfer would feel encouraged to leave his cart back of the trap.

Tees should not be placed directly back of the preceding green. This encourages golfers to cut right across the green with their carts, or at least narrow the traffic at one spot on the back side of the green. Place the tees on the side, far enough away for safety and in a spot where they naturally will be approached from a number of different directions.

Tee placement is going to be the real key to traffic control. They can be placed to form a “bag cart route” around the course.

Large traps stretching across the fairway will have to be divided to allow bag carts through. Large traps around the green ditto. Probably long narrow traps running with the fairway and small pot bunkers, 2 to 4 feet deep, will be the answer. Certainly much can be done in (Continued on Page 64)
Broker's Book Tells Spalding Story

Investor's Reader, magazine of stock exchange house of Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Beane, features "The Spalding Saga" in its March 13 issue. The story goes:

"Spring tugged at the U. S. this week and 130,000,000 sports-loving Americans began to think longingly of sunny afternoons at the ball park and on the fairways. And some of the most exciting sports events in many a year lie ahead—for the first time since 1939, 20 nations will compete in international tennis matches; Broadway scalpers are already touting tickets for the Louis-Conn fight at $100 a head. In short, sports spell big business in the U. S. (golfers spent $70,000,000 for caddies in one pre-war year). And one company due for a champion's share is the $12,000,000 A. G. Spalding & Bros., Inc., leading U. S. manufacturer of athletic goods.

"Since A. G. (for Albert Goodwill) Spalding and brother J. W. (for James Walter) founded the business in 1876 with $800 and plenty of optimism, the Spalding name has been synonymous with sporting traditions. Enthused Fortune: 'Rare is the manufacturer who has made with his market a union so binding, so permanent, so complete.' The first year's sales were only $11,000 but the Spalding Brothers were promotion-wise far ahead of their time. A. G. had been a star pitcher for the Chicago Nationals and helped organize the National League. One result: Spalding's always has been the official baseball for both major leagues. When Americans looked with disdain on golf, J. Walter imported British Open Champion Harry Vardon and sent him on a cross-country exhibition tour. Golf players multiplied and so did the sale of Spalding clubs. Meantime Spalding picked up prestige by making the first U. S. baseball, basketball, football, etc. The company began to spread across the world. In 1930 when sales hit a record high of $28,000,000, Spalding had 70 retail stores in this country, 15 in England, three in France, five in Canada. Besides this Spalding had dealers in almost every country in the world. Company-owned stores sold everything from niblicks to knickers.

"The depression knocked this further offside than a duffer's slice and in 1931-40 Spalding lost over $7,500,000; its common stock sank to $ in 1941. Says rangy, attractive president Robbins: 'From 1933 until 1935 we did what every company did, cut expenses and so on, but in 1935 we started actual physical reorganization of the company. We disposed of all foreign and unprofitable holdings. Also until 1937 we had a large internal board of directors with only one outsider on it. That year we changed to a seven man board with only two company officers as directors.' If nothing else this made the Spalding board look more like a directing body and less like a rubber stamp.

"The trimming-down was tough but like every good athlete Spalding knew the result would be worth it. Formal reorganization took place in 1939 and Spalding headed up. Since 1940 net income has averaged $500,000 (or $1.00 a common share) with sales hitting between $9,000,000 and 1946's heart-warming $16,000,000. A better gauge of Spalding's thoroughgoing reorganization is that on equal sales of $11,000,000 the company earned $500,000 in 1943 against a loss of $2,000,000 in 1934. Net working capital is $8,500,000 and only recently the company called for redemption all outstanding $2.25 preferred. Furthermore, Spalding intends to integrate its set-up still more, has promised dealers that goods will be distributed only through them with no competition from company-owned stores. And promotion-minded Spalding's current ads show the historical aspects of sports.

"Last week in his lower Manhattan office, Yale-bred Charles Francis Robbins (who has been with Spalding since 1915), spoke with quiet assurance about the future: 'We have about achieved the end result of our reorganization which was that our principal business should be to manufacture only athletic equipment and sell it through authorized dealers. We have no present plans for expansion. Our plants are in top shape. And we feel that there will be a great demand for our goods.'"

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directing the traffic where the architect wants it, with pot bunkers and deep traps.

Perhaps the architect's best friend would be contours around the greens and tees. With the adroit use of a shovel and scraper, фाउंटेन can be shaped to turn the flow of the two-wheelers as well as the flow of drainage. The old-fashioned cross bunker, "chocolate-drop" bunkers and deep traps can be used to halt the traffic and nice inviting slopes toward the next tee used to direct the traffic.

The deportment of the player is gradually improving but will never be perfect. Golfers are beginning to understand their cart, its possibilities and its hazards and its drawbacks. Golf course architects will have to protect the golfer from the hazards of improper bag-cart department.