

Trends in car path design

The increasing demand for additional paths is such that even the old-line private clubs are unable to withstand the pressure

by Edward Lawrence Packard

Golf Course Architect

So much has been written concerning golf cars and car paths that it is difficult to write a report on current trends without being redundant. However, the following trends, observed during the past year, are the most significant.

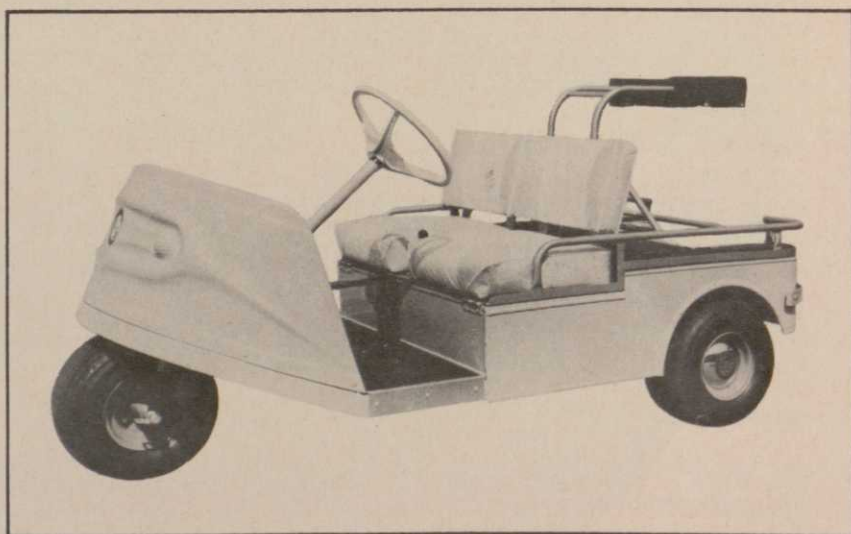
First, the demand for more car paths is increasing. Old-line private clubs that have withstood the pressure for more motorized cars are progressively succumbing to these demands and taking initial steps toward constructing more and larger car paths. Public courses also are systematically installing more paths.

Most new courses are planning car paths, at least around the first and 10th tees and around the clubhouse area. On the well-financed jobs, paths are also being planned at other key points on the course where it is obvious there will be a concentration of traffic.

From the viewpoint of good golf course design, car paths should be kept to a minimum, and the tees, traps and mounds around the greens designed in such a manner as to equalize the traffic as much as possible.

However, natural features of the terrain, such as hills, trees and other vegetation, or streams and ponds, often make it impossible to avoid certain areas of concentrated travel. At these points, the compaction of the soil will be so great that healthy turf cannot be maintained.

Car path construction is the only answer. The most asked question



Above, the Masterpiece electric golf car is manufactured by Laher Spring & Electric Car Corporation. It features a lub-o-matic drive switch.

is, "Where should the car paths be located?" On existing courses, it is easy to determine these locations, because the frequency and intensity of traffic will cause the turf to die, and these areas obviously are candidates for high priority path construction.

Most courses will prohibit car travel closer than 15 to 20 yards from any green approach. All cars are directed around the greens, and paths frequently are in order around the sides and rear of the green and green traps, heading in the direction of the next tee.

On new courses, minimum paths at the first and 10th tees and around the pro shop or car storage area are usually planned for initial construction, with more path locations

for future additions waiting until obvious heavy use indicates the need.

"How close should paths be around the green?" Because a golf ball will bounce badly off any hard-surfaced path, the paths should be built as far from the sides of the green as possible, within reason. Most players want the paths as close as possible to the green. This is especially true of the older players. Placing paths farther away is preferable, however.

"How should paths lead out to the fairway from the tee?" While there is no standard method, there is a trend toward slanting the path across the front of the tee (off the tee itself, of course) out toward the opposite edge of the fairway. That



Left, Herter's deluxe golf car which starts in temperatures of 30 below zero for winter golf.

is, if the path starts from along the right side of the tee, it will slant out toward the left side of the fairway, and vice versa.

Terrain permitting, this type of design permits the players to leave the path from many different points, depending on the direction of the shot to be followed, rather than all the cars coming off the end of the path in the same spot. The result, of course, is to create additional turf compaction at this point and the need to extend the path each year.

The width of car paths is another important consideration. The trend on the best private courses is to build paths at least seven, and often eight, feet wide. Probably six feet is a good minimum standard. The wider paths permit cars to pass each other, and still have a safety margin. They also permit small trucks to ride with both wheels on the path and this is a definite advantage in turf maintenance.

Material for building paths is almost universally blacktop for the best installations. Thickness of base and of blacktop will vary, with heavier applications of both required for wet or hilly locations.

Minimums should probably be four inches of crushed limestone or crushed road gravel, well compacted, and a one-inch layer of pre-mixed bituminous surface course. Better construction would be a five-inch base and one and one-half inch top, while best construction would be a six-inch base and a two-inch top.

This latter would be in order, for example, for paths that heavier vehicles (such as the maintenance crew's trucks) would use.

Where financing does not permit the bituminous surfacing, just the base course material may be used. It should be expected that some maintenance will be required on the paths, however, if they are not blacktop covered.

Dry areas present no problem for car path construction. Wet spots which paths will cross must be dealt with. Either you should drain them adequately with drain tile, or raise the surface of the path sufficiently above the wet area by adding much more and heavier material—such as two-inch crushed stone—to ensure a useable path. Corrugated metal pipe, concrete or clay tile may be used to allow pas-

sage of surface run-off water beneath the path. If shallow fill is planned over the drain line, the corrugated metal pipe will probably be less likely to suffer damage than the others, and would therefore be preferable.

The best planning will provide space where a following foursome can park their cars while waiting for those on the tee to move out. The wider paths solve this problem very nicely.

On courses where paths must be constructed on hilly terrain, careful thought and planning must be given to the proper grading of the path to provide for storm water control, to prevent erosion of the base of the path and also to provide adequate safety of the path by the installation of suitable guard posts, rails or cables. The gradient of the path can be lessened by the use of "switchbacks", that is the reversal of the direction of the path either up or down the slope.

Such paths should be carefully designed by a golf course architect experienced in this work. A good plan will include the planting of ground cover, trees or shrubs, which will effectively beautify the car path construction upon completion.

Finally, the most progressive club courses are looking forward to the day when they must extend their paths and are ordering the making of a car path plan. This plan shows accurately, at the scale of one-inch equals 100 feet, the exact location of every tee, green and sandtrap, and all trees, ponds, etc. The paths needed for use well into the future are then plotted in the field on this plan and reviewed for acceptance.

A certain amount of money can then be budgeted each year for car path extension as required, and the whole construction program made quite painless from the financial viewpoint. Exact locations of the extensions can then easily be determined and agreed upon for each year's work. □