

## Reduce Design Problems

# ASK THE SUPERINTENDENT

By Conrad Scheetz  
Executive Director, GCSAA

If we could roll back the clock to the early 18th century to the shipyards of New England, we could picture in our minds the gangways where the keel of a foremasted schooner had just been laid; we can picture the architect who had labored for long hours over the plans of the schooner; we can picture the ship builder with his tools and his men climbing like ants all over the gangway starting the construction process.

What this picture has not included thus far is the man who many months prior to the start of construction was involved in the basic planning and progress of the new ship.

During the design and construction phases of the schooner the captain was intimately involved, and he was the one who had to walk the decks and manage the people for years to come.

The same principle holds true for construction of a golf course.

If one were to visit the construction site of a new golf course, he would find the representative of the architect, a representative of the golf course builder, and a representative of the owner.

Unfortunately, the representative of the owner is more likely to be a land planner or a financier, and more often than not, not a man who is trained in the science of turfgrass management. And more important, not the man who will be responsible for the maintenance and playing condition of the course in future years.

In all likelihood, the course will have been designed by an architect and plans submitted to a governing board. The board in turn takes these specifications and lets them out to golf course building firms, and a con-

tract is let for construction of the course.

At some time, usually very close to the end of the construction period, a superintendent is hired. It is then his job to maintain the course with the conditions of construction he had no control over.

To be sure, the architect may well have designed the course in accordance with the owner's specifications. It may play long, short, tough, or easy. It may be aesthetically perfect, and meet all qualifications for championship play. The owner may have received full value for his dollar from both the architect and the builder — but the course may be very difficult and expensive to maintain.

Consider the advantages of having a golf course superintendent on the job from the beginning.

A good superintendent cannot replace an architect or a builder. These men are trained in their particular areas of expertise. We do, however, maintain that a good superintendent who is involved in the early stages of the development of the course can lend his expertise in areas that will have a long-term effect on not only the cost of the course but also on its playability and long-range reputation.

The choice of a superintendent must be made wisely. He should be well-grounded in all aspects of his profession, and have demonstrated ability. College degrees in turfgrass management are not enough, nor are years of practical experience. A balance of education and practical experience is most desirable.

A superintendent may or may not be able to read a transit or run a caterpillar, but because of his experi-

ence he can readily envision the finished course and foresee how it can be best managed upon completion.

He is not in a position to dictate to the architect or builder, but his suggestions for soil mixtures, grass varieties, drainage and layout can improve the overall play and maintenance of the course. Although a famed architect or builder can provide immediate prestige to a new golf course, it is the daily management of those facilities that will give a course its reputation.

There are a number of specific ways a good superintendent can guide the construction of a course. For example, one architect is currently thinking of building very deep sand traps that are lined on the green side with near-vertical railroad ties, or similar lumber.

This can of course be quite unique and will affect play greatly. A good superintendent knows the capability of modern motorized trap rakes, and whether or not they can get into a given trap. If they cannot, the course may well have equipment it cannot use. Also, one of a course's most expensive commodities — labor — will be poorly employed in the time-consuming process of hand-raking all traps.

Another design example that a superintendent might spot in development states is that sand traps located too close to greens will restrict the use of riding greens mowers, which again means higher labor costs.

Some courses are going to tees that are elevated with sharp drop-offs on each side. This is pleasing to golfers because of increased view of

*continued on page 43*

The architect can make the superintendent's job nearly impossible if he misses the mark in his design concepts. On the other hand, if the architect has done a reasonable job, the superintendent's ability can make the architect's creation into a beautiful golf course or it can be a disaster.

The areas of drainage, irrigation, management of traffic, control of pests, the use of trees and shrubs, treatment of ponds and streams, selection of turf species, treatment of sand bunkers, and others represent challenges to the designer and to the manager in providing the condition required for the playing the game of golf.

Players with the highest degree of skill can demonstrate that skill only when the underlying elements of golf course excellence are employed to the highest level. The peak of near-perfection can be reached only when each person involved in the various disciplines has a thorough understanding of the needs and the abilities of his counterparts in the other disciplines.

## DESIGN continued from page 31

the hole layout it provides; but if the slopes on the sides of these tees are enclosed with lumber as they are in some cases with steps leading to the tee, this will again mean increased labor costs and lack of efficient turf management because maintenance equipment will have to be carried by hand up to the tee to properly care for it.

Many times, the implementation of a swale here or there by the superintendent can save thousands of dollars in maintenance costs through the years if it causes the course to drain properly. How many courses have you seen where after a rain there has been puddling on greens, fairways or tees because of inadequate contouring?

The superintendent's presence during construction will enable him to gain valuable knowledge of the soils he must work with at various levels on his fairways, tees and greens. This can have a material effect on his maintenance program for future years.

All too often, superintendents are not aware of where drainage and irrigation pipes run on their courses because they don't have "as built"

continued on page 54



## The proven profit maker... *Lester* MATIC

Your golf cars aren't making money when they're down for a charge.

Keep your cars running farther and lasting longer with a Lester-Matic charger...The Proven Profit Maker.

Check these outstanding features:

- **Proven Dependability:** Over 150,000 Lester-Matics in use all over the country in all types of climates.
- **Proven Profit Maker:** Automatically compensates for voltage variations and tapers charge for longer battery life and low water use.
- **Proven Simplicity:** Easy to use. No taps or controls to set. Inexperienced help can operate the Lester-Matic without fear of over-or-under charging.

Circle No. 160 on Reader Service Card

The **Lester-Matic** gives you more rounds per car

Send for free brochure today! LESTER ELECTRICAL, 625 West A St. LINCOLN, Neb. 68522 • 402-477-8988 LESTER EQUIPMENT, 2840 Coronado St. ANAHEIM, Calif. 92806 • 714-630-2260

For More Details Circle (160) on Reply Card

# BROADLEAF WEEDS controlled positively

with maximum safety  
to sensitive grasses  
and ornamentals



# trimec

TURF HERBICIDES®

THE MOST CONTROL AT THE LEAST EXPENSE

U.S. Patent  
3,284,186

## PBI - GORDON CORPORATION

300 SOUTH THIRD STREET KANSAS CITY, KANSAS 66118

Telephone: 913/342-8780

For More Details Circle (131) on Reply Card



done and the new course seeded, all equipment and supplies having been delivered before the energy crisis added impetus to the nation's inflation spiral and shortages complicated golf course construction.

There followed an early rain season and mild winter in the Northwest, just what the golf course superintendent ordered. In fact, there was almost too much of a good thing. The course was opened exactly one year after ground breaking, one month past target. However, one of the wettest springs on record earlier this year made it advisable to delay traffic on the new turf.

Because the timing was so perfect, Hope is convinced his total cost was considerably less than it would be today, perhaps as much as 50 percent.

During the year Oakway was closed to play, Hope remodeled the interior of his clubhouse complex, which is particularly appealing to golfers. An antique collector, he decided to put some of his treasures to work in the shop, creating a unique and surprisingly functional decor.

Old five-gallon milk cans, attractively painted, serve as display bins for utility golf clubs; crest golf caps are attractively shown overflowing from an ancient trunk; an old cash register, highly polished and with an open drawer, holds scorecards, pencils, tees and ball markers; a huge dining table is used for the golf shoe display; clothing is arranged over various other antique pieces and such startlingly different items as bear traps, horse collars and muskets add to wall decor.

The entire shop is carpeted, including the dining area. There is no snack bar, but a battery of vending machines dispenses sandwiches, sweets and beverages. The dining area walls are covered with frame and well-arranged 8 x 10 photographs of golfers who have called Oakway home down through the years.

Hope's insistence upon quality follows through golf shop merchandise to the well-landscaped exterior of the clubhouse. A breezeway connects the shop and his office with the small building housing the offices of the project manager and his staff.

Hope envisions a larger mainte-

nance budget for the new course, but explains that his regulation course had been worked under an exceptionally low-cost operation. With the addition of automatic irrigation, riding greens mowers and other sophisticated machinery, quality is also stressed in maintenance.

Public acceptance of the course was good immediately after opening, but there has been some change in clientele. Those who prefer the challenges of a full-length course have moved, but shop personnel reports much more play by women, couples and families.

Nor is Hope willing to surrender his old regular customers without a struggle.

"We made a test with one golfer," he said. "We had him play here three times in one week, then go out to a regulation course. He shot the best round of his career."

The idea is that the short game accuracy demanded by the new Oakway will sharpen any player's game for any golf course.

"They could play here three rounds to one on a regulation course," Hope said, "and generally improve their golf."

When fully developed, released acreage around the golf course will provide 1,265 living units. Hope expects at least 40 percent of the residents to be golfers and hopes to convert others. Whether or not the Oakway executive becomes their home course, it will always be their course at home. He expects to continue operating the course on a daily fee basis and to resist any pressure to close it to resident play only.

Eugene lost a sorely needed 18-hole regulation golf course in the shrinkage of Oakway, but it did not lose an important green belt and recreation facility. It gained its first intermediate golf course and a new, high-density residential area near the city center.

Even before the remodeling of Oakway was under construction, the city of Eugene and Lane County were exploring possibilities of developing municipal golf facilities to meet a growing demand. In the long run, the Oakway project probably will have done a greater service to golf in the Eugene metropolitan area than anyone expected, particularly if it hastens the development of new regulation facilities.

## DESIGN

*continued from page 43*

drawings. Placement of trees in the rough or on fairways has a great effect on maintenance cost. If trees in the rough are allowed to stand too close together, certain equipment cannot negotiate these areas. Significant labor savings can be gained through the use of machines, thus the location of trees becomes vitally important if these areas have to be cut by hand.

A good golf superintendent will be able to specify varieties of grasses which are best-suited for that particular area's requirements of climate, temperature, humidity, and rainfall. To be sure, the initial cost may be greater. But when considered against the possibility of having to remove existing grass and go back and replant other sections, the initial cost becomes insignificant.

A superintendent can be very valuable in determining the amount and types of equipment which will be needed to maintain a golf course. Many clubs and owners follow a standard shopping list, and by the time a superintendent is put on the job, thousands of dollars have been applied to equipment which might otherwise have been spent to better advantage, or perhaps saved.

A superintendent can be useful in planning and layout of the maintenance building. With hundreds of thousands of dollars of equipment involved, a well laid out maintenance building is a prime requisite for any course. This function is sometimes relegated to a nearby barn or other such structure.

To sum up, a qualified superintendent can not only insure the owner full value for his investment while a course is being built; he can insure that the maintenance cost for the life of the course can be minimized by correcting those things during construction which will materially affect the maintenance of the course in future years.

This does not downgrade the importance of the sound architect and course builder. Rather it points out the long-term value of the course superintendent's input.

Certainly architects and builders have reputations to protect; but in the final analysis it is the superintendent and the members who live with the course.