

Rancho California

Built for Maintenance

Irwin Hearsh has a theory about designing and developing golf courses that might step on some golf industry toes. It goes like this: He has seen too many courses designed by pros, landscape architects and even golf course architects that look good the first two years. Then maintenance that was not planned for becomes a problem and the layout that had a good beginning becomes just another course.

He got a chance to try out his theory when the people who own Rancho California resort in Temecula, Calif., needed someone to build a golf course because they were developing 95,000 acres. "I was approached," Hearsh told GOLF-DOM, "and decided if I had the right superintendent, I would try to do it."

You see, Hearsh also has this other theory. He says that for better golf courses, superintendents must be given more of a hand in working on them. He says many superintendents are good golfers, and most of them are on the course enough to know how golfers play and think. And most important, they know how a course should be maintained.

Hearsh's superintendent is Dick Rosson. Rosson was an outstanding golfer, competing against the likes of Billy Casper and Gene Littler in their younger days. About 20 years ago, he was asked to take charge of Circle R, a San Diego course. Later, when Pala Mesa was being built in the same area, he was brought in to complete the course and stayed on as superintendent.

"I would never have built the course if Dick had not come with me," Hearsh said. "He would have been a great cost accountant or a time-study man. He has complete control of the course, makes his own budget, and decides if and when golfers are allowed on the course."

Hearsh knows what he is talking about when he says Rosson would have excelled in cost accounting.

Hearsh graduated from UCLA in 1934 as an accounting major. He went into the area of citrus growing, packing, hauling and marketing. He says he was the first to use nemogen for nematode control of citrus trees commercially, and was the first to design a method of bulk harvesting in the citrus industry.

In the 1960s he became interested in the gas and oil industry and became president of Merchants Petroleum, a small company listed on the Pacific Coast Stock Exchange. He later helped found and is a director of Manufacturers Bank of Los Angeles. He has been interested in real estate development all along and building the Rancho California golf complex is his way of retiring.

"Rancho California had already consulted with an architect and picked out the property where the course was to be built," Hearsh said. "The area was to be 500 acres with the Temecula River and Paganga Creek running through the property. Discussing the property with local residents, we found that the Temecula River was unpredictable and we decided to stay on the south side of the river. This gave us over 200 acres to work with. There were an additional 80 acres to the south of the property that I felt needed to be purchased to help the project and also to have control of all the land around the course."

Although Rancho California wanted a known architect, Hearsh felt a better job could be done if his superintendent helped design the course. One of the proposed architects, when asked if the superintendent could work on construction, said he would rather not have him. Six architects were consulted. Most of them wanted to build a course "the pros couldn't beat." They were interested in design, not designing a course for maintenance. Hearsh wanted a resort course for the golfers who shoot between 85 and 100, and also for women.

"We spent six months going around southern California looking at courses," Hearsh said. "We came to the conclusion that in order to be a good golf course, a course had to be designed for maintenance. Consequently, the drainage system had to be built into the course first. Second, the system had to be the best, and then the course had to be designed into the drainage and sprinkling systems."

The course was designed on the property itself, not from a contour map. Hearsh wanted at least a 6,800-yard course so it could play to a par 72 under United States Golf Association rules. After the Southern California Golf Association rated the course following completion, the rating was 72.2. He wanted the driving range to hit away from the course, and here part of the 80 purchased acres came into play. About 17 acres were used for the driving range, tennis courts and for the lodge and clubhouse complex. In all, the complex and course totaled 151 acres.

"Since drainage was very important," Hearsh said, "we purchased some reject concrete pipe from 15 to 36 inches. This pipe was used on various holes to carry water under the fairways from canyons above so we would not have water problems on the fairways. Concrete drainage ribbons from six inches to five feet were constructed throughout the course to carry water away in a hurry. And we tried to keep them out of landing areas."

Hearsh said the course was designed to fit into the terrain. Bad soil was marked, ripped and taken out with a paddle wheel and replaced with sand. Close to 300,000 yards of soil was moved to the third and fourth holes alongside the river to enable construction of lodge pads overlooking the course. This built the land up to the point where it was felt there would not be any further problems with flooding. Every year

Built for Maintenance continued

Hearsh has a bulldozer redefine the river. On a few tees along the river reinforced concrete walls have been built and covered over with sod.

There are six lakes on the course. They were designed so the golfer can retrieve his ball. No lake except the working lake is over 30 feet wide. There are 12-foot retrievers by each lake. The lakes are shallow and lined. They can be and are emptied and washed down to be kept clear and clean to see the balls.

There are 57 traps that were placed more to direct than to penalize the golfer. White silica sand of medium texture was used. The traps are checked to see that at least six inches of sand is in each one of them. Fifty tons of new sand is used each year.

"Concrete was used for our car paths because concrete can be contoured to the fairways so the mowers can drive over and mow," he said. "The car paths are beside every green and lead to the next tee. On par three holes they go from tee to green. On all other holes the paths are as long as needed. Reinforcing steel rods are placed in the ground and bent to go across the path. This way traffic is directed so the cars do not go over the paths on the grass at the same place every time and rut the end of the path.

"We do not believe in continuous car paths, making everyone stay on the path. It slows play and is not fair. A player goes over to his ball, finds he has the wrong club. Either he goes back and gets another club or plays the ball with the wrong club."

The greens were designed to have a minimum of five pin placements, though most have seven. The

terrain dictated the size. They vary from 6,000 to 8,000 square feet.

The back nine has many native oak trees. Before work began, every tree was marked six feet from its natural ground level. After the grading was complete, every tree was remeasured and if the ground was above the six-foot base a tree well was built. A nursery was purchased about six miles away. A tree mover was purchased and the trees were moved onto the course and around the clubhouse complex. Hearsh wanted the final design to look like the course was cut out of a forest rather than a row of trees along the side of the fairway.

"Our weather creates a problem because it varies as much as 50 degrees a day," Hearsh said. "In the winter it can go from the low 20s to the high 70s. In the summer, it can vary from the 40s to the high 80s. A strong breeze comes up in the afternoons which bothers some golfers, but it keeps the smog out of the valley and the summers much cooler than surrounding areas."

Golfers are not allowed to play the course until the greenkeepers are ahead of the play. That way they can do a better job and the course is in good condition, he said.

Rancho California has 76 carts. It uses 217 batteries so it can get 36 holes from a cart. With 76 carts the first ones out are later ready to go for late golfers. On many weekends over 100 carts are rented, although cart rental is not mandatory. All carts are numbered on the front, back and left side. Cars are rented in numerical order so they can be controlled. Binoculars are used from the golf shop to watch play. The left side number can be



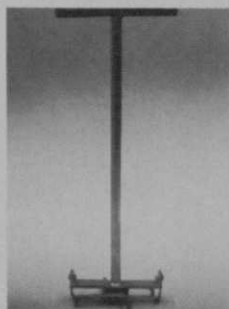
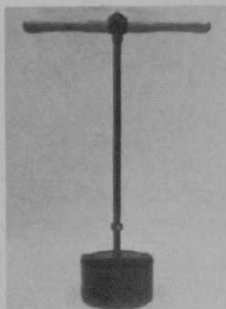
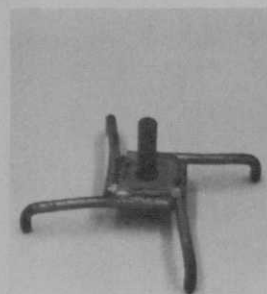
Before work on the course began, every tree was marked six feet from its natural ground level. After grading was complete, every tree was remeasured and if the ground was above the six-foot base, a tree well was built to protect the crown area.



To reduce tree grass trimming, the grass is chemically killed. The next step is for it to be sprayed green to blend into the fairway grass color.

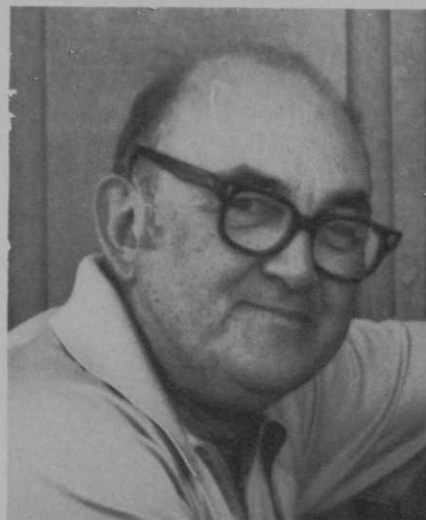


Reject concrete pipe was used on some holes to carry water under the fairways from canyons above so the course would not have water problems on the fairways.



Rosson has a specially designed cutter to remove excessive sod and grass growth at sprinkler heads on the course. From left, the series of photos above show a head-center locating tool for the trimmer; turret sprinkler trim-

ming tool; cutter for removing the plug after trimming; the sprinkler head prior to trimming; and after trimming. "This could be controlled chemically, but we do not desire brown patches at each sprinkler head," Hearsh said.



Hearsh

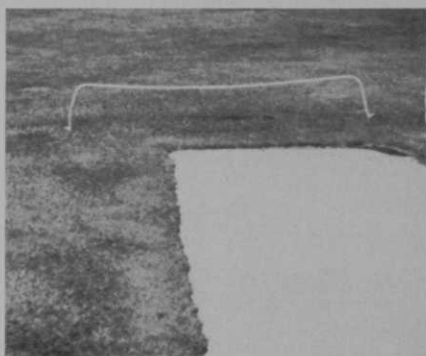


Rosson

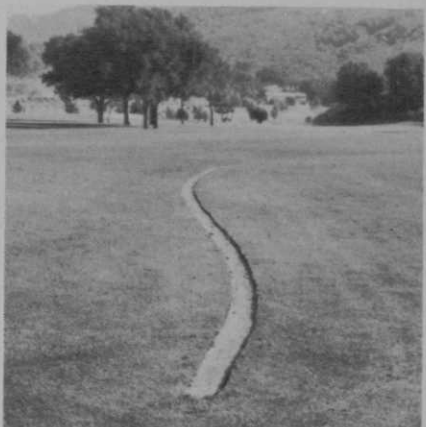
seen on the first tee. The front number can be seen on the ninth and 18th fairway and also in issuing cars. The back number can be seen on the 10th tee.

Hearsh said, "The resort owns the golf shop. We felt a large stock was needed so the wives would have something to do while their husbands played golf. With the beginning of the discount store handling golf equipment, we have been forced to meet discount prices, but must carry a large selection of golf equipment because our guests want equipment on the spot. There can be no ordering, because they do not visit very long.

"As to ladies' wear, we have found that we are getting the customers from the private clubs of southern California. If their club shop puts in a run of sizes of a style and color, too many women will be wearing the same outfit. Also, to



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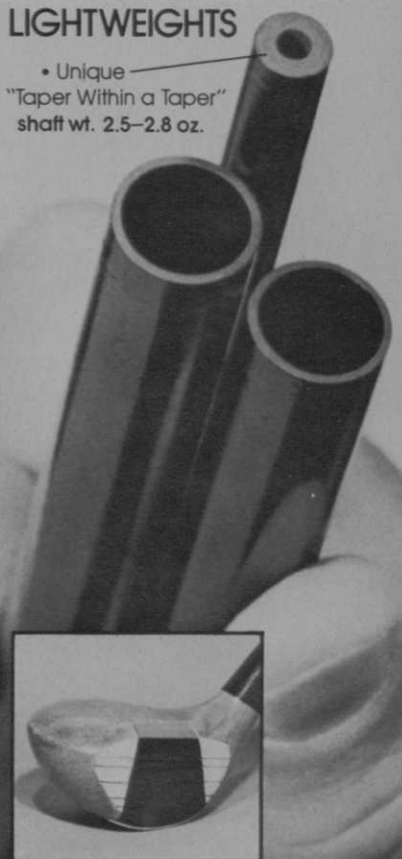
them, after a few weeks of being on the rack, even though it is new merchandise, it is old because they have seen the clothes too many times."

Hearsh said golf has developed as rapidly as it has in the last 10 years because of motorized cars. The cars have made the money needed to maintain the courses. Cars have also created problems in maintenance of the course. They have brought into golf a new breed of golfer. "The walker was a dedicated golfer" he said. "He knew the rules and how to take care of the course.

"But today's golfer has little knowledge of replacing or how to repair a divot, repair a ball mark, rake a sand trap, or how far to keep hand carts and cars from tees and greens. I have yet to see a golf instructor take time to teach a pupil the etiquette of the golf course." □

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