

In Design, Keep Women in Mind

With the rise of female participation in the game, course architects are becoming more and more aware of the fact that women must be included in their ultimate design plans.

Obviously, over the years many women have been somewhat discouraged in their game, forced to play facilities set up with men in mind. What are the alternatives? According to the American Society of Golf Course Architects, the female golfer is no longer being treated as an afterthought, but a highly influential factor in new course designs and remodeling projects.

"Architects are deeply aware of the need for considering the ladies in designing a course," explains ASGCA president Geoffrey Cornish of Amherst, Mass. "The challenge is to consider the ladies without compromising the layout for men."

Golf's handicap system has been an effective equalizer and has contributed to the sport's popularity. Yet no one can ignore the fact that, in most cases, a man can hit the ball farther — although not necessarily with more accuracy — than a woman.

Ladies' tees, therefore, are intended to compensate for the strength difference. But, do they? The yardage advantage is nullified when the ladies' tee does not afford as clear a view of the hole as does the men's. Sharp doglegs are often difficult to negotiate when playing from the ladies' tee. Then, too, a visible second shot for men is frequently a blind shot for women.

Designers recognize these problems and are correcting them in a variety of ways. Extra care is being taken to design ladies' tees with alignment to the women's landing area. Placement of hazards in relation to ladies' tees is also being given consideration.

"Generally women can play the same course as men except for the

length of the hole and the distances hazards and fairway areas are located from the teeing area," remarks Philip Wogan, Beverly, Mass. "Usually these factors can be adjusted by proper positioning of the women's tees so hazards and fairway landing areas meet the requirements of women's play." We can expect to see larger ladies' tees and multiple teeing areas according to ASGCA vice president Edwin Seay, Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. That way, players can select which set of tees offers the desired challenge.

"Shorter holes with more difficult approach shots seem logical and practical, with short tees for women and several tees for men," advocates Ferdinand Garbin, Export, Pa. "Then the men can choose a tee to suit their game and women will be more comfortable."

Arthur Hills, Toledo, maintains, "Consideration should be given to placement of women's tees so the traffic pattern from green to next tee is convenient and direct. The tee should view the hole as clearly as do the back tees. As a matter of fact, the name 'women's tees' is really inappropriate. These 'forward tees' are perfectly suited for play by the increasing number of senior players who drive the ball shorter distances. The fact they are called 'women's tees' discourages much use. The name should be dropped!"

Another problem area for golfers — especially women — is water. While water enhances the beauty of a course and has ecological merits, it is also a mental and physical hazard. Yet, we can hardly envision courses without water — nor should it be that way.

Richard Phelps, Lakewood, Colo., observes, "Water should not be eliminated; it is a part of the game and ladies expect it and enjoy it." Long carries over water, though, usually spell disaster for average golfers and are physically impos-

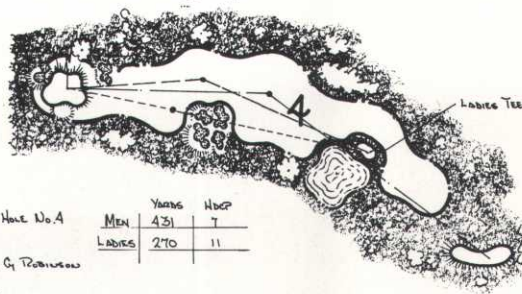
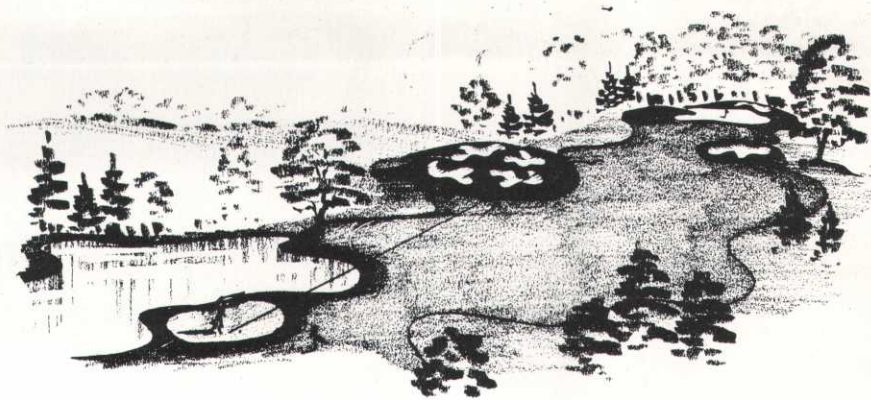


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sible for most women. To reach a happy medium, architects are concentrating on providing alternate routes of play rather than forcing golfers to attempt a long carry over water. Such a solution still offers the option of making the water shot, which will appeal to long ball hitters and low handicappers. It also promotes the thinking aspect of golf, brings strategy into play, and preserves the sporty nature of the course and the game.

"Both men and women should be required no long carries over water. Alternate safer routes around water and short shots after a lay-up from water should be the order of the course," states ASGCA Governor William Amick, Daytona Beach, Fla.

Tremendous rises in female golfers, coupled with soaring land prices, high maintenance costs, and increasing construction budgets, all point to shorter courses. Architects, consequently, are planning more par 3s and executive layouts, plus reduced yardage for regular courses. Ladies stand to benefit from shorter holes since accuracy, more than



Hickory Ridge Country Club - Hole No. 4
 AMHERST, MASS.
 BY GEOFFREY S. CORNISH - WILLIAM G. TROBROW
 GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS

	YARDS	H2OP
MEN	431	7
LADIES	270	11

Feminine option: Water is a particularly tough hazard for women to handle. Course architects such as Geoffrey Cornish are giving the ladies an alternate route to the green, without the worry of the water. Those that can hit the long ball, though, can take the water and invoke strategy into the game.

brute strength, will be rewarded.

The majority of ASGCA members predict shorter yardage will be accompanied by smaller greens and narrower fairways. Smaller greens, averaging 5,000-7,500 square feet, will contribute to faster play. Narrower fairways will place more emphasis on placement shots — a woman's forte — and sharpen golfers' thinking power in club selection.

Opposition was voiced by David Gill, St. Charles, Ill. He feels green size "depends on the shot played to it. Each fairway is an individual thing. It can be tight at one point and open at another." Under such conditions he does not foresee absolute reductions to accommodate women, or any golfer for that matter. "Par is the equalizer. What may be a tough-to-reach par 4 hole for the male may be an easy-to-reach par 5 for the lady."

Raymond F. Loving, Jr., Ivy, Va., declares, "In the green area, consideration should be given to women in design by providing a grass approach to the green without the penal hazard of having to hit over a bunker or water. Bunkers should not be deep or heavily mounded."

Separate courses for women doesn't seem the answer either. While the ladies' course at Medinah County Club in Medinah, Ill., and the Ladies Hunt in Toronto are fine tests of golf, the idea of separate courses is not popular. Cornish points out, "It has been repeatedly demonstrated in both North America and the United Kingdom designing a separate nine at the same club for the ladies is not the answer. They don't want to use it. It appears they feel they are being relegated to the inferior. They want to play the course."

Architects recognize this and caution against radical design changes. They are, by no means, attempting to change the game to suit the woman golfer stereotype. Their aim is to provide a fair test of golf for every caliber golfer — young and old, male and female.

"Designing and building good golf courses to satisfy women players does not necessarily mean too short or unchallenging courses for men," stresses Don Herfort, Minneapolis. "The time is not too distant when the shorter golf course designed for the 'thinking' golfer will become the most desirable, successful end product." □

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