

Contour mowing adds flair to

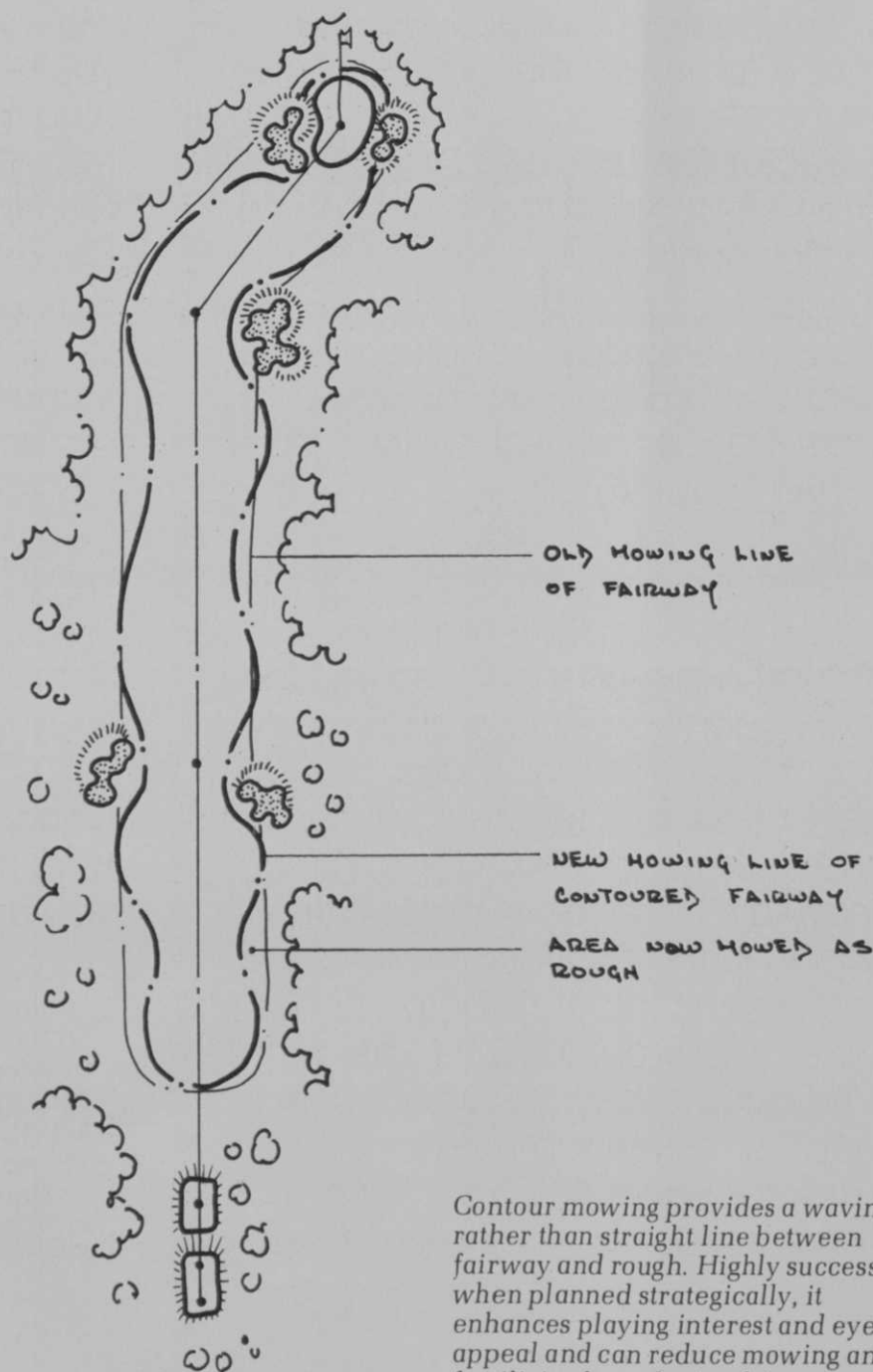
by Geoffrey S. Cornish & William G. Robinson

In recent years superintendents and golf architects have developed contour mowing involving a curving rather than a straight line between fairway and rough. If executed strategically to keep the game interesting for the low handicapper without hurting the player who has troubles enough, it adds enormously to the excitement and pleasure of golf.

Furthermore, the curving line enhances aesthetics because it is more pleasing to the eye than a straight line. Contour mowing also reduces the acreage in fairways. Indeed on some 18-hole layouts, this acreage has been reduced to 30 to 35 acres. This in turn reduces the tonnage of fertilizer required and may lower mowing costs.

An objection has been that a ball landing a few feet off the fairway can be more difficult to play than one landing 30 to 40 feet out in the older rough. This is because new rough is extremely lush for a year or two after it has been converted from a fairway with a high fertility level. To compensate for this, superintendents mow an intermediate refined strip for a season or more.

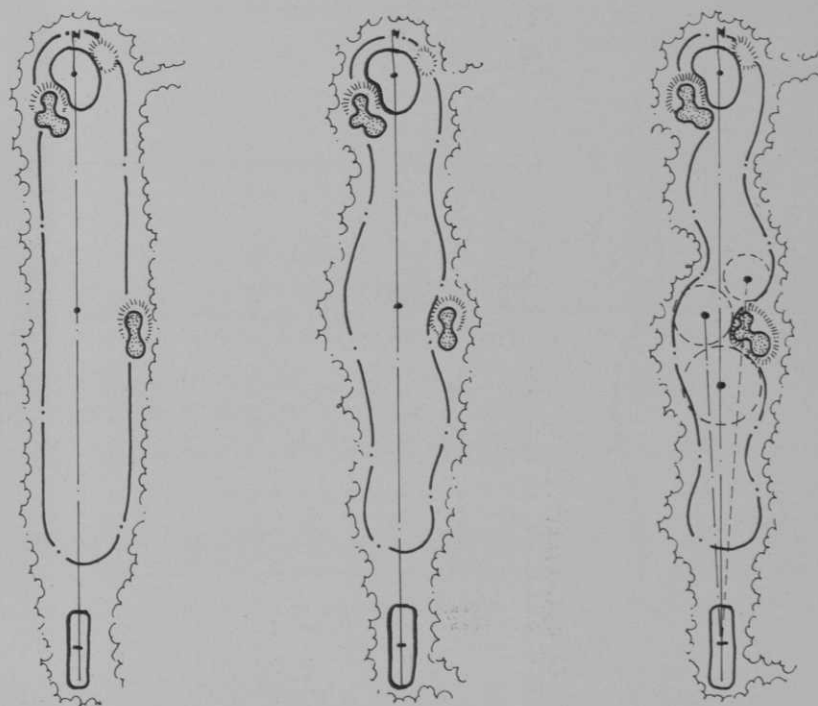
The most dramatic examples of contour mowing we have seen include Woodway Country Club in Darien, Conn., where Superintendent Sherwood Moore, a pioneer in this type of mowing, has executed patterns that have become a major feature of his course. At Canterbury Country Club near Cleveland, with 18 of the most perfect bentgrass fairways on the continent, Superintendent Bill Burdick achieved the ultimate in eye appeal by adopting contour mowing. Westfield (Ohio) Country Club's superintendent, John Spodnik, has developed intricate mowing patterns on his 36 holes so eye appealing that even the most absorbed golfer is aware of them. These three superintendents met with player opposition initially, but this dissipated as beauty and playing interest became increasingly apparent.



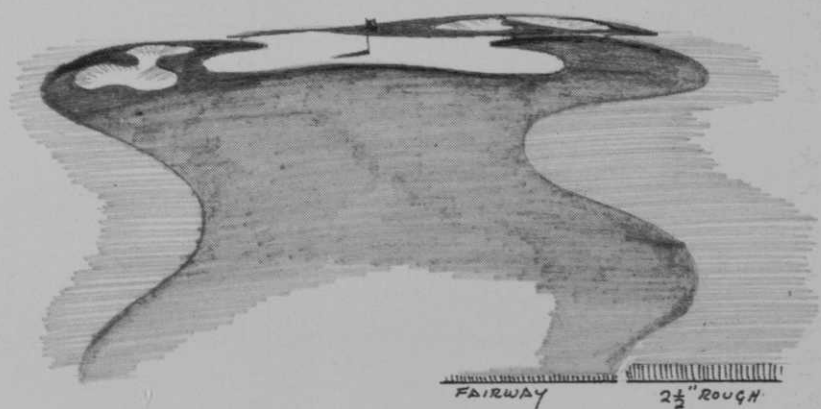
Contour mowing provides a waving rather than straight line between fairway and rough. Highly successful when planned strategically, it enhances playing interest and eye appeal and can reduce mowing and fertilizing by reducing fairway area.

Geoffrey S. Cornish and William G. Robinson of Amherst, Mass., are both members of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. Cornish is also an honorary member of the equivalent British Association, while Robinson belongs to the American Society of Landscape Architects. A previous contribution, "Trees on Golf Courses," appeared in the June 1977 issue of GOLF BUSINESS.

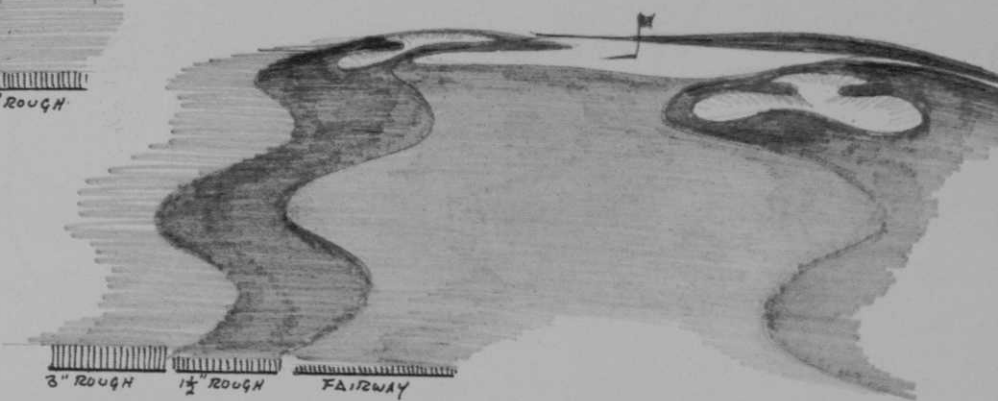
fairways — and cuts fertilizer usage



LEFT: Straight line mowing lacks style.
 CENTER: Haphazard contour mowing adds style but not strategy, may discourage high handicappers.
 RIGHT: Mowing executed in accordance with strategic concepts and shot values offers progressively smaller targets (circles) for players with differing abilities.



FAIRWAY 2 1/2" ROUGH



3" ROUGH 1 1/2" ROUGH FAIRWAY



4" ROUGH 2 1/2" ROUGH 1 1/2" ROUGH FAIRWAY

BELOW: Mowing heights for cool season grasses as practiced by three superintendents. Budget considerations are often paramount in selecting the style of mowing.

Discretionary fairway widths for contour mowing and contemporary positioning of fairway bunkers in relation to tees are indicated here. Light line paralleling dark fairway contour line indicates a refined rough maintained by some superintendents. Note also that axes of bunkers converge, so the larger one hits the more accurate he must be. Axes of hazards other than bunkers also converge (as indicated on left) and influence fairway contouring.

