

# Golf Architecture In Europe and America ~ A Comparison

By T. SIMPSON, *Golf Architect*

London, England

A LEADING English professional has stated in an interview, that he attributes our disadvantage, as compared with American players, to the fact that our courses in England are insufficiently bunkered. This is sheer nonsense; and for the best of all possible reasons, that the multiplication of bunkers, especially of a ir way bunkers, materially assists the good player to steer his shot and focus distance, just as buoys and light-houses assist the skilful navigator to find his anchorage.

In my opinion the superiority of the American player is mainly due to the fact that he takes the game more seriously and devotes more time to practice than we do in England.

There are two schools of thought in golf course design.

(1) The strategic, which prevailed in Great Britain up to 1885, and which still prevails in the best courses laid out during the last twenty-five years in Great Britain, and more particularly in France and Belgium.

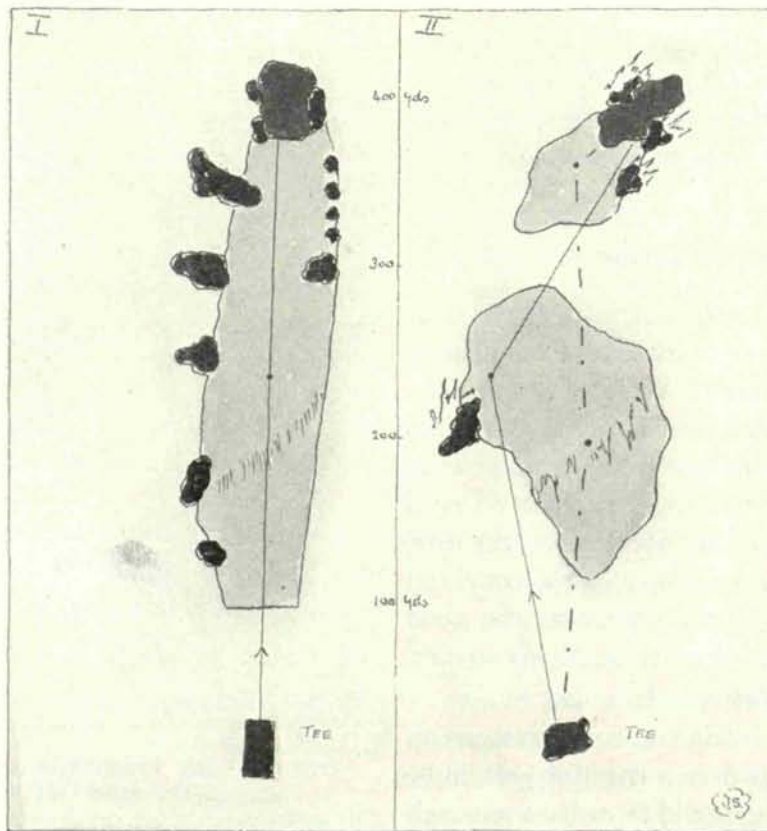
(2) The penal, which relies on the multiplication of bunkers.

It is a fact of some significance that most, if not all, of the advocates of penal methods, whether amateurs or professionals, have been, and still are, players in the very front rank. This fully bears out my contentions that the multiplication of bunkers assists the good player, and that their absence is both

unsatisfactory and disturbing to him.

The majority of the courses in America are penal. In this point lies the main difference between the principles of golf course design in Great Britain and America. I would mention, however, one exception in the fact that one of the most eminent strategic golf architects of the world is an American, practicing in America.

Before going further, it will be advisable to define more precisely what is meant when we use the terms



THE PENAL SCHOOL

THE STRATEGIC SCHOOL

The Tiger plays on the unbroken line. The hole as planned in Diagram II is a far more difficult test for the scratch player, and a fairer hole for the Rabbit, than the hole set out in Diagram I.

“penal” and “strategic.”

Broadly speaking, in the case of the penal school, the player is directly punished by the fact of his bad shot being trapped in a hazard. Diagram I, which is the exact plan of the second hole at the Inverness Golf Course in America, is a good illus-



tration of a penal hole. The strategic school, on the other hand takes the opposite point of view in regard to an excess of bunkers as a confession of weakness.

The strategic golf architect, in a word, hides his hand as much as he possibly can, and likes to keep the scratch player guessing. But if he is inclined to stress the advantage of not showing everything that he has in his mind, it does not mean that he will go to the length of actually deceiving the player. The result is that one of two things happens to the "Tiger," either that his good shot, which is not quite good enough, is trapped by a bunker placed at roughly 210 yards from the tee just off his most favorable line to the hole; or that his bad shot leaves him in such a position that, unless he brings off a very exceptional shot, he cannot possibly reach and remain on the green.

Both of these alternatives are well illustrated in Diagram II. This result is gained by the method of the orientation of the green to the second shot and the position of the wing hazards guarding the approach.

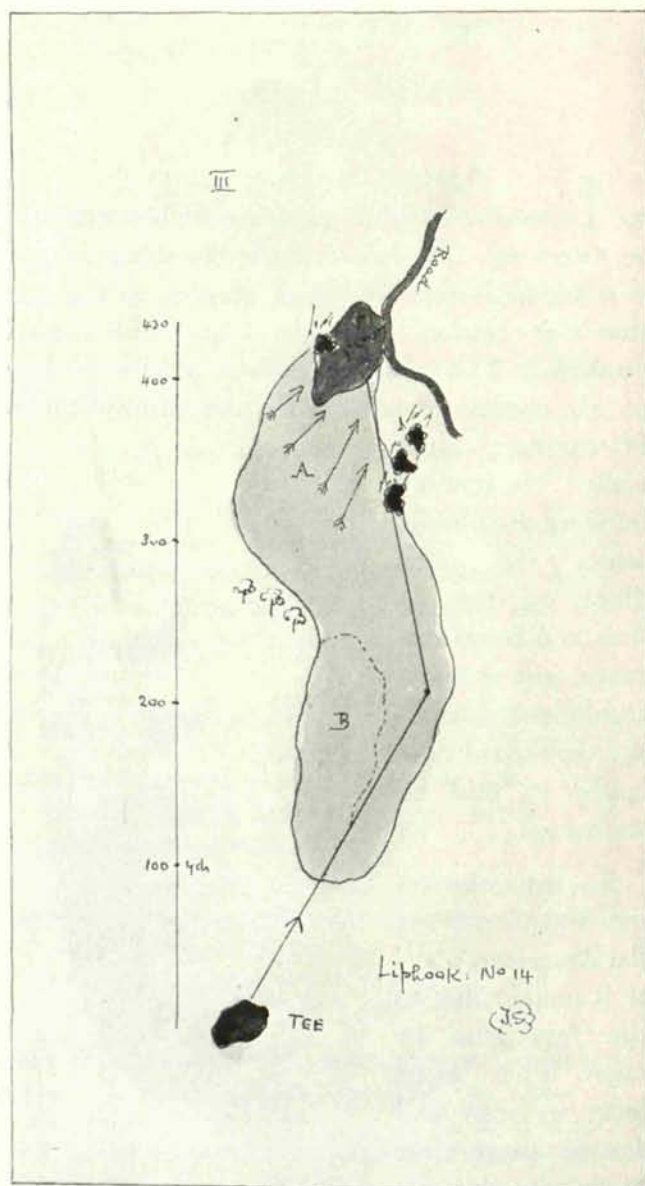
#### ENGLISH ADHERE TO STRATEGIC PRINCIPLE

**I**N my own practice, I adhere strictly to the strategic principle, and never countenance the placing of fairway bunkers to catch a bad shot. If the skeleton plan is well arranged, and if the fairways are properly shaped and the greens and their wing hazards are orientated correctly, there is no need whatever for fairway bunkering. In fact, the view I take is that to plaster a fairway or the rough on either side with bunkers merely assists the good player and has the effect of quite needlessly irritating the long handicap man.

I may be asked: "Why do you lay such stress on strategic holes?" My answer is that for golf to be enjoyed at its best there should be at least as much need for mental agility as for physical capacity. Let there be no possible misunderstanding. Nowhere in the world is there a single example of a classic hole that is a straight-forward hole. For a hole to be really great, it must possess the qualities one finds in the man who "lives by his wits," who "sails near the wind," in the conduct of his business.

There must be qualities about a hole that escape the notice of the superficial observer. Take, for example, the seventeenth hole at St. Andrews. This is a hole which Mr. Robert Jones can reach with a

drive and a full iron shot. But when he played and won his last championship at St. Andrews, he never once attempted to be hole high with his second, and for the best of all reasons—that it would not pay him to do so, having regard to the character of the



THIS IS A HOLE WHERE THE LONGEST WAY ROUND, IS THE SHORTEST WAY HOME

*The putting green is so fashioned in relation to the tilt on the fairway (left to right) at (A), that it will not receive and hold a second shot played from anywhere in zone (B). The width of that portion of the green between the bunker and the road is 12 yards.*

ground near the flag, the small bunker eating into the green on the left, and the road running behind the green.

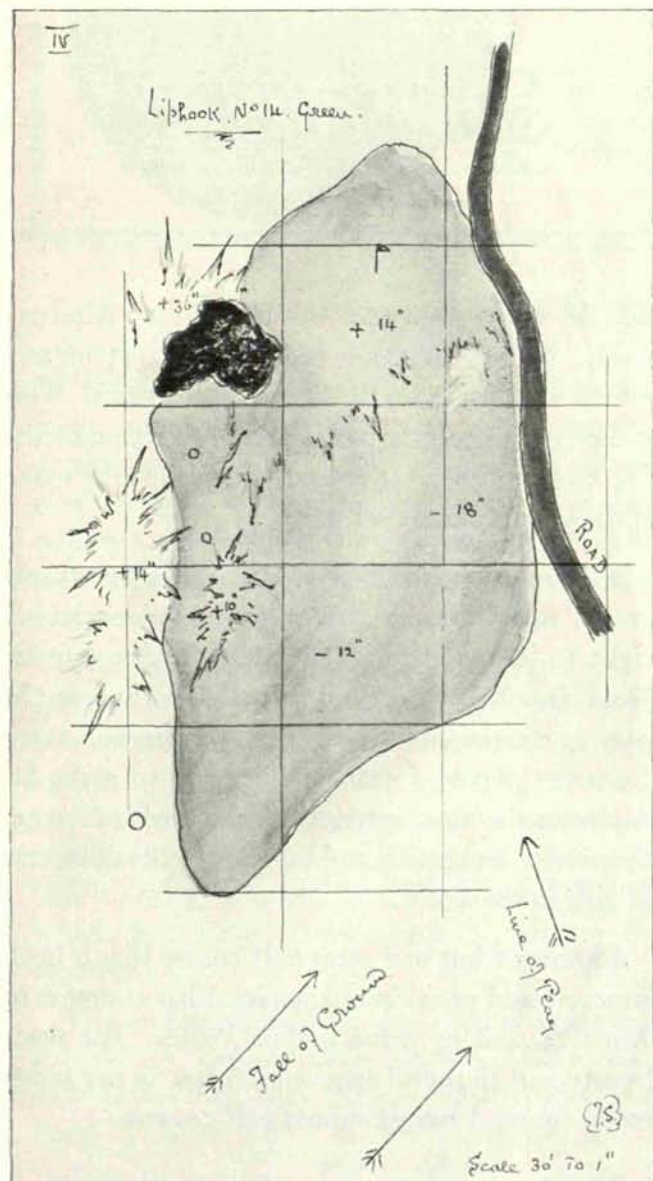
#### 17TH AT ST. ANDREWS A GREAT HOLE

**T**HIS hole has met with more vituperation than any hole in the world; yet it is without doubt the greatest two-shotter that exists. Its mischievous qualities begin to dominate the player from the



moment he has holed out on the sixteenth green, although the trouble, such as it is, is over 400 yards away. In this connection let it be insisted that no golf course architect knows his business unless he realizes that his primary duty is to mentally excite

main on the upper part of the green where the hole is cut, having regard to the tilt in the ground 50 yards short of the green and the manner in which the green is constructed. This hole is illustrated in Diagrams III and IV.



DETAIL OF THE 14TH GREEN AT LIPHOOK

*The tilt of the ground in front of the green, also the contour of the green itself requires a second shot to be played on the right hand side of the fairway.*

the "Tiger," and that at the earliest possible moment.

Again, take the fourteenth hole at Liphook, where the longest way round is the most effectual and the shortest way to play it. The careless golfer, who does not elect to use his intelligence, when he sees a dog-leg such as this latter hole, running from right to left, takes the shortest route; but it is quite certain that, if he does so he will never be able to re-

The average penal course has anything between a hundred and two hundred bunkers. In my opinion sixty bunkers at the most are sufficient for any golf course.

During the twenty years in which I have been laying out golf courses, I have never ceased to remind myself that, while I have not great affection for the scratch golfer, I wish to serve the interests of the lower handicap man, who after all is the mainstay of most golf clubs.

#### ESSENTIALS OF LAYOUT DESCRIBED

**I**T is, after all, a perfectly simple matter to lay out a course which is a searching and fair test for the "Tiger," and at the same time provides a happy hunting ground for the long handicap player. As briefly as possible, I will endeavor to explain how this double object is achieved. There are only three general rules to be observed, which may be summarized as follows:

(1)—The center of the fairway must never—except perhaps once in the round, for the sake of variety—be the true line to the hole at two-shotters and three-shotters. Compare the positions in Diagrams I and II.

The fairway must be so orientated to the tee as immediately to present the "Tiger" with a problem. On one side or the other, the rough should live with the ideal tee shot from the moment the ball is struck until it comes to rest. This well illustrated in Diagram II.

If, on the other hand, the hole is planned as in Diagram I, there is a wide expanse of fairway on both sides of the shot during the greater part of its flight. In other words, if the ideal line to the hole be the center of a fairway, it is the line on both sides of which there is a wide margin for error, and this is manifestly ridiculous.

(2) Eliminate, as far as possible, buoys and light-houses in the form of fairway bunkers, and on no account let it be obvious at a glance how the hole should be played. Leave a wide



expanse of fairway innocent of bunkers on the side which is not the true line to the hole.

(3) Orientate the green properly for the second shot, and place with the greatest care the wing hazards guarding the approach. This is well illustrated in Diagram II. Here, the orientation and shape of the green is such that it will only receive and hold a ball that is played from the extreme left of the fairway.

These features are no hardship to the long handicap player who, if he is prudent, should not try to reach, or expect to reach, a hole of this length in two shots.

#### HOW ENGLISH AND AMERICAN COURSES DIFFER

I HAVE said that the main difference in design between courses in America and Great Britain lies in the fact that most American courses are penal in character, while all our good courses are strategic. There are also two other points of difference. In England we place our greens, as far as possible, just

# Grass Seed of Known Quality

TESTED for PURITY and GERMINATION  
Prices and information on request

*Stumpp & Walter Co*

Specialists in Golf Grass Seeds and Equipment  
30-32 Barclay St., New York

beyond the ground that has folds in it. Alternatively, we manufacture these folds short of our greens where Nature has not provided them. This is the type of terrain which is characteristic of the Old Course at St. Andrews, and has helped to make it the great course that it is.

The second point of difference is that we tilt our greens more than is the custom in America—a right-to-left or left-to-right tilt as the case may be. Not infrequently the tilt is from the entrance to the back of a green—that is to say, the green falls away from the player, a feature that goes to make St. Andrews the most interesting, the most exacting, the most exasperating and the most enthralling test of golf in the world.

I know of but one great golf course that is both strategic and penal in character. That course is in America, and its name is Pine Valley. For sheer beauty and all round excellence it has, in my judgment, no rival among inland golf courses.

Grass Seed  
Fertilizers  
Rollers  
Distributors  
Buckner Sprinklers  
Toro Equipment  
Milorganite  
Arsenate of Lead

*J. Oliver Johnson, Inc.*

World's Largest Golf Course Equipment House

Morgan-Huron-Superior Sts.

CHICAGO, ILL.

© Reg. J O J Inc. 1928



#### Helps Keep Greens and Fairways Trim

With the Peerless Mower Sharpener dull cutting edges give way to keenness that enables mowers to run easier, on less power, with more speed. New reconditioner permits "lapping in" with emery paste after grinding.



The Peerless is the only sharpener that replaces dull cutting units with keen razor-like edges. Sharpens all makes of power, horse and hand mowers. A great time and money saver.

The Fate-Root-Heath Co.

825 Bell Street

PLYMOUTH, O.

Write for catalog and list of users.