Golf Architects New Survey Examines Slow Play Problem

What can the golf course architect do in his design to speed up play?

Reduce hazards and size of greens was the most frequent response of members of the American Society of Golf Course Architects in a recent survey. Other answers ranging from fairway adjustments to building more golf courses also came into play.

"Puttering" around on monstrous greens and flailing away in sand traps are time-consuming, frustrating experiences for golfers as well as those waiting in the fairway.


Hazards and excessively large greens alone are not to blame for the slow play problem. The imaginative professionals who design golf courses are well aware that golfers' abilities determine the degree of ease with which they conquer challenges. "Eliminate some sand traps and water hazards that bother the average player," is the solution of William H. Johnson of Rialto, Calif. Further agreement is expressed, by William James Spear of St. Charles, Ill., who says, "Do not use an overabundance of hazards and locate them so they primarily catch the low handicap golfers." Spear introduces another aspect: "Keep wooded areas adjacent to fairways free of undergrowth so golfers can easily locate their balls." That would certainly be a welcome relief, not only from the speed-of-play angle, but financially as well!

William Howard Neff of Salt Lake City has a five-point program aimed at faster play on the links: 1) Keep the number of hazards to a minimum, yet effective for strategic play; 2) keep green sizes between 6,000 and 7,500 square feet; 3) avoid severe slopes on putting surfaces; 4) keep landing areas generous but well defined; 5) avoid use of shrubs, bushes and higher grass in play areas."

Fairway design is another area that was frequently mentioned as architects considered ways that their designs could speed up play. "Avoid possible conflicts of adjoining fairways; widen the fairways at distances beyond ability to reach greens."