

Programmed flag positions give variety to the play

John Lelean suggests ways for making courses more interesting for club members

Who decides the daily tee marker and green cup positions on your golf course?

Usually it is left to the greenstaff to move the markers and cut new hole positions whenever they consider it necessary.

Some clubs consider this to be a daily maintenance task, others select new positions less frequently, but regardless of how often, is there any planned programme of positioning or is it just a mere whim of the man who sets forth armed with the hole cutting equipment?

There is a direct correlation between the siting of the tee markers and the pin position on the green. Both influence the degree of difficulty when playing the hole.

The third factor to be considered is the prevailing weather conditions on the day, fine and sunny, cold and wet, a gentle breeze or a howling gale that can turn a difficult par four into an equally difficult par five.

Golf is a game that should be fair to the medal player and for match play. If the standard scratch for the course is 72, it should be laid out to play to that score, equally, to the handicapped golfer as well as the scratch player.

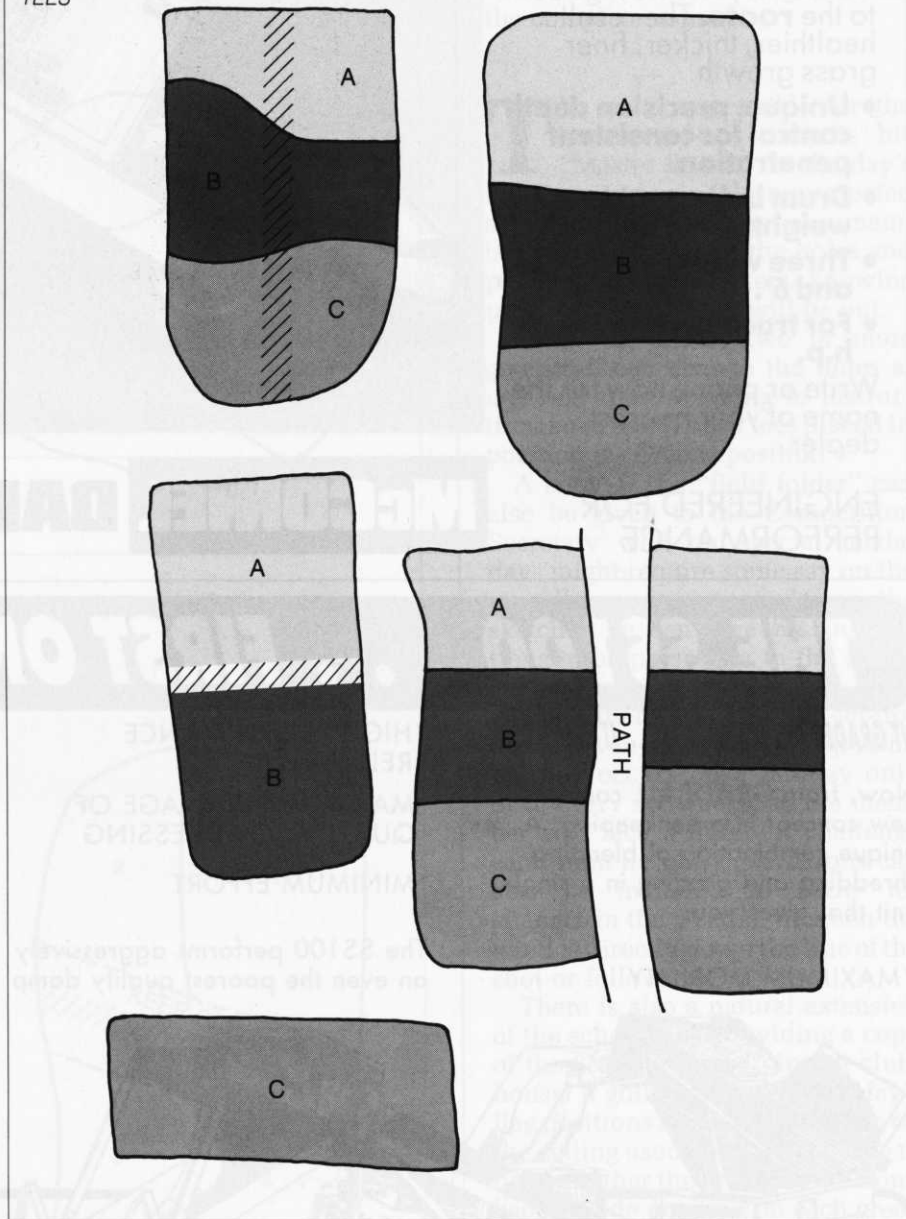
There is no point in extending the course by putting the pin at the back of the green, shielded by a bunker from the approach shot and moving the tee boxes alongside the distance markers if the golfer has to play into the teeth of a gusting north easterly.

In match play the stroke index for each hole is designed to reflect the degree of difficulty. To artificially alter the index by stretching the hole on days of adverse conditions or for that matter reducing it when the weather is perfect will not make the greenstaff many friends among the members.

There is also a fourth dimension that should be considered and that is the player. Few golfers hit every shot down the middle, they are either hookers or slicers.

All too often the course is set up to cater for one type of golfer, and this

FIGURE 1
TEES



particularly applies to pin positioning where the cups are regularly cut on one side of the green, giving for instance the right to left player a considerable advantage over the left to right hitter.

Some simple pre-planning will not only solve these problems, but give a great deal of

variety to playing the course as well. It will also curb the moans from the golfer who plays on a set day of the week, such as a Sunday, only to find that the flag on the green is always in the same place.

The first step to introduce variety, involves drawing rough sketches of all eighteen tees. The tees are then surveyed to choose marker position areas ranging from the most difficult

MANAGEMENT

to comparatively easy and marked on the sketch plan in three distinct areas (see fig. 1), marked A, B & C.

The forward Ladies tees should also be treated in similar fashion in instances where their teeing areas are greater than 150 square feet.

Next, draw up sketch plans of the

eighteen greens, showing both sand bunkers and other hazards adjacent to the putting surfaces.

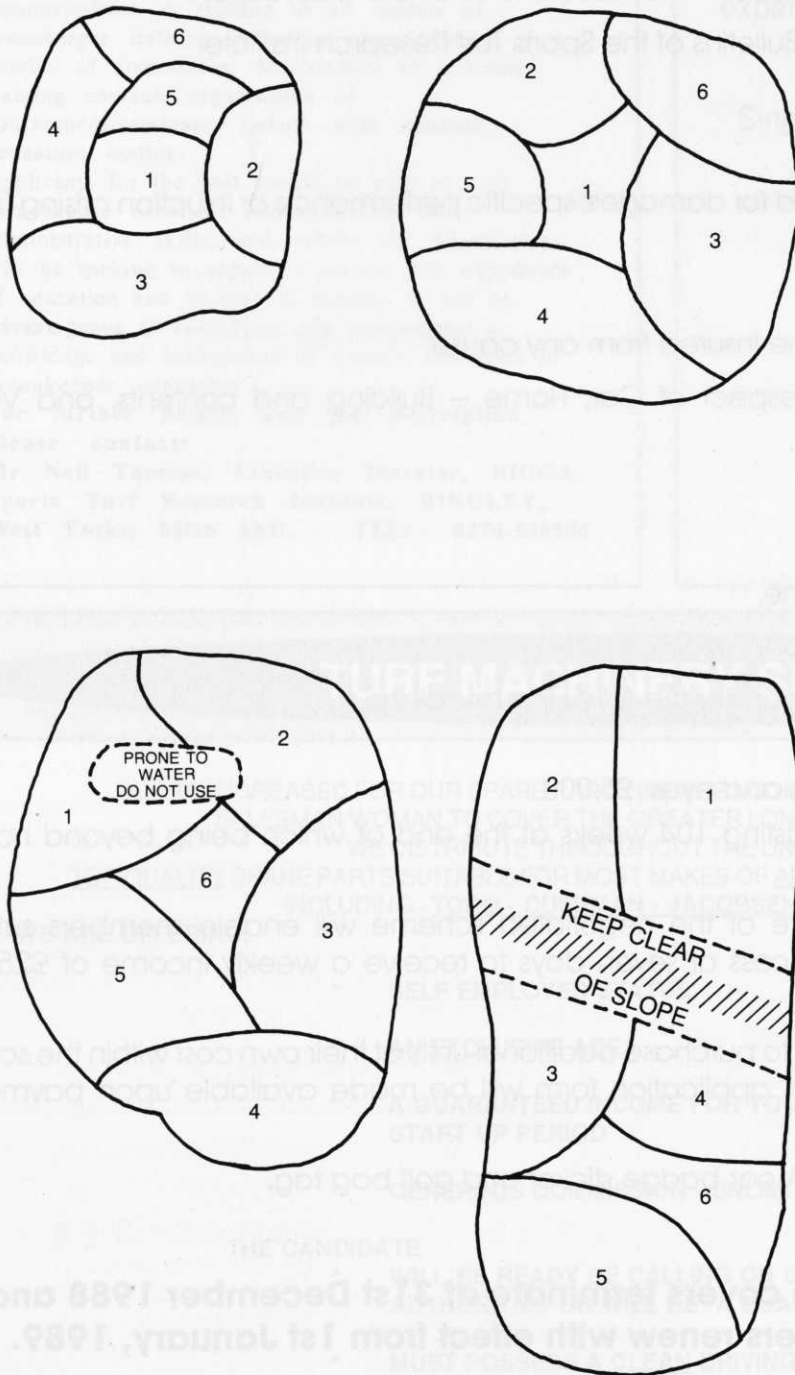
The green plans are now divided up into six segments on the sketch, ignoring any areas where a pin position is totally unfair, such as a steep slope, covered from the approach by

tree or lying in a hollow prone to fill with water in a thunderstorm.

The six segments are now numbered from 1 to 6 for all eighteen greens and these plans form the basis of a "Master Board" located in the Greenkeeper's Shed (see fig. 2).

It is a simple matter to extend this record on to a separate card for each tee and green, reproducing the "Master Board" into a ring folder for the complete course.

FIGURE 2
GREENS



The man responsible for the course set-up, consults his "Master Board" for the day's locations and using the now created set-up card can instruct any member of staff to change the holes and position the tee markers, knowing precisely where they will be put.

Using the cards, two or more greenstaff can change the holes at any one time, working to instructions such as - "Today tees placed in position B - Greens position 4."

A copy of the "field folder" can also be given to the Competition Secretary who on special medal days might require some say on the overall course set-up. Using the sketches he can give his instructions to be passed on to the actual hole-cutter.

Since there are now six set-ups over a seven day cycle, set-up number one occurs on a Sunday only once every six weeks, so the member will face a different challenge each time he plays. Variations can also be included to allow for changes in the weather or when the wind is directly down the line of the shot or following.

There is also a natural extension of the scheme. By providing a copy of the "Master Board" in the clubhouse. If golfers are told - "Today's flag positions are at 1, depending on the coding used, they will be able to note whether the hole is at the front, back or side position on each green before setting off on the round.

This is essential information on courses with a number of "blind" holes or on par 3s, where the bottom of the flag-stick cannot be seen from the tee.

This simple and straightforward scheme will not only please your members but has the added benefit of spreading wear on tees and greens.

Why not try it?