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**Roland Taylor looks at modern day course furniture and gives some advice about how it could be put to best use**

# Finishing touches

With all that is involved in turf management on a modern golf course, it is easy to overlook other aspects that are going in to making it one which golfers will want to join or keep returning too. Most courses that have been constructed over the last two decades are commercially based simply due to the investment involved. Attracting members and visitors requires more than paying attention to the playing surface of the course.

## **Image**

Modern marketing has indoctrinated the public and, as a result, has heightened their expectations - none more so than in the field of leisure activities. Public perceptions have become one of the most important elements in any business, and, make no mistake, the majority of golf courses are operating in this league. It is a highly competitive world and so the road to success means standing out from the rest. These days having a corporate identity is very fashionable and this usually includes a logo. These are ideal for including on suitable items of course

furniture such as flags and tee signage. The presentation of each hole is important and money spent on this certainly enhances the image.

Today's work environment is highly stressful so when it comes to leisure, people want to feel relaxed and comfortable. For a majority of golfers the tranquillity and visual aspects of a course are part of the enjoyment of the game. Creating the right image and atmosphere is what it's all about.

For things to run smoothly people need information and instructions, but this should be done discreetly, otherwise it can be irritating and unsightly. Therefore the inclusion of any signage, whether out on the course or around the complex, needs to be carefully thought through so that it blends into the surroundings without being intrusive.

As far as responsibility for course furniture and signage is concerned this will depend on each club. At a new venue it will probably be the architect, but for older, established courses it may fall to the Course Manager or greenkeeper.

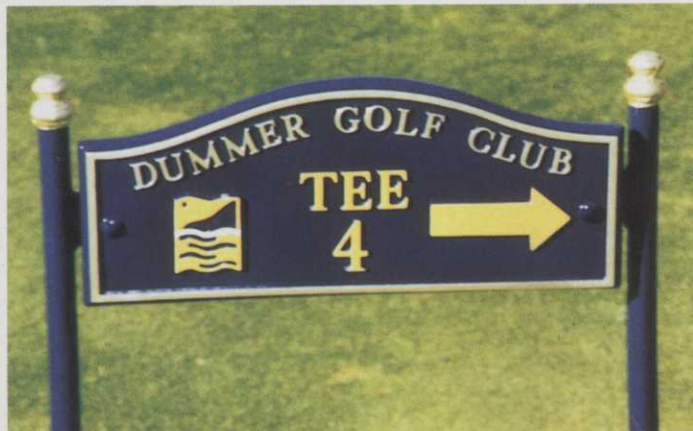
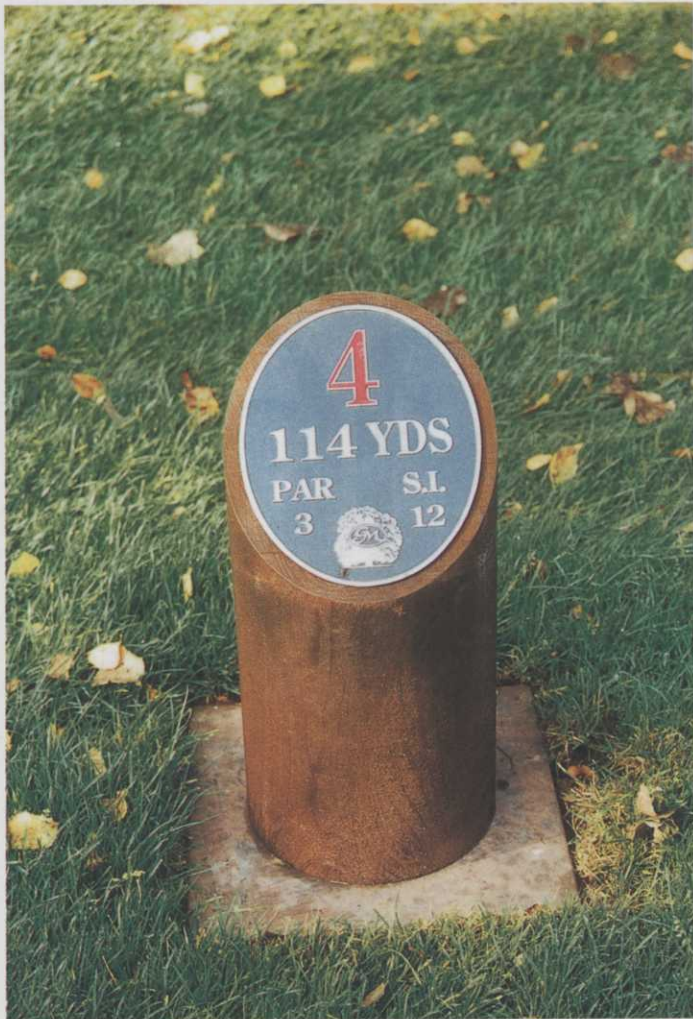
## **Taking stock**

Golf is now playable virtually 365 days of the year, although spring and summer are naturally the busiest periods. Now is an ideal time to take stock and look to improve the present situation. As most courses are relatively exposed, winter gales and the accompanying rain or snow can play havoc with course accessories, especially signage. Some renovation work will very likely have to be carried out and, quite possibly, replacements are going to be required. In this situation you will need to take a look at what is available and to check out the latest technology.

## **Latest technology**

In recent years, modern technology has introduced processes that produce some very adaptable compounds. Manufacturers have turned these into highly durable accessories that can take most of what nature throws at them for years to come. The selections on offer can be blended with the environment where they are going to be located. For instance, a course, which is situated in a specific geological area,

# Finishing touches



can have artificial boulders that match the natural rock found in that location. This means that man made additions can be naturally blended into the landscape to enhance an area where they are sited. Likewise logs can be used in a woodland setting. If this material is being used ensure it is of the highest quality hardwood and treated for longevity.

Whichever base product is used plates or plaques of either zinc, slate or cast bronze can be attached to provide information. Using a photographic process, a logo, and diagrams of the hole - in fact virtually anything can be etched onto these plates. The surfaces are then coated in epoxy resins and polyurethane. This protects them from sunlight and the ravages of weather as well as keeping them looking good for many years, with only a minimum of maintenance.

## Siting

When siting any new signage it is

important to take into account how it will be kept free of the grass that will grow around it. If no provision is made to deal with this problem then it may result in much time consuming grass cutting. Small items can be lifted out of the way, but large boulders and posts cannot be moved. One solution is to dig out an area around the object and line it with weed depressant material such as butyl or polythene. This is then covered this with a layer of stones, pea grit or wood chippings to a level just below the surface of the surrounding turf. You can then mow easily to the edge.

## Routes

There is another exercise worth carrying out at this time of the year. Most readers will know their course like the back of their hand, as will the members. But what about visitors? Have you ever followed the directions on a signpost for a particular village or town only to find at the next junction the

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name is not on the board or there is no signpost? Are there any areas on your course where this could happen? Try walking the course imagining you are a visitor and check all the pathways (especially in wooded areas) - you may be surprised.

Generally, signage on a course imparts information whilst around the clubhouse or complex it is more likely to be instructive such as where to park (and where not to!) or directions to facilities. However, the type of signage can be all of the same design so that a corporate image runs throughout.

### Minimal usage

Whatever the policy of the club there is one important factor that should be at the forefront of any decision about signage - minimal usage. This has proved to be more effective than when it is overdone.

When looking to purchase new signage it is worth consulting specialist

firms since they have the experience and can advise on design and the best and most effective positioning.

### Summary

Those clubs with a membership waiting list are fortunate, but there are plenty of others who need to attract new members and visitors. The initial impression of a club and the overall images perceived are all-important. It is not just the greens, tees and fairways upon which potential new members will judge a course. There are a host of other factors that add significantly to the total picture. Course accessories, including signage, are just one of the facets. These should not be taken for granted as they could contribute to the reason why someone fails to join or return. If it is done right it makes life easier for the players, they notice the care, attention to detail and investment, plus you are increasing the chances of them returning for another round.

