

So Your Golf Course Needs a Face Lift!

After a busy summer season, many golfers — as well as course owners and managers — recognize that their courses need a “face lift.”

Many older courses were designed before the advent of the modern ball and clubs, and the hazards no longer come into play for the better golfers for whom they were intended.

With our mobile society, many golfers are able to play some of the newer courses around the country, which feature multiple tees, well-bunkered greens, and lakes that not only provide a visual accent, but serve as water retention basins.

John Watson, president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, points out that there are other areas to study in a comprehensive master plan, such as fairways, irrigation system, landscape treatment and cart paths.

The actual redesign of a golf course can cover several elements. The architect, he explains, will evaluate the course, keeping in mind its integrity and the character that should be maintained, when developing a master plan that may well be phased in over a period of years.

An effective remodeling program, Watson notes, does not mean a total reconstruction program. The architect, in conjunction with a players' committee, manager, superintendent and pro — will review the following:

TEES: Tees establish playability and are prime targets of improvement. They tend to be much larger and longer than in the past because of the beating they take from concentrated play. It is not uncommon for tees to cover 5,000 to 7,000 sq. ft. in area on the modern course.

FAIRWAYS: “Sparking up” a fairway can involve the reshaping of mounds, bunkers, lakes or ponds, Major gradework may be required to eliminate blind spots or to soften severe terrain.

BUNKERS: The trend has been toward milder convolutions of the edges of the bunkers and more gentle rise from the bottom of the bunker to the top edge. Gentler contours make it easier to cut the edges with power mowers, reducing time and labor expenses.

PONDS: Artificial ponds may be recommended. They enhance visual impact, offering a stimulating challenge if they are strategically placed, and serve as a valuable water source. The excavated material can often be used to rebuild bunkers and mounds.

IRRIGATION SYSTEM: Good irrigation systems can't be overemphasized. The trend is toward completely automated systems. Installing an irrigation system is a relatively simple procedure. An 18-hole system can be installed in 4-5 weeks and is generally less disruptive than club members think. An automatic system can conserve water, reduce labor expenses and allow watering during night time hours.

GREENS: The shape, size and protecting features of each green should be in direct relation to the approach shot. Although larger than those of earlier eras — a good average size is 6,500 sq. ft. — today's greens should offer variety. More and variable pin placements are possible with larger greens that also alleviate problems caused by heavy play. Gentle undulations permit the use of machine mowers and reduce the risk of scalping. The green should be designed to drain in more than one direction. It is possible to enlarge a green but the best way is to reconstruct it entirely. It is less of a task to install additional drainage than

(cont'd. on bottom of page 21)

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A Letter from Grau

Dear Fred:

The October 1985 issue made interesting reading. A soil probe is not one of the traditional tools of the golf professional. He is known as a teacher of the game, not ever as an agronomist. But, it might be possible that he had joined the crew of the superintendent and was acting under orders.

In my office hangs a plaque, presented to me by Dr. Henry Indyk at N.J. Expo, on which appears "An Ode to Grass" credited to John J. Ingalls, U.S. Senator from Kansas. This could clear up to anonymity or it could further confuse.

A new horizon has emerged for the golf course superintendent. No other class of professionals enjoys the enviable reputation of providing beautiful turf. There exists today a concerted coordinated effort to help provide information on Safer Sports Turf to reduce injuries. An egg dropped 15 feet on good cushiony firm resilient turf doesn't break. Drop an egg 12 inches on a bare playing field, compact and grassless, and you have a mess!

Some superintendents now assist club members with their lawns. A few blocks away is the athletic field where the members children play as athletes. Some may simply give advice, some may help by organizing money - raising events to finance the improvements; others may get involved physically by providing equipment for soil cultivation, fertilizing, seeding or sodding. Some superintendent chapters of GCSAA actively support fund raising that helps to defray costs of the Sports Turf. Research and Education Committee which represents every element of the turfgrass industry. States involved include Ohio, Oregon, Maryland, Minnesota, Michigan. Canada, too, is involved.

Most states, at the agricultural experiment stations, employ extension turfgrass specialists. They are far too few to meet the rising demand for SST. G.C. Supers can extend their efforts by working together. Never has there been a more worthy cause to which turfgrass professionals can rally.

The enclosed ad (copy) will appear in several publications soon. We want every parent to know that there are those who know how to grow grass, yes, even on Sports fields! Not golf turf, but tough turf. The agronomic principles are the same.

Public recognition of those who are involved in SST will come as a matter of course. Athletes are ready for natural grass turf that reduces injuries. There are sports fields masterminded by superintendents that have records of "No injuries in 3-4 years." Will other superintendents meet the challenge?

When I began this letter I intended to write briefly. Good intentions pave the way to hell, it is said. Well, I'll see you there — (some of you, anyway).

Fred V. Grau
President & Chm. ST R & E Committee

(Facelift for Courses cont'd.)

is supposed. Critical areas can be retiled and backfilled and the sod replaced within one day.

LANDSCAPE TREATMENT: A long range tree planting program is generally the first item a club selects to execute in a master plan. Many clubs find a detailed planting program an excellent method for replacing maturing trees and supplementing existing plantings. It is not unusual to find clubs establishing their own nurseries in preparation for their landscaping program.

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