

## The Maintenance Zone

by Bob Lohmann

While attending the GCSAA International Golf Course Conference and Show in San Francisco, I had a chance to sneak away and visit the Monterey Peninsula. The AT&T golf tournament was on and I was able to walk the Cypress Point Club and Pebble Beach golf courses. Talk about a spectacular golf course; I have seen photos and television shots of both courses, but neither can do them justice.

The terrain on Cypress Point varies in the most exciting way. The 3rd through 7th holes are wooded hillside holes, and the 8th through 12th are inland in character. The 13th, 14th, and 18th are seaside holes, and the 15th, 16th, and 17th are spectacular cliff-top golf holes.

The common denominator of all the holes is the intense maintenance style practiced on the greens, tees, fairway landing areas, and sand bunkers adjacent to the target areas. These features were in excellent shape and provided the golfers with ideal playing conditions. The intense maintained areas were not small targets, but were adequate spaces that allowed the golfers some error in their golf shots.

On the majority of the holes, the golfer has an avenue for advancing the ball toward the green without being forced to carry a hazard. Because Cypress Point is a private club with limited membership and is also a championship course, the forced carries on the oceanside holes are not only acceptable, but make the golf course unique and memorable. The remainder of the golf course is traditional and strategic. It is a relatively short playing course of between 6300 and 6500 yards and has greens that are small, contoured, and well bunkered.

Most impressive to me was the stark contrast between the golf course playing area and the adjacent property, which was attractive and defined the target areas of the golf course.

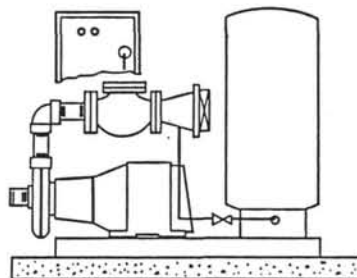
These sandy dunes and rough grasses adjacent to the highly maintained playing area had far less maintenance attention and in some areas had none at all. This unmanicured style amplified the intense maintenance practices on the playing areas and made the subtle design features more noticeable.

No doubt, in this case, the site was an aid in developing an outstanding golf course. But the design of the architect, Dr. Mackenzie, and the current maintenance style have made the golf course somewhat of a spectacle.

This maintenance style could be adopted by many private clubs whose maintenance budgets are unmanageable. With proper consideration for the club superintendent, its members, and other golfers, the course should be examined for areas that require less maintenance. Any money saved from using less water, fertilizer, fungicides, or labor could be applied toward the maintenance of the playing areas on the golf course. This shift in maintenance style would not save much money initially because of the costs associated with developing the native habitat. But the minimum amount of maintenance required once the course was established would result in significant cost savings as well as a classic golf environment.

"Natural look" golf courses are often talked about today. They can offer diversity, variety, and distinction if properly designed and maintained. The basic premise is to work with the existing features of the land. The architect and superintendent must capitalize on the natural advantages of the landscape to adopt this style successfully and make it acceptable to the members.

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