

Why 18 Holes?

John N. MacLeod

I can remember my grandfather telling me stories of his early years in Kilmarnock, Scotland, at the turn of the century before he immigrated to the United States. He worked as a young lad in the local distillery running errands for a Mr. Walker... that is, Johnny Walker, chairman of the board of that famous Scotch whiskey company. He told me that he had once delivered to Mr. Walker some of the latest American Haskell wound golf balls, Mr. Walker being an avid golfer. The following story, however, takes place some 50 years before, about the time gutta percha, or rubber balls, were first introduced, and where another "board member" and some Scotch whiskey play an interesting role in the fate of the game of golf.

Why couldn't a golf course have 10 or 13 or 21 holes? Well, it seems that back in 1858, the board of one of the oldest, most venerable courses in Scotland sat all day trying to settle this very question. There were 7-hole courses, 13-hole courses and 15-hole courses. At one time, the famous St. Andrews itself was made up of 22 holes; and another, the Montrose, had 25. Finally, after fruitless all-day discussion, it is said that one of the Scottish board members, an elder of very good standing, arose and spoke as follows:

"You good men have been considering this situation for many hours. I have been hoping you would decide along lines agreeable to me without any insistence on my part. I see, however, that I must now speak for myself. As you know, it has long been my custom to start out for a game with a full bottle of

Scotch whiskey in my bag, treating myself to a wee nip on each tee. Naturally, I find it pleasant to play golf as long as there is a drink left in the bottle. And, it makes no sense to continue the game when the bottle is exhausted. Here I have a small glass which contains about an ounce and a half. I have found that one bottle will fill this glass just 18 times, so it has been my custom to play 18 holes each afternoon, no more, no less. I see no possible way of changing from this custom, unless the bottles are larger, which I fear would be too marked a difference in our manufacturing life."

And that's how a golf course came to have 18 holes. ■

Credit: Why 18 Holes?—Courtesy of the Milwaukee and Illinois St. Andrews Society

Director's Column

(continued from page 10)

advertisers, this publication would not be possible. Fred and Dave have done a great job! Let's show our support by contributing photographs and articles to *On Course*.

One final note. I think it was very fitting that the title for our publication came from one of the legends of our industry who had been the source for the title of its predecessor. A special Thank You to Bob Williams, who came up with the name *Bull Sheet* in 1947 and the title *On Course* in 1995. ■

Ask the Expert

(continued from page 22)

much this concept catches on remains to be seen. In reading articles about this topic, superintendents in other parts of the country claim to have cut their fertilizer costs due to the information gained through tissue testing. Others suggest that they are spending more on fertilizer; but in conjunction with a fertigation system, they are not using as much labor to put the products out on the course. Others still have documented that using less pesticides due to tissue testing has helped them grow healthier turf. Is tissue analysis in your future? ■

Brad Johnsen - Klein Creek

(continued from page 20)

for 22 years. Joyce is a special education school teacher for kindergarten and first graders. Together, the Arlington Heights residents are raising three children: Gary - 18, Phil - 14, and Julie - 8.

I asked Brad if any of his children would "follow in his footsteps" as he did to his grandfather. Brad politely said, "I love what I do, and I would not do anything else in my life, but it is not for my kids."

I, for one, am really looking forward to playing Klein Creek later this month. It is my understanding it will be a scramble format with a 10 a.m. shotgun. Look in your mailbox for details, and do not miss this chance to play Klein Creek. ■

