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# THE GOLF COURSE

A MONTHLY BULLETIN DEVOTED TO THE DIS-  
CUSSION OF MODERN METHODS AS APPLIED  
TO GOLF COURSE CONSTRUCTION AND UPKEEP

## A Plea for More Holes Between 400 and 480 Yards, and Fewer of Over 500

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**S**OONER or later, if I am not mistaken, holes of more than 500 yards in length will gradually disappear. The demand for length is not in this direction. What is required are more holes ranging in length from 395 or 400 to 480 or so; or, to put it plainly, better two-shot holes, and not "mongrel" holes of over 500 yards, where three strokes of any kind will do, yet no two shots will get there (occasionally this may happen, I may add, but very seldom). Standing on the tee of a hole a few weeks ago, where the length was something like 530-odd yards, two out of three of my opponents made remarks to the effect, "anybody's hole; we can't get home in two, anybody's home in three," and this happened exactly, for I half missed my second, played a moderate third to the edge of the green, and luckily sunk my putt—some four! The other three players each played fine drives, equally good seconds to within fifty yards of

the green, good approaches—good fives, all. Now, surely something is wrong with this type of hole. Therein lies a trouble to-day, providing much "food for thought," considerable study, and the modern golf course architect should be fully alive to it, for, I repeat again, we have not enough good holes between 400 and 480 yards.

Very few so-called three-shot holes are ever *three shots*. Holes of this type usually range from 500 to 550 yards or so, and provide too many loop-holes. Any one of three strokes may be topped, whether it be the tee shot, second or third, and the player will have a "fifty-fifty" chance of getting a "five par," also a half with an opponent who may have played three faultless strokes from tee to putting green, and who cannot do better than a "five par." Honestly, I cannot say this is as it should be. Holes of this length allow too many possibilities at the expense of the man who may have

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played three perfectly straight and well-placed strokes. We cannot entirely lay the blame to bad bunkering system in these days of modern construction of traps, etc.; then there must be a weakness somewhere. As a rule, these so-called "three-shot" holes are constructed in places and under conditions where the rise and fall, and character of the ground generally, lend themselves to this type of hole.

As a matter of fact, I have never yet seen a real "three-shot" hole—these holes generally simmer down to two good strokes, and either a pitch with a niblic or a mashie may be a run up; but whatever they are, under normal conditions they are never real tests, and I believe I am right in presuming that, as a rule, golf holes are laid out for "normal conditions."

If we are to have "three-shot" holes, then let them be made in such a fashion, and exacting, so that any *one* of three missed would mean *four* strokes to reach the green.

This could be done not merely by a bunker system alone, but by placing tees at varying distances and angles, so that they might be regulated according to the importance and class of the field and prevailing conditions, etc.

Next, I would make the "third" the all-important stroke; put a big premium on this shot (in fact, all strokes at same, so that the conditions at the time the pin are most important), with not more than a 50-foot entrance to the green. The green itself, on the small side, may be sixty feet wide, traps

right and left—but the entire back of the green I would leave "*open*," not trapped at all at the back, as is so often the case; rough grass, perhaps, but nothing worse. Strokes sliced and pulled naturally expect to be penalized, but there are limits to bunkering the back of golf greens. Players should be encouraged to be up, even to pass the hole! They should be educated to *aim straight*—not compelled to play short. The average golfer is often afraid to "go for it," as the saying goes, because the bunker at the back may "catch" him. This does not tend to encourage good golf, rather does it tend to frighten the player, the bunker at the back being mostly responsible. The mental effect is too great; in fact, if the bunker did not exist, he would go for it—and make it. Bunkers right and left he would forget, knowing there was a real chance "beyond the pin."

I am averse to long holes, which are neither "flesh nor fowl"—neither three strokes, yet considerably more than two. If the "lie of the land" be such that it lends itself so well as to make the third shot an extremely testing one and interesting—similar to No. 4 at Baltusrol, or No. 9 at Brookline—then they are passable; but there should always be at least two ways of playing can be met with the type of stroke demanded.

You, readers, are fully aware that in playing certain holes one day, you may play them just as well, but from an entirely different position, the next day. Herein lies not only part of the glorious uncertainty of the game, but the point must not be lost sight of. Seldom do we play the same hole in precisely the same position and under the same con-

ditions, especially if the course happens to be exposed to wind.

The two holes already mentioned are worthy of special attention and character, and must be termed "three-shot" holes (though both have been reached in two strokes).

They are really two good strokes and a short pitch; others there are, equally as long or longer, but few possess the qualities of these two. The fifth, Bræ Burn; also the seventh, fourteenth, and sixteenth, Baltusrol; fifth, St. Andrew's, Scotland; seventh, La Boulie, France; ninth, Prestwick, Scotland, and others, are worthy of mention, but, as a general rule, these holes may be reached from all kinds of positions. Any one of three strokes may be missed, or even half-topped at the right places, and still secure a par five and a "perfect" half.

As against these three-shot holes, contrast a few really good two-shot holes. Holes on the order of No. 15, Baltusrol; No. 3, Brookline; also Nos. 11, 12, and 15 on the same course, and Nos. 11 and 18, Bræ Burn, for distance; Nos. 2, 10, 12, 16, and 17, Sunningdale, England; Nos. 1, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 13, 15, 17, and 18, Sandwich—all between 400 and 490 yards. These are all typical first rate two-shot holes. Take, for instance, No. 15 at Baltusrol; what could appeal better to the golfing spirit than to lay the second at this hole "on the green"? I quote Baltusrol for the reason that this hole may be known best by most readers.

At Walton Heath, considered by some as one of the best inland courses in England, there are practically seven two-shot holes. At Deal, Kent, England, there are ten two-shot holes.

I am fully aware how difficult it is to make perfect holes. It is well-nigh impossible to have them suitable to every player, but holes ranging in length from 400 to 480 or even 490 yards, provided with a change of tees as conditions demand, seem to be better than any other type of long hole. There are comparatively fewer chances, the possibilities of recovering after missed strokes are lessened, whereas the better strokes are well rewarded. The individual who may have arrived on the green in two has a decided advantage over an opponent who may have missed his first or second, as at this distance he still will require three strokes, at least, should either of the first two be "dubbed."

It may possibly transpire that the individual who "dubbed" his second may, with a splendid recovery, lay the third to within a few feet of the cup, then sink the putt for a four; the opponent on the green in the specified number—two—may even take three putts and lose what seemed to be a certain win but a moment ago. This, of course, is bound to happen sometimes, but, as I have already stated, the chances are 90 per cent. in favor of the man who has played *two perfect strokes* on the green—and this is as it *should be*.

In conclusion, it may come as a surprise to some of my readers to know that of all the seven championship golf courses in Great Britain, there are only *six holes* in all these seven courses with holes of 500 yards and over. These courses, acknowledged to be the best in all Great Britain for championship tests, are St. Andrew's, Prestwick, and Muirfield, Scotland; and Hoylake, Sandwich, Deal, and Westward Ho!, England.

The fifth and fourteenth at St. Andrews measure 533 and 516 yards, respectively, while the twelfth at Prestwick measures 508; the sixteenth at Hoylake, 510; the seventeenth at Westward Ho!, 542, and the fourteenth at Sandwich, 505 yards. Neither Deal nor Muirfield possess any hole of more than 480 yards.

Out of seven of the finest golf courses in the world, only *six holes* of 500 yards or more out of one hundred and twenty-six holes! This is not saying much for the so-called "three-shot" holes. I might add that there are fifty holes ranging between 400 and 490, and twenty-seven between 360 and 390 yards.

Holes measuring 480 or 490 yards are no harder to reach in two strokes, generally, than holes around 400 to 440 yards. The elevation of the tee, in most cases, accounts for this.

Of all golf courses, I am of the belief that the Royal St. George's, Sandwich, Kent, England, is well worth

consideration. Its length is admirable.

Appended are the lengths, hole for hole:

1st, 496 yards; 2nd, 312; 3rd, 250; 4th, 415; 5th, 400; 6th, 160; 7th, 490; 8th, 210; 9th, 410; 10th, 400; 11th, 390; 12th, 370; 13th, 481; 14th, 505; 15th, 440; 16th, 160; 17th, 405; 18th, 400.

Total length from official measurements, 6,594 yards.

Several others are:

*Deal, Kent, England*

1st, 330 yards; 2nd, 376; 3rd, 476; 4th, 150; 5th, 475; 6th, 282; 7th, 383; 8th, 480; 9th, 350; 10th, 375; 11th, 473; 12th, 163; 13th, 400; 14th, 195; 15th, 417; 16th, 483; 17th, 372; 18th, 414.

Total length, 6,593 yards.

*Hoylake, England*

1st, 420 yards; 2nd, 330; 3rd, 490; 4th, 155; 5th, 410; 6th, 365; 7th, 200; 8th, 460; 9th, 380; 10th, 400; 11th, 190; 12th, 355; 13th, 130; 14th, 485; 15th, 440; 16th, 510; 17th, 300; 18th, 400.

Total length, 6,480 yards.

(P. S.—Note the strong finishing holes on above three courses.)

*Westward Ho!*

1st, 430 yards; 2nd, 420; 3rd, 470; 4th, 357; 5th, 140; 6th, 352; 7th, 378; 8th, 191; 9th, 464; 10th, 345; 11th, 372; 12th, 436; 13th, 412; 14th, 166; 15th, 398; 16th, 138; 17th, 542; 18th, 405.

Total length, 6,416 yards.