

# So, you got some land for Christmas

BY BOB LOHMANN

So it's Christmas 1990 and you're thinking golf. You love the game. You love the sociability. You love nature. And you'd love to have your own golf course, even.

After all, when it's your course, certain critical decisions are yours to make. Like the famous singer who was asked what par is on a golf course he owns. He replied: "Anything I want it to be. For instance, the 18th hole is a par 47, and yesterday I birdied the sucker."

So-o, let's say you're getting a special Christmas present from a very special friend. Let's say your gift is 175 prime acres and the money to design and build your own course.

Have you thought of this before? Of creating 18 of the most challenging holes you can visualize, with doglegs, water, sand, protected greens?

The first item, then, is to determine your course's character. Think of it as a personality and its individual holes as personality traits.

Some traits are fun and fairly easy-going — a short, down-wind par 4. Other traits tough and demanding — a 220-yard par 3, for example.

The difficulty of the holes on your course is your decision. Just remember: To create a great course, you must create a balance of easy and difficult traits.

The next item to consider is whether you build a links course, like those in Scotland, or a more manicured American

version.

By definition, a true links course has no artificial features. So to create a course like St. Andrews, you would need hundreds of years — slowly receding seas to leave behind sandy dunes with ridges and furrows for the fairways; natural plateaus to become greens and tees; and animals to join forces with the wind and rain to create bunkers. In fact, the only architect involved is nature.

While patience is a virtue, waiting hundreds of years for a golf course to develop isn't the greatest idea. So let's say you were given land suitable for creating an American version golf course.

You now need to give your holes their character traits. There are three basic styles of hole design: penal, strategic and heroic.

- A penal hole is very basic. Virtually every poorly played or slightly errant

shot is severely penalized.

A good way to look at a penal hole is, it's fun for only the very best golfers.

- A strategic hole is designed so a golfer must play position to score well. Hazards in the fairways and around greens offer maximum reward for a well-placed shot. In most cases, the shots are not overly difficult. A golfer just needs to think ahead.

- A heroic hole is just that. A golfer can "go for it," but at the same time has options. In other words, both high- and low-handicap players have a route to the green. The key on a heroic hole is that rewards are big but failure promises almost certain disaster.

A good golf course combines and balances strategic and heroic holes. In today's era of golf, penal hole designs are selected infrequently because they tend to slow play and frustrate all but the best.

Nature plays an extremely important role in your design. Wherever possible, use natural elements and the topography of the land — hills, water, trees, plateaus.

Natural mounds and terrain will help create a flow for holes. Take the time to walk the course (in your mind).

Visualize a green nestled among trees. A hole that's uphill all the way. A tee high above the fairway.

Many golf course architects create as many natural holes as possible and use them as the base to build the course.

While your mind is "walking" your course, start to get a visual feel for the course layout and individual holes.

Here are a few basics to keep in mind. On a regulation golf course, par ranges



Photo courtesy of Fisher Island Golf Course in Miami



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When Trivial Pursuit creator Chris Haney bought a mountaintop site for a golf course in Caldeon, Ontario, Canada, this spot "jumped right out at us as an elevated green," said Dana Fry, project manager for architect Michael Hurdzan. Even the untrained eye could see the spot should look like the photo at the right.



from 70 to 73. A par 72, for example, usually has 10 par 4s, four par 5s and four par 3s. Yardage is up to you.

**Yardage Chart**

	Men	Women
Par 3	Up to 250	Up to 210
Par 4	251 to 470	211 to 400
Par 5	471 +	401 to 575
Par 6		576 +

Which route would you choose? And under what circumstances?

Greens and green protection should match the difficulty of the approach shot. On a medium-length par 5 or a short par 4, a small or target style green adds to the hole's character. To score well re-

quires a well-placed shot.

A long, treacherous par 4 means a long iron or maybe fairway wood for the approach shot. A larger, deeper green gives golfers extra leeway. But don't give away too much. A tier or undulating green will reward the excellent shot that much more.

On short par 3s, green protection is the name of the game. Bunkers, sand, water. Use them all if you so desire. On a long par 3 — over 180 yards — distance becomes a tough enough element for most golfers.

Sooner or later, a golfer ends up in the rough. And for most, it is sooner. With contour mowing and varied cut levels, you can create a fairway landing area, a

short rough and a long rough. A shot slightly off-target isn't penalized in the short rough as much as the shot that is ... well, sometimes golfers will call it an "ugly" shot.

Another factor to consider in building your course is the prevailing winds. More often than not, a hole facing west means hitting into the wind. Excellent for adding another dimension to a short par 3 or medium-length par 5.

A prevailing cross wind also is an element to be used. For example, a par 4 dogleg can easily go from cross wind to trailing wind. The key, for the course architect, is to use the winds to add another dimension to play. And when the

winds shift 180 degrees, the character of a hole changes. Going after a par 5 in two with a not-so-often trailing wind is simply irresistible for most golfers.

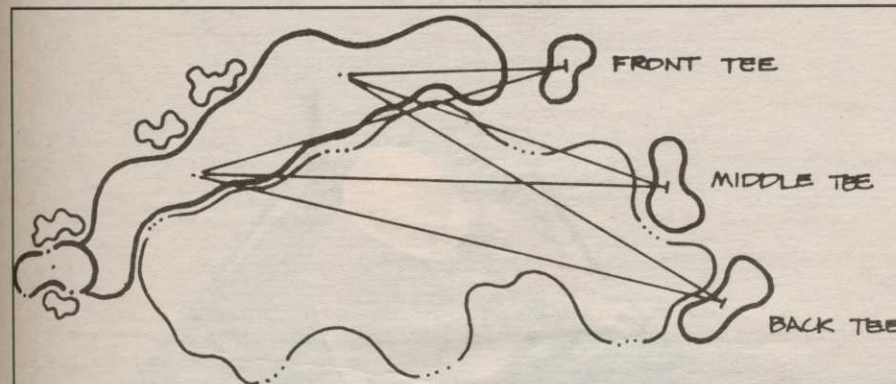
Trees not only add beauty, but they are another element to be used to enhance your course. Most of the time a golfer has to go around a tree, so well-placed trees can cause more headaches than a sand bunker or water hazard.

You have all the elements for a great course. Now, think about the course you play the most.

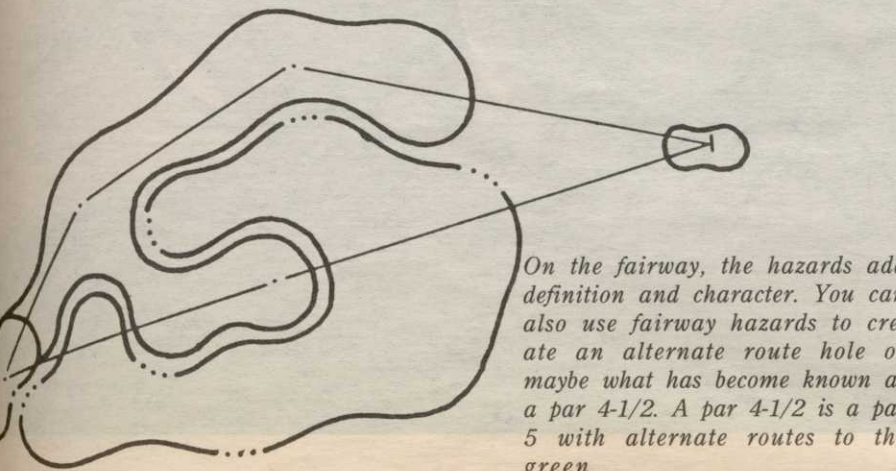
How would you have built it? What could you change? How could you make it better? After all, if it's your course, you can make par anything you want.



Chris Haney's dream of a golf course turned true. These photos show the transformation of one field into the 8th fairway at Devil's Pulpit.



Multiple tees can be used so a hole can be both strategic and heroic. From the back tees, it's a heroic 450-yard par 4 and a golfer goes for broke. Hitting from the middle tees, the hole plays 410 and strategy plays an important role.



On the fairway, the hazards add definition and character. You can also use fairway hazards to create an alternate route hole or maybe what has become known as a par 4-1/2. A par 4-1/2 is a par 5 with alternate routes to the green.

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