

In defense of flat-drain tile drainage and all concepts considered 'new'

By MICHAEL HURDZAN

The last issue of *Golf Course News* carried an article about using flat drain tile for green drainage, and outside of Casey Martin, few things in golf have generated more discussion in the past month or so.

Personally I am pleased that so many people read and tried to understand the logic and physics of what was trying to be accomplished. On the other hand I was a bit disappointed by the number of people who openly dismissed the concept, without ever trying it or seeing it work.

I have given this situation a great deal of thought to try to understand why some people are so afraid of change. Possible reasons may be that perhaps they have such a shallow understanding of how things work, that any deviation to what they now know is threatening.

Michael Hurdzan is a golf course architect and principal of Columbus, Ohio-based Hurdzan Fry Golf Course Design Inc.

Perhaps it is because to deviate from the standard way of doing things demonstrates some weakness in resolve, or to the way they have always done business. Perhaps it is a legitimate concern for their clients that to try something new is gambling with someone else's money. Any of those reasons are plausible and legitimate, to some degree.

But I am more concerned that it reveals far more fundamental problems: and those are a reluctance to be a life-long learner, lack of skills involved to make compromises, and a fear of progressive thinking. This is not healthy to individuals or our industry, for it signals a stagnation of thought.

Being a lifelong learner means living each day with a childlike curiosity that never ceases to question and/or understand the things around you. All children seem to naturally have that characteristic, but is somehow is lost as society turns them into opinionated teenagers and later cynical adults.

If you understand and believe the old adage, "the more we learn, the more we see that we know nothing about," then you are a life long learner. Knowledge is the fountain of youth for the brain and spirit.

The ability to make intelligent compromise is a learned skill that few people truly master, and perhaps that is why we bestow such great honors on our peacemaker and arbitrators. Finding the middle ground means objectively and intelligently weighing both sides of an issue, giving the benefit of the doubt, when it is due, and be willing to risk failure to gain a greater success.

Progressive thinking comes from an internal unrest to find a better way, an honest discontent about following the same path, or doing things the usual way. It is a quest to advance the art and science of whatever is your pas-



One of the earlier Hurdzan-Fry flat pipe installations. See GCN March, page 45.

sion. Athletes are constantly looking for new ways to train, improved technique and performance enhancing equipment.

Physicians seek new medical procedures and medicines, and people concerned with golf are looking for ways to improve the game and places it is played on.

Lifelong learning, skillful com-

promise and progressive thinking are not for everyone. There is nothing wrong with reaching a point where one decides that enough change is enough change. But I am reminded of another adage that says "all things are either in a stage of growth or a stage of dying." A

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Letter/WGA

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harming their enjoyment of the round. This is a golfer issue not a walking v. cart issue.

And we are doing something about it.

We are currently negotiating with the City of Rockville and the professional staff at their municipal layout, Redgate Golf Course, to partner in the creation of an educational video for golfers which will be filmed this spring.

This 15 minute video would be displayed in pro shops or concession areas and explain to players in a simple clear way a dozen speed of play or rule of play tips to speed their rounds. We want these tips to be something players immediately take to the course and use.

Once we are successfully educating golfers, then we want to help golf courses to train their marshals on how they can enforce these rules effectively. Marshal training is currently time consuming and potentially expensive for a golf course.

Marshal turnover is high, forcing continuous reeducation on part of the golf course creating inconsistency at a particular golf course and one course to the next.

To this end we intend to create a Marshal Training Program. This program, which will include a 30 to 60 minute video, work book and test will save golf courses hundreds if not thousands of dollars.

You know as a golfer, there is nothing more frustrating than a marshal flying up to your group and yelling at you for slow play when you have been the person waiting for others during the entire round and doing everything you can to get the group to pick it up.

You leave the golf course with a bad taste in your mouth feeling like that marshal has no idea what your group was doing or how to manage play on the course — let alone how to talk to

people.

Through our training program, a marshal will be taught how to quickly observe a group and then strategically engage with them in a positive way to speed up play. The program will, even more importantly, teach marshals how to manage and maintain play in the first place!

Many times marshals are the ambassador of a golf course. Other than the guy that took your money and the kid at the concession stand, you might not meet any other staff at the course. Therefore, it's in the interest of the golf course that marshals are well trained, personable and good shepherds.

'Once we are successfully educating golfers, then we want to help golf courses to train their marshals on how they can enforce these rules effectively.'

—Graham Whatley

This is actually where the opportunity comes in for *Golf Course News* and ourselves to work in some way with Redgate and the City of Rockville. How could we partner to distribute these marshal training videos and publicize this program? Our issue is not the pro-

duction but building a solid distribution network.

Furthermore, we are going to be conducting a lot of research in partnership with golf courses and the National Golf Foundation.

Redgate, for instance, is very interested in working with us on some of the problems they face.

Bottom line, our goal is not to be adversarial. Your article, I'm afraid appeared to portray us that way. We will not be able to work with and attract golf courses if they perceive we plan to order them to simply allow walking. It's unrealistic.

We believe this can definitely be a win-win situation for everyone.

Furthermore, I hope there is a way we can work together in the best interests of the spirit of the golf.

*Thank you,
Graham Whatley*

Hurdzan/flat pipe

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pretty harsh thought I would admit, but not without a fair amount of truth.

We are living in a period of rapid technological innovation and application that is trending toward a pattern of life that is more naturally sustainable. This period has no foreseeable end and the pace will only quicken as we learn more about the complex world in which we live. Hence it is an individual decision to either grow or not, but to frown on a new idea or concept without giving it an unbiased delibera-

tion, to me, signals being past your prime.

For all of those reasons I am surprised that flat tile in greens would generate controversy — stimulate thought perhaps, but not generate controversy.

Build a test green by first sending off your rootzone material to a certified lab to be sure it meets some performance standard or selection criteria. Then build a test plot with about 1 1/2% slope as you would in a golf green, divide the green with an impermeable barrier, install round tile on one-half and flat tile on the other, with each system having its own sampling pit to catch leachate — then make a decision.

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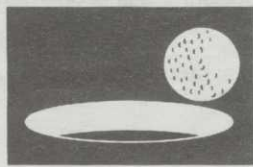
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