

Careful Selection of Site Vital to Course Progress

By EDWARD B. DEARIE, JR.*

EXPERIENCE teaches us that greenkeepers must understand the elements of nature and the greatest difficulty which presents itself to most of them is the varying condition of soil, climate, rainfall and duration of seasons. All have a direct bearing on what results are to be obtained in bringing a new course along.

Such knowledge is invaluable to any greenkeeper. He should acquaint himself with local conditions. Also, he should accustom himself to profit by his experience. What might be right in one place might be the contrary in another. It is a foregone conclusion that the soils of Florida and California, where the climates permit year around play and perpetual growth on greens and fairways, must be organically different from soils in northern and eastern states where the turf is dormant for a considerable portion of the year. It is not to be expected that the geologic conditions of all parts of such an immense country would be the same. Thus, we find abundant reasons for diversity in soils, temperatures, quantity of humidity, quantity of rainfall and duration of seasons. These all offer exceptional opportunities for study. A knowledge of these elements, therefore, is essential to a proper understanding of the principal factors involved in this work of bringing a new course along to a playable condition.

That is why I am not going to outline any definite procedure for conditioning a new course. All I can do is to point out what in my mind seems to be the fundamentals for conditioning a new course for play.

Equally important with the problem of maintenance is one which is absolutely fundamental and vital: That is the proper selection of a

site. There is a tendency to regard the selection of a site and the maintenance of a course thereon as two distinct problems whereas in reality they are part of the same general problem. Many club organizers are overly impressed with scenic beauties and disregard other aspects of the problem—which is the creation of a practical and attractive golf course.

In selecting a site for a golf course attention should be given to topography, soil resources, drainage and water supply. Opinions differ as to the relative importance of these factors but each of them is of great importance. One has only to work in this field in various parts of the country to realize the importance of fundamentals. Many so-called golf courses have been laid out and constructed by laymen and amateur golfers, landscape gardeners and self-styled golf course architects, which are impractical. In some cases men interested in golf course promotion have done the best they knew how to build a course at a cost fixed by the amount of money available. We have in this country a great many golf courses which are as they are—deplorable examples of waste and violations of the sound principles of construction. Such courses are costly to maintain and quite impossible to understand.

"Haste is waste" is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in this field. Patience is still a virtue in these times when all else seems to be sacrificed to the desire for speed. The attempt to build golf courses on poorly chosen sites is unfortunate. Many locations have not been well chosen with a view to satisfactory maintenance. It is folly not to exercise the greatest care and discrimination to secure proper topography, sufficient acreage, right soil fertility and adequate water supply. In most cases,



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too little thought is given to the cost of maintaining the finished course.

A golf course is a permanent or at least a long time investment. The first thing to engage the attention of any club should be the importance of obtaining the right site and sufficient acreage with the proper soil. One cannot overestimate these factors. Many clubs selecting their sites in haste have never been able to correct their initial errors. Vast sums of money have been wasted in an effort to control unconquerable conditions by re-arranging course from time to time in order to attempt to satisfy the members and constantly trying to modify the texture of the soil to provide the proper fertility for the greens. One hears tragic reports of the cost of maintaining such courses from year to year.

Not only have mistakes been made in the past but they are still being made now in the face of the advanced information which we have before us today. For some strange reason it is often thought that almost anyone can choose a golf site or layout and build a golf course. Such stupidity more than anything else has been responsible for the incredible waste and difficulty that greenkeepers have to encounter from time to time. It is doubtful if greenkeepers ever will succeed in conditioning poorly chosen courses except at enormous expense. Many newly organized clubs ignore the basic fact that, in order to have a satisfactory golf course, they must secure a suitable tract of land on which to lay it out and grow turf.

Moulding a large acreage into a first class golf course is an expensive matter and once done is not easily altered. It is much cheaper and more economical to secure a suitable site in the first place than it is to rebuild and recondition a course in an unfavorable location. Many club treasuries will bear testimony to this fact. Our need is a crying one for more careful selection of golf course sites and should be emphasized on all possible occasions.

Pick Architect Carefully

Let's survey a little more closely the considerations which should rule when golf courses are being planned. Unquestionably it should be the work of a golf course architect to advise in the selection of a site. The selection of a golf course architect should be given very careful consideration. He should be a man of wide

experience and demonstrated capability in this field. Do not put too much stress on his promises but rather pay more attention to his past performances.

The type of course, whether public or private, and the amount of money available for construction are the two paramount considerations. Economical construction and maintenance are also points of great importance in the selection of a site. Wise is the club which can secure several tracts of land on option and then have the architect go over each one carefully and report to the club which he considers the best, giving his reasons for regarding it as a site for a practical course. Special attention should be given to economical construction, avoiding waste without sacrificing attractiveness.

Nowhere else is the architect more necessary than before the selection of a site and nowhere else will more be required of him. He must be a man of parts with considerable experience to be able to pass judgment on the location, its topography, soil and cost of construction as they are vital to the planning of a new course. Experience has shown that the services of a capable architect, who understands the fundamental principles of course construction and maintenance, will save the club thousands of dollars in upkeep.

The designing of a golf course is an art in itself and it is manifestly impossible to give in a short article all the ramifications of this highly developed work such as topographical surveys, soil charts, drainage plans, principles of hydraulics necessary to irrigation and problems of engineering.

Relation of Building and Care

There is an extremely close relationship between construction and maintenance. This fact is often overlooked. There is a tendency to hire the greenkeeper after the architect has completed his work. This is manifestly unfair. The greenkeeper should be called upon to express his opinion and judgment regarding the cost of maintaining the course before the work is started. There can be no first class golf course unless the turf is of the right quality. The quality of the turf depends upon the quality of the soil. There can be no great satisfaction in courses—no matter how well designed—where the fairways, tees and greens have a poor stand of grass impossible to condition.

If the greenkeeper is engaged in the early stages of the construction and can see the course developed from the start, he will be better able to determine the methods of conditioning the course for play. In the past he has had to accept what the architect and construction engineer have turned over to him, starting where the others left off. This was most unfair to the greenkeeper and did not give him a chance to prove his worth. It is in the initial work that the greenkeeper can prove his ability even more than in routine maintenance. He then has a full knowledge of the soil, drainage system and water supply. He may even make special arrangements to supervise the grading of the greens, tees and fairway before seeding. What has been done before the greenkeeper was engaged is invariably never corrected. He starts off with a handicap which in most cases it is impossible for him to overcome.

Conditioning a new golf course is a complicated problem and the greenkeeper responsible for the result is shouldered with no light responsibility. Unless he is a first class man, backed with considerable and diversified experience, and has a sound workable plan for efficient and economical operation, he will fail. But a properly qualified greenkeeper working in conjunction with a qualified golf architect will be able to develop a course with the utmost economy and attractiveness. He will be able to provide a course with which his club may be justly proud.

Standards of greenkeeping are being raised each season and qualifications of greenkeepers are being raised also. Secure a greenkeeper who knows the fundamentals of golf course maintenance. Such a man should know turf, grasses, drainage and irrigation. He should have a knowledge of elementary chemistry and landscaping. He must know golf both in theory and practice so that his judgment will be recognized by his chairman. Therefore, the greenkeeper who has mastered his business is somewhat of a combination of engineer, chemist, artist, agriculturist and mechanic. He is truly a versatile specialist of high order, a master of the complicated factors of greenkeeping.

With such a convenient subject I am tempted to write at length as there are many subjects of importance, such as turf culture, grasses, soils, fertilizers and mechanical problems not dealt with here.

How I Get Our Course in Good Condition Early

By H. E. SHADE

Greenkeeper, Okland Hills Country Club

I ALWAYS get an early start on the season's conditioning of the course by doing as much of the work as is possible in the preceding winter. An important detail of this work is fertilizing our fairways with rotted manure. I haul on the manure during the frozen season, as by doing this work at this time we prevent our fairways from being cut and avoid a lot of extra work later.

This winter I have used 500 tons of cow manure on our two courses. When spring comes I seed the thin places and drag the manure and seed in together, then roll with a heavy roller.

My greens I expect to spike roll and seed with 20 pounds of creeping bent per green, fertilize with 30 pounds of sulphate of ammonia, top-dress and roll.

Tees will be top-dressed and any badly worn spots reurfed. I will put around 400 yards of good sand in the traps. We lose a lot of sand out of our traps each year due to the heavy winds across our course, and with 187 traps this item runs up. It is work that must be done with thoroughness in order to have good courses in condition that will reflect credit on the club and its course maintenance organization and provide a good test of golf.

To me, one of the most important phases of spring work is a definite preliminary plan instead of simply an unplanned program that takes up work as it occurs to the greenkeeper or chairman. This lack of planning starts the budget out under a handicap for it allows a possibility of too much waste in performance.

PROS who are making a study of the turnover of their stock will be impressed by the importance of turnover as revealed by a recent Harvard Bureau of Business Research statement. Big department stores having fewer than 3 turnovers during the year made a net profit of only 1.6 per cent. Addition of one turnover a year to wholesale automotive equipment houses brought selling costs down 3.8 per cent.

As the turnover increases, selling cost comes down and profits increase. It's the same for the pro shop as for the big department store, so watch this phase of your business.