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URGES NEW PAR COMPUTATION

IS the present method of computing par illogical and due for revision before golf is led into confusion and error by adherence to par as it now is determined? William B. Langford, veteran golfer and course architect, after 10 years of study and calculating, not only is convinced the present method of determining par is seriously wrong, but is of the firm opinion he has worked out a revision of par determination that provides a sound basis for appraising, comparatively, golf scoring.

Langford's findings, according to his interpretation, have two major applications:

(1) A true rating of comparative difficulty of holes for players of all classes, enabling the 'stroke hole's" to be properly placed on the card and more equitable handicapping to be done; and

(2) An accurate appraisal of the character of performance.

High Par Permits Low Scoring

In connection with the second claim for his progressive fractional-par system, Langford advances the interesting statement that much of the alarm about low scoring is without scientific foundation because the greater part of the sub-par scoring is done on courses that have their pars computed unreasonably high. This remark, coming from an architect, indicates that some of us may be worrying unduly about the long ball making courses play to easy.

In beginning his blast at the present par set-up Langford points out that the existing par schedule of 250-445-600 yards for men's par change intervals has successive shots of 250, 195 and 155 yards as standard length attainment in consecutive strokes. This has been entirely out of line with performance for many years and when compared with the women's par schedule of 200-375-550 is illogical, for although the woman is rated as 20 yards shorter than a man on the second shot, she is supposed to be 20 yards longer with her third shot. A system that brackets together as par 4s, holes of 255 and 440 yards although obviously there is almost a stroke difference between such extremes, is not one that assures fair handicapping or an accurate rating of the standard of play, Langford declares.

Bases Par Distances on Average Shots

He proposes a par based on a 240 yard drive and an average 210 yard wood shot through the fairway. Inasmuch as par is considered the standard of first class golf, Langford says his determination of distances for drives and fairway wood shots is founded on average performance by first class men players. Women's par, according to his system, would call for a

drive of 205 yards and an average fairway wood shot of 175 yards.

By Langford's progressive fractional par system, a man's par 3 hole is any hole of 240 yards or less and a hole of 300 yards or longer is definitely in the par 4 class; the midway point, 270 yards, would be par 3.5. Langford has gone into mathematics to set the par 4.5 distance at 493 yards. He maintains that fractional par will provide a close measure of stroke probability, from which accurate inter-club handicaps can be derived.

Langford differentiates sharply between par and difficulty. Par, he says, is the probable average score of perfect expert play, and is based on length only. The difficulty in rating a hole is the uncertainty of making any given score on a hole. It depends on many factors, among which are length, surface warp, hazard placement and course condition, and can only be discovered by an analysis of competitive scores.

He has worked out a simple method of analyzing scores by which holes on any course may be rated and handicap strokes allotted in the fairest possible manner.

Langford began his research into par rating in 1924 in an effort to compute how wide a green should be for the approach shot required and his work toward a mathematical checkup of the artistic phase of golf architecture led him into the fractional par field. Checking over the scores of numerous National Open championships and National Amateur qualifying rounds, as well as data on club tournaments, developed the fractional par system.

System Checks with Tourney Averages

Langford's application of his fractional par computation to Oakland Hills, scene of the 1937 National Open, revealed that course as an eminently sound one. Scorecard par is 72. the average score of the first 25 and ties in the National Open was 72.80 and the Langford fractional par is 72.89. The hole on which the lowest percentages of pars was scored was the 491-yard eighth which used to be a par 4 hole but which was lengthened to give the bunkers significance for the second shots. There were 54 scorecard par 5s on the hole, 41 birdies, 4 eagles, 6 sixes and a 7 on the hole. By the Langford fractional par method the hole would be par 4.49. The Oakland Hills hole that was most frequently made in par was the 416-yard seventh, on which there were 86 pars out of 108 rounds played by the leaders. The average score was 3.89. Fractional par on this hole would be 4.15. This difference of .26 stroke under par is the widest gap between fractional par and the leaders' average score in the Oakland Hills case.

Langford does not advocate half strokes for putts. He presents the fractional par idea entirely as a sound mathematical basis for comparative difficulty ratings, not only between various holes on the same course, but between different courses.

However, he has worked out from data on games of expert and average players, and on a mathematical basis, a fractional par putting table that gives a reasonably good foundation on which to appraise putting performances. Obviously the expert who is content with the traditional 2-putts-per-green idea in par is not going to finish very high in competition. Accuracy of approaching, of course, has much to do with the putt total, and on that account Langford says that the fractional par determination of the full distance between tee and hole offsets the error of the antiquated two-putt factor in determining par.

Portland Dads Backing School Instruction Proposal

DADS' clubs of Portland, Ore., high schools are active in a move to put golf instruction into the local schools. The enterprise is receiving encouragement and support from Portland high school officials, sports editors and pros.

L. L. Rau of the US Rubber Co., and president of the Franklin High School Dads' club, is prime mover of the plan and hopes to see the Portland plan followed by Dads' clubs throughout the country. George Bertz, sports editor of the Portland "Journal," has been giving the Dads' club golf instruction plan a strong boost and forecasts that one-fifth, at least, of Portland's 22,000 high school students will enroll in golf classes if the golf teaching plan is favored with strong cooperation by local pros.

IN 1618 King James VI granted James Melville a monopoly on the golf ball trade, on grounds that "no small quantitie of gold and silver is transported yierlie out of his Hienis' kingdom of Scotland for bying of golf ballis."