

# WHAT PRICE SAND?

By John Monteith, Jr.

A FOREIGN golfer, who on several business trips around the world, had played golf in almost every country which possessed a golf course, was asked if American courses appeared to him to have any outstanding characteristics. He quickly replied that the great array of artificial sand traps were distinctly American. His impression was that our American golf course architects must have been activated by one thought: to instill as much fear as possible into the heart of the golfer when on the tee. Club officials seemed to relent and by fine manicuring of both sand and other hazards reduced their effectiveness to a minimum.

He added, "What a tremendous cost this must represent for installation and maintenance." He further added that in playing our courses he missed the grassy hollows and their many interesting shots. He found our sand traps rather monotonous and not difficult to play (he played in the low 70's) and thought that our efforts toward "frightfulness" had robbed our play of much interesting variety.

This "seeing ourselves as others see us" is particularly interesting from the standpoint of maintenance. Few golfers realize how much they pay for the privilege of digging themselves out of sand. Even club officials who might be supposed to know something about the costs of operating their courses have expressed amazement on learning, for instance, that their labor costs for raking sand exceeded the labor costs for mowing fairways and tees.

Recently some labor costs were obtained from 20 representative courses

scattered from Massachusetts to California. The averages for these 20 courses showed that the labor cost for mowing fairways and tees about equalled the cost of raking sand. The average cost of raking sand plus hand mowing around sand traps was 9/10 the cost of poling and mowing putting greens. The average trap costs over \$10 a year to rake. One of these courses had 110 sand traps which cost nearly \$1,300 to maintain. This course was practically closed in winter. Two courses with year-around play spent \$1,500 each for raking sand. One-fourth of the clubs spent more for raking sand than for mowing putting greens. One club spent well over 3 times as much for labor to rake sand as for mowing fairways. Many other comparisons were afforded that would no doubt surprise the sand trap fans.

The extensive use of sand on golf courses is primarily an imitation of British seaside courses. Some clubs may well afford this imitation but others might better admit they are inland and make the best use of more suitable and less expensive hazards except in the limited strategic positions where sand may be fully justified. The sand on the much-imitated British seaside courses presents no maintenance problem. The light rains penetrate readily into the surface layer and continue through the deep sand beneath. Our sand traps on the other hand are packed by frequent heavy showers and may be washed from the traps when the layer of clay beneath it is unable to absorb the rainfall rapidly

enough. The constant wind on those sea-side courses soon smooths out foot-prints in that shifting sand. The sand we usually must use and the wind we have on most of our courses do not work so obligingly for us. Therefore, our sand traps must be raked and raked or they will be cussed and cussed.

How many sand traps a course requires is apparently an unanswerable question. Nearly every club has at least one member who seems to rate golf courses by the simple scale of the more sand the better the course. The anti-sanders are far more numerous but are usually kept under control by the powerful minority of the sand trappers. The anti-sanders include most of the dubs, who are not supposed to be heard on questions of playing features of a golf course.

Majorities, however, sometimes do have their times for recognition even by the most dictatorial minorities. The anti-sanders usually obtain greatest recognition in periods of economic stress for at such times club officials are forced to recognize that most of our 70 shooters play their golf on courses that are maintained with funds obtained chiefly from those who play in the vicinity of 100 or above.

#### Notice Trap Neglect First

In the last depression we had many cases of clubs hard-pressed to keep courses in operation. The courses that were most littered with sand traps usually presented the most rundown appearance when maintenance costs had to be severely cut. Curtailments in maintenance of fairway, rough, or even greens were not as conspicuous to players as were the curtailments that left sand traps gullied and packed by rain or scarred by careless players who had trampled through them days or even weeks ago. When the dubs cancelled memberships in those clubs their material value to the club was finally recognized.

Frequent warnings have been given against excessive sand traps not only because of their actual cost but also because of their effect on members who are paying most of the bills. Too often, however, members think of trap removal as involving little more than the scratch of a pencil crossing off the trap on the map of the course. The removal of traps, like the building of them, is far more expensive than most

golfers realize. Therefore, their removal or change should be considered in a period when revenue is ample to make these changes rather than leave them until funds are limited. When a club has to reduce its budget to the extent that it cannot rake traps it certainly does not have funds to remove them even though such work would accomplish economies. It may be that part of the problem may be solved by the development of special machinery which will reduce manual trap maintenance labor to a fraction of its present requirements.

#### 'Tourney Traps' Waste Funds

An excellent example of waste of club funds via the sand trap route is afforded in a club where a national tournament was held a few years ago. In preparation for that one tournament the club officials installed an elaborate new system of sand traps. These proved too costly to maintain and the average member resented so many of them. During the last three years 56 sand traps have been removed from that course. The cost for their removal alone was \$1,814, which averages over \$32 a trap. Certainly this is an item of expense and inconvenience that seems hard to justify for one tournament.

The removal of sand traps and regrading to bring the area to the level of the adjoining fairway or rough has other objections besides that of cost. If some sand traps are converted to grass traps or grassy hollows the cost of the change is less than complete removal and they will continue to serve the purpose of hazards. They can be made to provide a much greater variety of shots than did the original sand. The maintenance cost will be greatly reduced if care is taken to so grade the area that it can be cut with power equipment.

The grassy hollow has come into disrepute in this country for the reason that too often there have been poorly drained waste areas covered with coarse weeds which most of the players remember as places to lose balls. Such a condition need not exist in a properly designed grassy hollow or grass trap. If properly graded and drained they need not be swamps at any season and with modern methods of weed control they need not hold up play because of lost balls.

In many cases the present sand traps can be converted into grassy hollows by the simple process of taking out the sand

and replacing it with sod. In other cases some regrading is needed if the greatest economy is to be effected for steep banks will have to be mowed by hand. Modern power mowers will cut steeper banks than could be handled by machines that were in use when most of our courses were designed. Nevertheless, there are limits to the effective use of machines on steep banks and in most cases it is advisable to do some regrading along the ridges where scalping is apt to occur.

The suggestion to replace sand with grass, like any proposal for change, is met with opposition. The various im-

portant points in favor of sand are paraded with all the trimmings. It should be pointed out, however, that those who advocate such changes are not calling for abolition of sand traps. Invariably, they are simply urging a curtailment of them in keeping with the funds for labor that are now available—and which are likely to be available a few years from now. The handwriting on the wall which many now read seems to urge that thoughtful consideration be given to expenditures that may now be made in the interest of future reductions in course maintenance costs.

## Extra Pro Service Means Extra \$\$\$

By DON BUSH

Pro, The CC, Johnson City, Tenn.

Anticipate the member's every need, serve his every want, and you'll find extra profits coming your way

**E**XCEPTIONALLY good pro service means that you are doing hundreds of little things in and out of the shop to see that your members get the greatest amount of pleasure from the hours spent at the club, with the least friction.

These little things, that perhaps you do not have to do, will create a lot of good will for you that will soften up sales resistance and bring in the business and profits so necessary to your success.

Your opportunity for service begins the moment a member drives into the club. At our club we assign his favorite caddie immediately, who takes his bag to the first tee and washes up several balls. Players not on club care have a caddie sent to the car or locker-room door so that they are spared the annoyance of lugging their bag around looking for a boy.

Every pro knows that as soon as his players are out on the course things begin to happen fast. It rains. Caddies are sent to all cars and windows closed and open tops raised. Four women are out on No. 6 tee caught in the downpour. Your assistant or one of the older caddies drives one of the cars out and brings them in.

Then a foursome of men stamps into the shop soaking wet. Have towels for them to dry their faces and hands and give the caddies dry rags to clean off their clubs. Loan them a couple of old um-

brellas and a rain jacket. When it clears up a little they are on their happy way again, thinking a little better of you.

The phone rings. Dr. Gibson is wanted at the hospital at once—emergency. A caddie rushes out with a typewritten note and the doctor comes in out of breath. "Damn it, the wife has the car."

"Take mine, and don't wait to pay your caddie. We will pay him and tip him for you."

"Well, thanks, that's very nice of you."

"Not at all."

Mr. Swinghard has a headache and no one to play golf with.

"Here's a couple of aspirins."

"How much?"

"No charge."

"Well, thanks."

You introduce him to three other 95 shooters and he gets rid of his headache and has a big afternoon. He stops in after nine holes and buys 3 balls.

There might be some connection in this sale with your service.

Mr. Green comes in the shop to say that he has just broken the shaft of his pet driver.

"Hit the ball clean, too."

"Here's one like it from my used club stock you can use until yours comes back from the factory."

"That's very nice of you, pro."

Makes no difference if he bought the