

Maintenance and the Rules

By JACK FULTON

This article continues the discussion begun last month on the Rules of Golf as they affect course maintenance practices. The previous installment dealt with the teeing ground, hazards and casual water.

Purpose of the series is to point out how the green committee, in cooperation with the golf committee can make it easier for players to understand and comply with the Rules and for the golf committee to enforce them.

According to Definition 8 of the Rules, **out-of-bounds** is all ground on which play is prohibited. Players have no difficulty in understanding this but they have a world of trouble deciding in close cases if a ball is in or out of bounds, unless the club has taken the trouble to mark its course limits accurately.

In some cases the marks needed to indicate the line are already present (as for example, a line of fence posts) and it is only necessary to announce on your score-card that these posts are the line; in other cases, a line of white stakes will have to be placed; but in either case the greatest care should be taken that the marks extend well beyond any adjacent green, not leaving the golfer to guess where the out-of-bounds line projects beyond the last marker.

If posts or stakes are used, the USGA recommends that their inner faces at ground level be the dividing line. Whether you follow this recommendation or not, remember a post is usually a great deal thicker than a golf ball and so your score card should specify which face of posts or stakes marks out-of-bounds.

Greens Same Shape and Size

What is a putting green? To most golfers, it is the area at the end of each hole which is carefully mowed several times a week. They believe that greens differ considerably in size and shape. Actually, every putting green in the world is a perfect circle of the same size, except where hazards happen to bite into it. Definition 10 explains this; the putting green is all ground except hazards within twenty yards of the hole being played and results from the fact that, in the early days of golf, such things as mowers were unheard-of, and a carpetlike surface was not necessarily available around each cup. Players simply played toward the hole and were on the green when they were within twenty yards of it, no matter how high the grass or how bare the spot (not a hazard) where their ball lay.

Today we have mowers, but the age-old rule still holds and a putting green continues to be all ground within a circle of 60' radius (except such hazards as may be present). The green shifts with every cup change. If the cup chances to be located rather near to the back edge of the mowed area, it is quite possible for a golfer to overshoot the clipped surface, end up in high rough beyond the pin, and yet, in the eyes of the Rules, still be on the green!

The green-committee would do well to keep in mind this circular conception of a putting green and give golfers a break to the extent of not allowing the rough and shrubbery behind and to either side of the specially mowed putting surface to grow too heavy.

Watch Green Aprons

To a lesser extent, aprons and collars of greens should be watched. These strips get a great deal more fertilizer than fairways receive and a great deal more water from the overlap of the greens sprinklers, even at clubs with fairway watering systems. As a result, the turf on collars and aprons grows rapidly, yet on only the most carefully manicured courses is it mowed any more often than the fairways.

The hole, under Definition 11 of the Rules, shall be $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter and at least 4 inches deep. Cups or linings must be of metal not exceeding $\frac{1}{16}$ inch thick, not counting the thickness of the paint, and should be cylindrical for the first 3 inches of depth and then taper or curve for an additional inch to the flagstick hole. They are to be sunk approximately one inch below the putting surface, unless the nature of the soil makes it impractical to do so, in which case $\frac{3}{4}$ inch is the minimum accepted depth. Cups may be of any color, but linings other than metal may not be used.

Never locate the hole (according to USGA recommendation) closer to the edge of the specially-mowed surface than one-quarter the width of that surface.

This is commonsense; to locate the cup any nearer annoys your golfers, raises their blood pressure, and increases the number of off-line approach shots. Play is slowed up, a factor of particular importance on week-ends and other days when heavy traffic is expected.

Within the center half of the putting surface (farther out being too close to the edge for a cup) any spot is okay for the hole in the eyes of the Rules. Custom, however, dictates that a spot be picked that has a reasonably level zone of turf for a yard or so all around—one free of all but the gentlest of rolls, dips and undulations. Golfers don't mind taking two putts, and some golfers accept three tries rather calmly, but if you are a green-chairman and value your peace of mind, don't allow the grounds crew to cut the cups on slopes where gravity is stronger than the resistance of the grass blades. Nothing annoys a golfer more than to have his ball slide past the cup and then gather momentum.

One more point and we will be finished with consideration of the hole. Change cup-locations on a definite, regular schedule. Whether to plan changes daily, every other day, twice a week, or weekly de-

pends on the texture of the putting surface, the amount of play the hole has had, and to a less extent on the importance of the events being played over the course. Whatever frequency your course requires, the standard should be that cup edges remain sharp and the surrounding turf not unduly worn.

Help Players to Find Balls

A ball is lost if it be not found within five minutes after the player's side or his or their caddies have begun to search for it. (Definition 20). The five minute span is all right, because some limit must be placed on the period a player may look, but for practical maintenance purposes and for meeting the wishes of your players, there should be the minimum of spots on your course where a ball can become so thoroughly lost that more than a minute is required to find it. No useful purpose is served (other than healthy ball-sales volume in the pro-shop) by allowing a fairway to be bordered by a wilderness of underbrush and weeds, or by knee-high rough.

In the case of woodlands and groves of trees, all (or almost all) underbrush should be removed, because the hazard of



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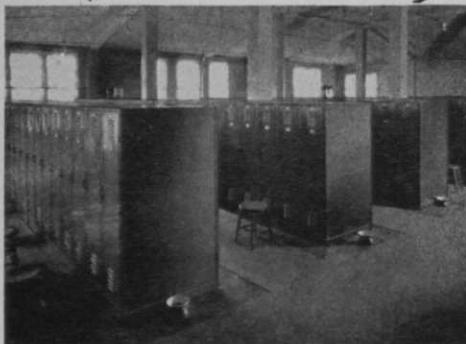
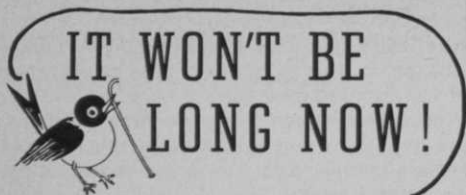
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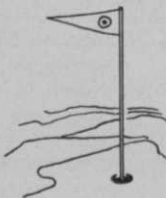
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the trees is punishment enough for an off-line shot. In the case of plain rough, keep the tall weeds chopped down and vegetation not over three inches high; then a golfer has a chance of locating his ball while still some yards away and of playing it out promptly. At the same time, he is not likely to get a "fairway lie."

Why Heavy Rough?

One fee-course operator with whom the writer talked recently said 2-inch rough was high enough for him. "I'm in business to sell patronage at my course," he explained. "I want players to enjoy themselves and come back again. They will, if they are not prevented from scoring reasonably well, if they don't lose too many balls, and if I can keep traffic moving fast enough to get them around 18 holes in less than four hours, even on a busy Sunday."

His view, of course, is tempered by commercial considerations, but even at the most exclusive of private clubs there is no advantage to "ball-traps" anywhere on the course. Your member may not mind loss of a ball, but it gripes him to have to add that penalty stroke to his score.

Keep the vegetation cleaned out of the ponds and streams of your golf course. It is a maintenance touch often overlooked. True, the Rules do not require a player to find the exact ball he drove into the water, but there seems to be very little excuse for denying a player the right to find his ball and recover it, especially when, at many layouts, every water hazard on the course can be cleaned of vegetation in a day's time by a workman armed with a rake and hoe.

Next installment of this series will discuss obstructions, loose impediments and ground under repair.

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SHORT COURSE CALENDAR

- March 4-5—Iowa State College, Ames, Ia.
- 5-7—Minnesota Greenkeepers, Nicolett Hotel, Minneapolis.
- 13-14—Michigan State College, East Lansing, Mich.
- 14-16—Recreational Conference and Exhibition, Massachusetts State College, Amherst, Mass.