

Architect's Services Valuable in Postwar Golf Planning

By ROBERT BRUCE HARRIS

TWENTY-FIVE years ago golf, in the United States, was at the threshold of a big boom. Previous to World War I there were 742 golf courses in the U. S. A. Five years after the war the number of courses had increased 300 per cent and by 1929 the number had increased 760 per cent over 1916.

In the early twenties most new golf course construction was for private clubs with a few here and there being built as municipal and daily fee courses. It was in the late twenties and the early thirties that the "muny" and daily fee courses swept the country in volume.

Now, as another World War is drawing to a close, we are on the verge of an upward movement in new golf course construction that will make the boom after the first World War seem very small, indeed.

Judging from the variety and scope of new postwar golf course construction coming into our office, almost daily, after this war there will be a far greater variety of golf course ownership than after World War I. Besides the private club and municipal course, which was so much in vogue then, we now have an existing daily fee business which has become big golf business. Add to this hundreds of resort hotel courses, courses that will be owned and operated by large industrial corporations, schools, colleges, State and Federal parks and you have some idea as to how golf is spreading out. Golf has definitely become a game of the masses.

Many new golfers have been created by this war. Army and Navy mass participation sports programs are introducing millions of young men and women to golf and other sports. "Memorials That Live," a nation wide program promoting community recreation centers instead of monuments is in full sway. Industrial recreation and Labor's postwar plan for reduced hours and high wages will be another potent stimulant for golf.

As everyone in the golf game knows, golf has changed a lot since the first World War, and so have the people playing it. Golf is now as democratic as baseball and, consequently, in designing a course to fit today's requirements, the problems are many and varied.

One of the many mistakes that the prospective golf course owner makes is in not calling in a competent golf course

architect to aid in the selections of the site. Too often the architect is called in after the property is bought and paid for, and because of a poor site mediocre layout results.

In more cases than not the layman will select a site in which the acreage is too small and too rugged. It's a cardinal rule in any golf layout that the bigger the acreage the better the layout. A site of small acreage means that your course will be cramped and uninteresting with parallel and dangerous holes. Neither will there be the surprise and variety that is achieved on a larger tract.

A gently rolling site is preferable to one that is extremely rough and rugged and it will please a variety of golfers. Also, an irregular shaped piece of property often tends to produce a more interesting layout than one that is square or rectangular. By all means if you haven't bought your golf property, have a competent golf architect guide you in your site selection. It will cost you little and probably give you a better course at less expense than otherwise.

After selecting the site have a detailed topographical survey made of the whole property. It is practically impossible to plan or construct a good golf course without this survey, and you will save many times its cost in having it. This survey will be used in every phase of your golf course construction, particularly in the grading, drainage and water supply items which require an accurate survey to avoid errors.

Modern grading equipment makes it possible to construct a golf course much faster, cheaper and better than in the old first World War days. At that time most construction was with horses. Grading equipment consisted of horse-drawn ploughs, discs, harrows and slip scrapers or fresnoes. A quarter yard load by a scraper was a big load. Not so today, as with our large bulldozers, caterpillar tractors and scrapers that carry a 15-yard load in one bite and bucket tractors that can grade and shape an entire green in one day, that phase of golf course construction is comparatively fast and easy. This type of equipment also makes for better courses, as grading is now so inexpensive that large greens and tees can be common practice. It is no longer necessary to have a bad hole because a ravine or gully comes in the

wrong place in the fairway. The cost of grading is so low it can now be completely filled in.

Neither is it now necessary, for economy's sake, to have small angular bumpy greens, tees and traps. With modern grading equipment all of these items can be large and streamlined, and can be constructed at a small fraction of the cost prevailing after World War I.

The old-fashioned trap and green where the sides had such a steep slope that they had to be mowed with a hand mower should now be a thing of the past. These old fashioned warts were not only ugly and in bad taste, but were also extremely difficult and expensive to maintain and did not add to the interest of the design. The modern contoursaped green or trap is more fitting to its site, is more beautiful and most of the grass, except the putting surface, can be mowed with a fairway mower thereby reducing maintenance costs.

There has been too much sameness in the construction of traps. Traps can be made effective and still fit in and enhance the landscape. Good sand traps don't just happen, but to make them look that way requires infinite study and adjustment to existing contours. Variety in the design of the sand traps will make the course more exciting and more interesting, both from the standpoint of beauty and playing.

In general, a standard 18 hole course should be planned to furnish a pleasurable and varied test of golf. This can usually be done in a course having a yardage from 6200 yards to 6700 yards and on a total acreage running from a minimum of 120 acres to a maximum of 200 acres. You can get by with 120 acres, but in most cases a rather tight course will result. 160 acres for an average 18 hole course is quite satisfactory, but as mentioned above, the larger the acreage the more interesting the course.

In examining the score cards of a great many courses, I was amazed to see the many faults in layout which show up vividly just from the card alone. It is surprising how easy it is to discern a poor layout from the card of the course. If a competent expert has designed the course it always shows up in the card.

Where the play on the course is quite heavy the first hole should be a long par, four or five, and wide open so the crowd can get out and away without congestion. It is advisable to have this first hole so the golfers do not slice out of bounds. It's very discouraging on a crowded course for players on the first tee, and those that are following, to watch balls sail over the fence with the resulting delay that back-logs play. Likewise No. 2 and No. 3 should be quite long, but should tighten up on the players' accuracy and

stiffen the test of his skill. If possible, on the congested course, there should be no par 3's before the fourth hole. No two holes should be alike in yardage, direction, terrain or character. Mix them up plenty and avoid any similarity in any two succeeding holes.

It is often possible to take an almost ideal card of the course, and by adhering as closely as possible to it, although adapting it to the individuality of the site and mixing up the holes, to achieve a good varied basic yardage.

By using a chart of distances in yards, such as the following, 135—155—175—210—335—350—360—370—380—390—500—410—420—430—475—490—510—530 as a basis for design, and varying the succeeding holes as much as possible, you will have a good start towards an interesting golf course. The above listing will total 6525 yards. It may be varied as much as 200 yards more or less, and still be an interesting and pleasing layout. This studying and experimenting with the card of the course during the designing was often omitted altogether during World War I years. This omission resulted in many needlessly dull and uninteresting layouts. It will play an extremely important part in World War II postwar golf planning.

Of course the 18-hole layout is merely a tradition based on the original course at St. Andrews in which there were 9 holes out and 9 holes in. This 18-hole tradition has been revered for many years. However it need not be. I think it would be far better on a site of say 100 acres to have a 14 or 16 hole course, 7 or 8 out and 7 or 8 in instead of trying to squeeze a crowded cramped 18 hole layout on 100 acres. It's time to consider whether this 9 and 18 hole tradition should be thrown overboard. It has caused more bad courses than any single factor and I believe discarding it will mean a great upsurge in golf. It will offer many possible sites not now available, such as the school and college campus, the small park, the grounds of the large industrial corporation, etc. It will also increase the number of players many-fold, as now one of golf's handicaps is the amount of time consumed in playing a full 18 holes.

Tees on the postwar course will be many, large and streamlined. Only one small tee for each hole is difficult to maintain and keep in repair. With several tees to each hole the course can be varied with each round and the length of each hole can be better adjusted to the quality of the player.

Just as before purchasing the site, it is essential that your golf architect locates the clubhouse, drives, parking spaces, recreational areas, caddy house, etc. Many a possible championship course has been spoiled by the improper location

of the clubhouse.

Another important factor in postwar design is the planting of trees on the course. I have seen many possible good golf courses marred by lack of good planting. The location, selection and planting of trees on the golf course is as much a factor in golf design as the placing of traps, the outlining of fairways, or the location of tees. Unfortunately it is generally a sad afterthought in which a nurseryman and a few club members spot a few clumps of unnatural looking trees in a pepper and salt manner over the landscape.

The selection of good long-lived trees, native to the region are to be preferred. They also fit far better into the surrounding countryside whereas foreign or exotic types create a jarring or discordant note.

The scale and distances on a golf course are big and demand large planting groups, not small clumps of small spiky evergreens or shrubs. Most shrubs should be confined to the clubhouse grounds and should not be seen on the course itself. The planting of a golf course should be done by an expert and not the layman. It can make or break the appearance and the quality of the course.

Spalding Ads Feature Little Known Facts in Sports

Aimed at spurring public interest in all sports, early this month A. G. Spalding & Bros. launched its 1945 newspaper campaign with a sports series highlighting dramatic, little-known events in the world of sports. The series, in cartoon form, continues a radical departure in sports advertising, which won wide popularity when introduced in Spalding's newspaper advertising last spring. This year's series will be illustrated by Willard Mullins, ace sports cartoonist. Later, the cartoon series will be made available in booklet form without cost to the public.

Garland Worthington Rep

Worthington Mower Company announces the appointment of Donald F. Garland, 170 S. Victoria St., St. Paul 5, Minn., as their distributor for sales and service in Minnesota and northern Wisconsin. Now equipped with repair parts for Worthington machinery, Garland's postwar plans call for complete facilities for servicing of such equipment.

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