

# Reviews Quarter Century of Course Architecture

By A. H. TULL

LOOKING back over the past 25 years, I cannot see that the fundamentals of golf course design have changed at all. The same principles of design used by Crump and Colt to such good effect at Pine Valley prevail today, and although a few freakish ideas have been brought forth from time to time they have never achieved recognition. The hole that demands an accurate long drive to win the reward of a possible try for a birdie, the hole that offers 2 or 3 different routes to the green over varying degrees of hazard, the short hole that requires an accurate pitch to a particular plateau on the putting surface, are all illustrative of principles that have been used since golf courses were first designed, and the ability to adapt them to the particular terrain available has always been the hallmark of good golf course architecture.

Most courses rated championship in calibre 25 years ago are still tops, and contrary to the fears sometimes expressed, few of them are too short today. The low scores made in tournaments during the last few years are not due as much to increased length of the ball in play, as they are to the decreased hazard in being off line in modern rough.

There has been, however, a considerable change in the *details* of golf course design in the past 25 years. These changes have been brought about largely by high maintenance-labor costs, the increased amount of play on popular courses, and last, but not least, a decided swing away from "golf for golf's sake" to golf for recreation and fun. There is no doubt that the large increase in the number of players during the last 2 decades has reduced the proportion of old time golfers who observed all the rules, and enjoyed a good fight against old man par, even tho they didn't expect to come within 20 strokes of beating him. Perhaps it is because of this fact that green committee chairmen are besieged with requests to keep the rough mowed short and the putting greens soft and easy to pitch to.

Much as one may decry the current practice of close rough mowing, and its effect on the accuracy of the next generation of golfers, player demand is such that the effect of this loss of a normal hazard must be considered in designing courses today. It is player demand also,

aided and abetted by our friends the greenkeepers, that is responsible for the present vogue of fewer sand traps. The elimination of hazards that catch only the poor duffer's weak shots can do no harm to the quality of any golf course, and will make the duffer's game more enjoyable. Leaving out sand traps that serve only to decorate the course without serving their proper purpose as hazards will certainly reduce maintenance costs. But leaving out bunkering that is properly designed and placed to catch the good players poor shots will make a mockery of any course, and the game played over it.

## Greens Trapping Tendencies

Around the putting green, there is a laudable tendency to place hazards farther out from the putting surface so as to catch wild approach shots, rather than closer in, where they trap shots slightly off line, without enough penalty imposed on the wild hitter who misses both greens and traps. A small green surrounded by fairway, beyond which is placed good trapping, lends variety to the course, cuts maintenance costs, and on long par 4 holes particularly, graduates the penalty in proportion to the accuracy of the player.

At one time we had a craze for "picture greens" surrounded by artistically designed sand traps in which islands, capes and isthmuses of turf, sometimes planted with tall sedge grasses and small evergreens, made a beautiful picture. But on many of these a putter was sufficient to play from sand to green, and the poor greenman charged with the mowing went dizzy cutting the banks by hand. On British seaside courses and on some of our courses such as Pine Valley and Montauk Downs, it is sufficient to remove the scant top-soil and Nature will of her own accord fashion such beautiful trapping. But, except in these sandy sections, the high cost of maintenance is putting it out of fashion.

## Green Contours Change

At about the same time that every new course was described as "very sporty" we had a craze for undulating greens, on which a player couldn't putt 10 feet without allowing for the "borrow" and the greenkeeper could never find a place to which to move the hole cup. Greens of this type are almost impossible to mow or water except by hand, and the modern

demand for power mowing has about doomed them.

About 20 years ago there were many courses built with huge greens generally placed just over the brow of a hill and built up to make them visible. The unlucky player who overshoots the green on these courses frequently takes several shots to get to the putting surface, and is then facing an 80 foot putt. Many of these greens are now maintained with a border of fairway length turf on the green, all around the putting surface, wide enough to be mowed with a gang mower. It is not likely that such monstrosities will be built in the future.

Today's favored design does make the poor player's game easier and more enjoyable, it provides for faster play through the fairgreen, and it takes full advantage of modern power maintenance machinery. We must however, be careful to so design our courses that the better players have to strive for accuracy and use of judgment in their choice of direction, or we shall end up by breeding a race of golfers who can drive a mile and pitch over a barn and nothing else.

### Tomorrow's Architectural Features

Looking forward, I think we can discern certain definite trends in future golf course design. I think we shall demand more acreage than we have sometimes been forced to content ourselves with, so as to obviate the necessity of too great artificiality which comes from cramping holes into too small an area, with consequent high up-keep cost. I think we shall reach a sensible compromise between the old fashioned hay field called "rough," and today's rough which more closely resembles fairway. I think we shall use larger tees designed for gang mowing. The banks of tees, greens and traps will be so contoured that they can be mowed with a gang mower, and the sand-perimeter in sand traps will more closely follow the arc of machine mowing.

More emphasis will be placed on rewarding the accurate player and penalizing the good players' poor shots, and above all, more importance will be given to designing enjoyable courses that can be maintained with a minimum of labor.

### Golf Featured for Army Occupation Troops

There is plenty of opportunity for golf under auspices of the U. S. Army's Theater Special Services.

Many fine courses, such as St. Cloud in Paris, where the European Theater Championship tournaments were held in 1945-46, are available to soldier-golfers. St. Cloud is one of the most exclusive in France and is open to American military personnel on weekdays.

Germany, where most American soldiers are located in Europe, has many excellent courses available to military personnel. They are spotted all over the occupied zone and there is plenty of golfing equipment furnished by Special Services for the benefit of American soldiers who wish to participate. Courses in Frankfurt, Garmisch, Bremen, Bad Nauheim, Starnberg, Berlin, Wiesbaden, Bad Kissingen, Bad Wildungen, Berchtesgaden, Kitzingen, Karlsruhe, and Regensburg contribute materially to the morale of the soldier-golfer. Many of these German courses are situated in luxurious surroundings and all have qualified teaching personnel who instruct beginners as well as cure the faults of chronic "duffers."

Competition is keen and there is plenty of it. Matches have been arranged with golfers from other nations and our inter-theater competitions have presented high caliber golfers.

"Germany is a golfers paradise," says Special Services. "Many good courses, excellent instructors, plenty of equipment, and an abundance of a tough competition. And it's all free of charge to the occupation soldier."



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