

How 9-hole Course Can Raise Its "Class" Profitably

By **DON CARMICHAEL**

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In the majority of cases the condition of the smaller town 9-hole courses can be greatly improved by well-planned operations that don't involve expense beyond the comfortable reach of the smaller club budget. Primarily the reason for so many small town courses being cow-pasture establishments rather than courses that compare favorably with metropolitan area jobs is in official policy. If the club has officials who get around and have a clear idea of what good playing conditions should be then the tough part of the task of improving course standards is out of the way.

Our situation at Martinsville differs from that at many other small towns because our club is privately owned. Walter Kennedy, the man who developed the town as a mineral water health resort, is the owner of the Martinsville CC. Kennedy is present Indiana senior champion and won the state seniors' title twice previously. As a proficient and enthusiastic golfer who has played on many courses Kennedy knows what is needed. As a businessman and civic-minded citizen he also realizes that the course to be a civic asset has to be in such condition that it will please the many members of metropolitan district clubs who play golf here as part of their health and pep-restoration plan.

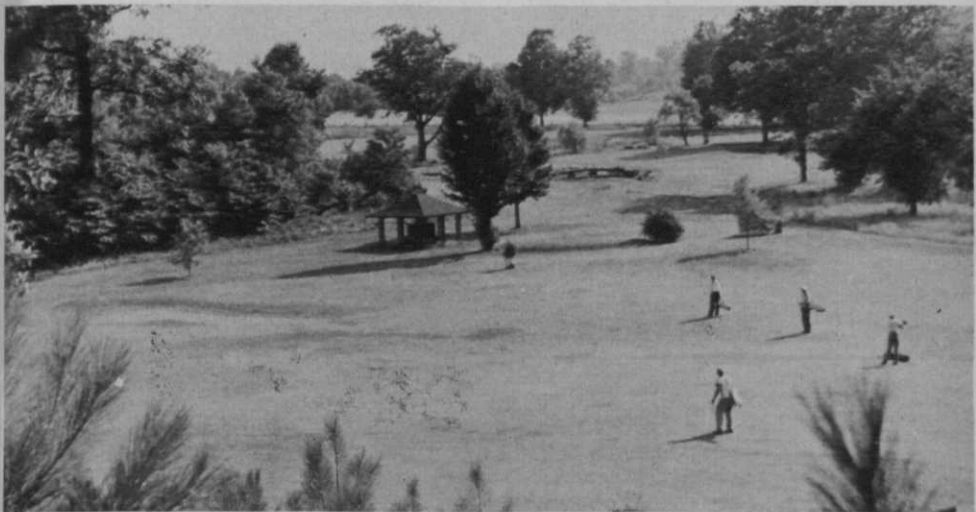
9 Good Holes Wiser Decision

Kennedy could have had built an 18 hole course that would have involved heavy maintenance expense out of proportion to the amount of play we get and which would have required more labor than we were able to get in the war years.

But he considered that most of our play is that of men past their mid-forties who get a satisfying amount of golf in 9 holes. If they want 18 hole play our tees are long enough to give them considerable variety. However, at that point, let me mention that one of the things Kennedy and I both recommend to groups building new 9-hole courses is to have double tee layouts providing interesting variety of tee shots on the same hole and so constructed that the fairway mowers can keep the added tees in rather good shape.

One of the most common mistakes made by the smaller town courses is that of trying to get by on too small acreage. Most of them have 40 or 50 acres and cramped layouts; frequently with parallel holes that are dangerous.

In another respect many of them start out wrong by not getting competent architectural advice in laying out the course. Ground that lends itself to naturally fine golf holes often is not used, or is misused.



A little stream that winds through the valley on the Martinsville course supplies natural hazards at the right places because of talent of architect Wm. Diddle in designing the course.

Will Diddle of Indianapolis designed our course by fitting greens into locations nature seems to have built especially for them in most instances.

We have only 7 sand traps on the course and they are not large. But they are smartly located to catch the shots of the longer player who gets off line when he takes a chance. They do not penalize the player who already is handicapped by his lack of distance. These traps are just enough to fill out our boast of our course as a fine test of golf. They give a good variety of sand trap shots. Other hazards are the natural roll of the ground, out of bounds, trees, and a creek that wanders through the valley in which most of the Martinsville CC course lies.

There, in use of natural hazards, is where the smaller town course is wise if it makes use of experienced architectural service.

Nature Used By Architect

I'll show you how skilled design, taking advantage of the natural terrain, makes interesting holes:

The 1st hole is a 340 yard dogleg to the left. The tee shot goes into a valley; but just where it goes has a lot to do with the difficulty or ease of the second shot—a pitch to an elevated green.

The 2d is a 525 dogleg to the right with out-of-bounds in the angle of the dogleg. The tee shot has to be smartly placed to take advantage of knobs and a valley, and to put the ball in position for getting across a creek. There are grassy hollows and sandtraps guarding this green.

The 3d, a 400 yard hole to an elevated green, again makes use of the creek as a hazard to punish the fellow who is longer than he is wiser off the tee. The green is in front of a hill. This hill cuts off a lot of air circulation and calls for plenty of vigilance to keep it in fine condition up to the standard of the rest of the greens.

The 4th is a 165 yard hole with the creek wandering in front of it, to the left, and in

the rear. There is a grassy hollow at the right. We used to have an elevated tee for this green but eliminated the climb without sacrificing the beauty and the playing qualities of the hole.

The 5th is a 376 yard slight dogleg to the left on flat ground with two sand traps to catch fairly long hooks or slices.

The 6th is a straightaway 412 yd. hole with out of bounds to the right and the creek about 35 yards in front of the green.

The 7th is 505 yards with out of bounds to the right and a grassy hollow in the face of a hill at the right to catch drives that are off of line. The hole plays down a valley until the approach to an elevated green. There are two grassy hollow traps in the left of the fairway to catch mishit second shots.

The 8th is a 200 yd. hole with a ravine to the right, a grassy hollow to the right in front of the green and a sand trap to the left. It is a hole that can be changed a lot by changing the location of the cup.

The 9th is a 396 yd. dogleg to the right with the tee shot across a deep ravine. The ravine and trees are to the right and the green is guarded by grassy hollows.

I think you can get from that description that the playing interest of the holes is equal to that of many metropolitan 18-hole courses.

Major Factor Is Good Greens

Of course the major point is greens. First of all, they were constructed right with good tile drainage and properly conditioned soil. We topdress them 5 times a year; in early spring, in May, June, about the first of August, and finally in fall to carry them through the winter. We topdress with a compost of 30% local peat, 20% manure and the other half being sand and a good loamy field dirt. We fertilize greens and fairways with Milorganite.

By looking around the neighborhood we located some excellent leaf-mold and peat and dirt and manure which we throw into

Martinsville's charming 9-hole course uses rolling terrain of southern Indiana in providing an interesting test of golf without being too tough.



our compost pile. We keep discing it and seasoning it for more than a year before we use it.

We watch our greens carefully to see that no nap or mat develops. When there are signs of a mat we rake the greens vigorously and cut short. We also are great believers in using a spiking and renovating machine along with our topdressing operations.

Our general practice is to mow the fairways twice a week and the greens 3 times a week. Two other men and I do the work on the course.

Untold benefits may be received by the small course whose greenkeepers take advantage of the experience and advice of greenkeepers in the nearest metropolitan centers. Carl Bretzlaff and other top-ranking Indianapolis greenkeepers have been most generous and helpful in guiding me and in steering me into solutions of my problems. The short courses in greenkeeping at Purdue have been of tremendous assistance too. I came onto the Martinsville course as a caddy and grew up with it, so the greenkeeping I had to learn would have been the long, hard and probably unsatisfactory way had it not been for making use of the practical, authoritative advice of veteran large-club greenkeepers, Purdue, the USGA green section and the supply men.

Live With the Greens

One thing they've all impressed on me is that one has to live with greens to make sure that the greens are good. By constantly and closely watching them you learn when they need water and how much, instead of having a set watering schedule. The result of living with your greens is that you minimize risks of disease. Of course at the smaller town courses one doesn't have to high-pressure greens and make them as susceptible to disease as greens are at some of the larger city district courses due to members' demands of conditions that are not healthy for grass.

Tees always are a problem at the smaller course. Ours are in pretty fair condition but they could be better as they are hard-worn by mid-summer. One has to watch to make frequent changes of tee markers. Probably larger tees are one of the answers and maybe some other grass such as zoysia may be tough enough to stand the wear and hacking, especially on the short holes.

Several years ago we got sewage sludge which we used for fairway fertilizer, but now are back on a Milorganite and lime program. In the case of small town clubs where the budget is very tight I'd suggest fertilizing the fairway shot areas. After the members note the contrast chances are the budget will be increased.

Very important, and not costing much money to the smaller town clubs is the conditioning of tee benches, walks, shelters, bridges and stiles where players or caddies may have to go over fences to get balls out-of-bounds. By keeping these features in repair, and having the ball-markers and flags and flagpoles smart-looking the small town course can be given a classy look without much expense.

And that classy look, after the necessities of good turf and sound, interesting design, is going to be more important to the smaller town club than ever before. Now golfers travel around and will compare standards of courses. In very few cases will they continue to be content with the pre-war idea of the cow-pasture course.

I think that the Martinsville CC is a quite pleasant and impressive exhibit of the maintenance standards that eventually will prevail at most of the smaller town courses. The cost of our operations isn't out of line for what we really believe is far, far above average playing conditions on 9-hole courses. Last year we spent \$6500 as our complete maintenance budget and the income attracted by good playing condition made the course upkeep cost a very wise investment.

SEES MORE WORKER'S GOLF

Joe Green, veteran Jersey golf pro, is confident golf play in 1947 will far exceed capacity of public and fee courses in metropolitan districts. Green bases his conviction on possibility of strike wave receding and many thousands of workers again having security of income to spend more money on greens fees and equipment. During World War II Green worked in the Mathis shipyards at Camden, N. J. and in free time conducted golf tournaments for the shipbuilders. He says workers' golf still has to see the combination of income and leisure time that will set the stage for a tremendous growth of golf among middle-

aged as well as younger workers. Joe started in golf at the old Hyewood GC, North Plainfield, N. J., and caddied for Johnny McDermott and Alex Findlay as a kid. After World War I he was active in the Salesmen's GA of Philadelphia. During 1946 he was with Bruce Coltart at Seaview, Atlantic City.



Joe Green