

Machine Maintenance Has Its Architectural Limitations

By WILLIAM B. LANGFORD

Golf course architecture is primarily the science and art of arranging a closed circuit of 18 holes: First, to bring out the most interesting and testing combinations of terrain and length from a playing standpoint; and, second, to produce a layout which can be economically built and maintained.

Considerations besides interest and economy, such as clubhouse location, beauty, flexibility, balance, congestion, soil, etc., are important, but no one factor can dominate the development. Above all, the course must be as fine a test as natural conditions plus artificial creations permit, even economy playing second fiddle to character.

Some features which add immeasurably to playing excellence are greenkeepers' headaches, yet if our enjoyment is sufficiently enhanced by them and our game so tested that we acquire new strokes or greater proficiency in the old ones, the extra cost and greenkeeping annoyance of these bugaboos is justified.

Certainly economy and operational ease must always be carefully considered, but if we are to get any kick out of the game and if we wish to improve, we must occasionally, especially around and on the green, tolerate features which are expensive and comparatively difficult to construct and keep up.

The unexpected is always happening in golf, and the course should not monotonously repeat humdrum mediocrity; it must augment the life and variety of the game it fosters to be right.

What Limit to Economy?

Increased labor costs and frozen budgets have put the accent on machine maintenance

of golf courses for the past several years. From this trend one might imagine that the ideal course would be that on which no hand maintenance would be required. Further along that line of thought the ideal course for maintenance might be a park that could be mowed quickly, and with greens, traps and tees that would be easily handled by motorized equipment.

Nature doesn't do that, and nature is the governing power in golf course architecture. The architect always is looking for opportunities to provide tests of golf that appear to have been made by nature. The magnificent tests of the Scotch links are mainly natural, with man's work being at its best when it deftly accents the natural features.

The talk about having a course completely machine maintained definitely has a tendency toward nullifying part of the genius of the greenkeeper. Astute training and management of labor is a quality which identifies a master of the greenkeeping profession. If golf architecture's ideal is to be made something on the park order then a distinguishing quality of the expert greenkeeper is going to be lost.

Psychology An Essential

This year with golf balls again available the rough has returned and with fewer complaints, apparently, from private club members than from the tournament pros. Rough is a hazard and one of the best and most testing of hazards if properly located. The main argument against rough is one that applies to public and daily fee courses; that of possibly delaying play. As the pay-as-you play courses try to approach the private



This group at the Tifton, Ga., turf conference gave the unique problems of southern course maintenance and turf research an intensive going-over.

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club standard of architecture the rough is bound to increase as a hazard to be avoided by calculated shot-making.

One of the psychological features of good golf course architecture is that of making a hole look easy but play hard, or vice versa. This is an element that may not lend itself to machine maintenance. Handwork on traps of interesting design and strategically placed may be absolutely necessary.

There has been much loose talk about making golf easier for the high handicap player who pays most of the bills at the private clubs. It has been seen frequently that the course can be eased to the extent that it loses attractive character. The member, even if he has trouble breaking 100, prefers to play a course that has a reputation as being a real test. There he knows he has earned his score.

For some years the average age of private club members is going to decline. Now the average age probably is slightly over 50. In another 10 years the average age of private club members probably will be around 40. That's something to be considered by the architect. Right now one of the problems of layout at many clubs is steep climbs which are none too good for aging members with heart trouble.

But such problems of design that are governed by the age factor are matters mainly of new construction. Right now the alterations (as well as new construction) are governed too much by the machine maintenance factor rather than by the strictly golf elements.

The green chairman and greenkeeper may be tempted by possibilities of reducing maintenance costs by architectural revisions but they'd better get competent architectural advice before they ruin a hole so it will be more agreeable to a machine than to a player.

Miami Country club luncheon, and maybe the presence of Mlle. Holmes, queen of the Florida florists' show, accounted for cheerful looks of Florida supts. at their first annual conference. Hector Supply Co. was host at the lunch.

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NEW LIFETIME TEE MARKERS



Announcement by Mueller Brass Co., Port Huron, Mich., of their new "Streamline" tee markers is bringing a lively response from golf course management men. The new markers are of solid brass, in plain brass or painted finish carrying numerals from 1 to 18. Tee Marker has 7 in. top diameter; pin length is 5 in. Prices and complete particulars may be had direct from the manufacturer.

