

Architecture That Considers the Greenkeeper's Work

By JAMES E. THOMAS

The other day I had the pleasure of walking over a new 18-hole golf course on the Atlantic seaboard. Most of its construction had been done with two bulldozers. All of the grades were gentle and rolling and fitted into the landscape as if they had always been a part of it. There were very few places that could not be maintained with power equipment, and in these days of high costs and scarce labor, this is quite an item.

This course had been built for a group who intended to secure most of their members from the middle brackets of business. They were successful men who played the game for relaxation and social companionship. They had no aspirations toward championship laurels, so the architect whom they engaged was asked to design a simple layout of character and diversity, one that would be easy to keep up, also a fair and interesting test for the average player, yet not too severe.

All instructions were carried out and followed to the letter. The architect, in turn, asked that there be a minimum of committee interference; that his past work, reputation and achievement were such that he should be entitled to carry out his own creative ideas unmolested. This he considered to be of the utmost importance. It would leave him free to accomplish the best results with the material he had to work with.

The property selected for the site was a slightly rolling bit of meadow land, partly wooded and well drained by a small stream. The plot consisted of over 200 acres, which made it possible to keep most of the holes well out in the open with very little paralleling of fairways. One of the interesting features was the way in which nature had supplied the hazards. In many an instance the slice or hook landing in the tall uncut, would find its recovery stymied by some obstacle such as a tree.

Nature in Golf Architecture

One could not help but be impressed by the visibility along the line of play, this held good through the fairway from tee to green, there being an absence of blind shots. There was very little major shifting of earth on the job except where it was necessary to secure orientation and

the proper profile, or to help the golfer spot his target; even then these key points were raised up only a little from the level, and when this was required they gradually melted out into the surrounding country. Important positions were placed on high ground prominently along the horizon. The use of swales and dips for this purpose was avoided.

Another feature was the size of the tees. They averaged around 4,000 sq. ft., equal to the area of a small putting green. This provided many different angles of play and numerous tee marker changes which would help to protect the sod from wear and tear. Also it allowed for a shift of playing conditions during all kinds of weather.

The fairways had been nicely contoured to fit in with the topography. Straightness had been avoided. This irregular outlining did away with the necessity of traps in many cases and presented a pleasing appearance to the eye. The fairgreens were narrow and tight wherever a topped or poor played first or second shot would fall; a well hit ball would reach ample width of fairway.

Special attention was given to the collars around the greens. They received the same care as if they were putting surfaces and were to be planted to the same strain of grass. There mowing called for a height of cut halfway between that of the fairway and green. This attention to the outside surfaces adjacent to the putting carpet will eliminate a condition one sees so often on many a golf course, that is: a well executed play that falls short of the green and lands on a hard approach and finishes up in the rough beyond the flag.

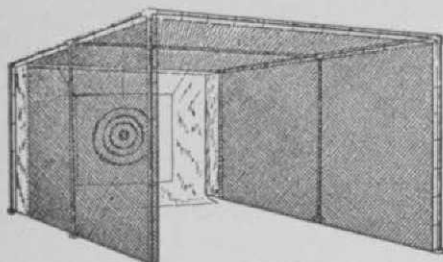
The greens had been well constructed. Much care had been given to the proper soil texture. It was of a porous nature, not plastic and sticky, a type one sees so often. The designer had evidently been through the mill and knew that poor drainage along with the lack of aeration was ruinous to the upkeep of good turf. The earth was of such a character that it could absorb large quantities of water, retain the needed capillary moisture and yet freely release the unwanted gravitational water.

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tween greenkeepers and pros as a primary affair in improving club activities, hence the earning power of the man responsible for the course and the man responsible for the player. Stan told how his association's members regard helping each other with their problems as one of the great things that has elevated the status of greenkeepers with club officials and members. Warren Bevington, pres., Highland GACC, spoke on the pros' job in furthering cooperation between clubs for the extension of golf and putting clubs on a sound financial basis.

Cliff Waggoner, sec., Indiana Amateur GA, paid tribute to the pros' work for amateurs. The final afternoon was devoted to a teaching clinic. The dinner was held Monday evening with Rev. Eligius Weir, Mayor Al Feeney, George Soutar, Bill Fox and Herb Graffis being featured speakers.

About 80, representing all but a few of the Indiana PGA membership, turned out for the meeting which was briskly conducted by pres., Wayne Timberman and chmn., Louis Bola.

ARCHITECT AND GREENKEEPER

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The greens had been gently contoured without exaggerated grades which would cause a ball to gather additional speed on a downhill put. There were no locations in which a cup could not be placed. Both surface and sub-drainage had been well provided for. Care had been taken to eliminate all water pockets. Bunkers were placed far enough away from greens to allow for the passage of medium width power equipment.

Placing of fairway hazards had been left for future work, the thought being that they could be better spotted after the course had been in play awhile. The spots that caught poorly played shots were to be closely watched so as to determine the proper placing of traps. Bunkers misplaced serve no useful purpose other than added upkeep. To build them is a very quick simple job with the aid of a bulldozer, and is accomplished in a short time.

Watering Installation

A few words about the modern watering installation: Pipe sizes ranged from a 6 in. feeder main on down to 1½ in. lines at the tees and greens. Snap valve sprinkler heads were used at all outlets. The entire system was hoseless; it was possible to sprinkle nine greens and tees at a time along with six fairways. By the time the sprinkling attendant had set out his last head, the first settings were ready to be turned off.

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The plan was divided into three equal zones with six holes in each group. Every division was separated by its own gate valve with drains being placed at all low spots. The water supply came from a small lake formed by damming the never failing creek that flowed through the grounds. This body of water plus the pump house completed the job.

There were many features about this creation that could not fail to please the greenkeeping superintendent who is entrusted with its care and upkeep. Even the landscaping of the grounds had been done with a view of keeping it in line with present day machinery. All trees and shrubs were planted and spaced so that there was ample room for the passage of equipment. The place was well provided with proper plantings at all points of vantage. This was not overdone as is so often the case.

Having been on a golf course since my boyhood days as a caddie, I could not help but being impressed with what I had seen. Everything about the place pointed to simplicity, not complication. Its creator had followed the lines of nature and had added very little to his picture that was artificial. Everything was pleasing to the eye. The most outstanding and commendable part of this architecture was its strategy of construction. It had been done and planned by one who knew and realized that after he finished the job, the course would have to be cared for. The designer and builder had a working knowledge of greenkeeping along with his ability to create and construct.

INCREASING PUBLIC PLAY

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old "cast-offs," a wood—3 irons and putter, that rent for 35 to 50 cents, and a few good sets of 12 or more clubs for the occasional "club member" visitor who forgot his clubs—\$1.00 a round. Many a customer renting a good set comes in and buys a set just like it.

Must the publinker go on playing on weedy fairways, hunting for balls in fairways that are yellow with dandelion blossoms? No fun in that. The cost to kill weeds on a fairway is usually not many green fees.

You have played on unwatered fairways on a hot summer day and got the usual golfers "mile of roll." You have smelled the hot grass fairly burning up, and you have had those tired "hot dogs" from walking on the soil dry as concrete. Any fun in that? Now that watering can be done at many places with "walking type" sprinklers inexpensively more fun

Golfdom