

The Rough As a Factor in Golf Architecture

By WILLIAM B. LANGFORD

Many factors have contributed to produce the low scores made today by our leading golfers. Among them are better implements, better putting and fairway surfaces, and easier rough. In this short article I intend to write only of the rough—that important section of a golf course that is not even mentioned in the rules.

A course may have no sand traps, no trees, no severe natural hazards and still be a fine testing, interesting layout if the rough is properly placed and sufficiently rugged.

To function properly the rough should not be a hayfield robbing the game of precious minutes spent in search of the errant ball, nor should it be an unsightly weedpatch. It should be maintained as carefully as the fairway and cut to a height—varying with the nature of the turf—which will prevent the indiscriminate use of wooden clubs for recovery shots, and still not slow up the game unduly by prolonged searching bees.

Modern weed-killing compounds have made easy the maintenance of a rough free from clover and broad-leaved plants in which, when not watered too much, bluegrass and the fescues will supplant the lush bents and afford an area where the ball can be readily found, but demanding a highly developed technique in recovery shot play.

Rough A Fair Hazard

The rough in general is a much fairer hazard than trees, water courses or bunkers, although I do not consider this unadulterated praise since the charm of golf lies in its uncertainty and a test of a champion is his ability to take bad breaks with equanimity. The rough is a fairer hazard because it is so extensive and, if properly kept up, homogeneous.

Lies in well-kept rough are much more apt to be uniform than they are in sand traps, and because of their limited size, bunkers are frequently missed altogether by atrocious shots, while they penalize severely shots only slightly misplayed. Trees, especially isolated specimens, are greater offenders in this respect than bunkers, and small ponds and creeks are just as uncertain ball stoppers with the added disadvantage of failing to offer the opportunity for recovery play.

Play from the rough, to be successful, calls for fine judgment in the selection of the proper club, offers a wide variety of interesting shots and demands confident, cool, steady concentration. The player who derives more satisfaction from the execution of a tricky shot than he does from his medal score will not be cast down by a lie in the long grass, but rather exhilarated by the opportunity presented for skill and finesse. Walter Hagen's colorful exploits in the rough show what can be done by the fellow who keeps trying to develop required skill.

The man who is consistently down the middle should be rewarded for his accuracy, a reward he does not collect if the erratic shots of his slugging opponent find lies comparable to his.

On many courses the fairways are ribbons of uniform width stretching uninterestingly from tee to green and utterly disregarding the fact that there are nodes of play on every hole, and that a properly designed fairway should meander to suit the scheme of play and vary in width to accord with the range, the terrain and the character of the hole. Fairways so constructed will not only provide more interesting golf but will avoid artificiality

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Many Green chairmen, superintendents and professionals who become aware that players on their courses are finding certain holes very uninteresting or unfair, may well consider Bill Langford's article on the function of rough.

Although Langford and other leading architects have stressed rough as an essential and interesting phase of good course design, it's surprising how many holes have had excellent architecture

nearly nullified by failure to maintain fairway-rough borders according to the architect's original design. One course in a mid-western town has been made about as uninteresting as a practice fairway by lack of care in maintaining the original rough line.

This fall, if you're thinking about course alterations, you might study the rough as a possibility of making holes more exciting and better tests of golf.

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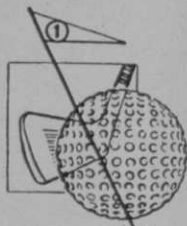
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tient to a home club pro as a "specialist;" meaning that the home club pro could do a lot of good for the patient if the patient would give the pro the time.

Expose Guests to Buying

The lessons, the competitive programs and the lively golf atmosphere of the whole place develop a very substantial volume of shop business. Obitz is strongly adverse to any idea of high-pressure selling but he certainly makes it easy and pleasant for the Shawnee guests to be exposed to the temptation of buying.

He has volunteered in his shop a surprisingly large amount of business that has been entirely overlooked by pros at clubs from which Shawnee guests come. Pros could get some excellent instruction in alluring display and technique in exposing the merchandise to the customer when the customer is in the right mood, by observing the Obitz staff's methods.

The pro department personnel at Shawnee must be immaculately groomed and wearing the latest of what the shop has to sell. They're walking displays of shop merchandise. On hot days the teaching pros change outfits at noon. Fred and Harry both make a strong point of the pro staff at a smart resort showing par for smart resort wear.

"Mind If I Change Shoes?"

Shoe business is particularly good and one reason is that when the circumstances permit a pro staff member will say to a guest "do you mind stepping into the shop for a few seconds while I change into my golf shoes?" The guest goes in, sits down by the shoe display, and guess what happens frequently?

The keynote of the Obitz operations are that Harry works on the platform that the pro shop and the services of the pro department personnel must be a golf resort attraction to personalize and emphasize the quality of the course and every other feature of the resort.

"We strive to attend to every guest so he and she will think subconsciously that the main reason Fred Waring runs Shawnee is to make each guest his happy friend. When that's done in a resort, private or fee club for the management the pro and the management both are going to be rewarded when they look at the financial statement."

THE ROUGH AS A FACTOR

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and blend effectively with the natural landscape.

When properly proven by play, the outlines of the fairway (or rough) should be meticulously maintained. So often, careless or thoughtless mowing will gradu-

ally and imperceptibly change a hole until its original character is utterly destroyed. Sometimes the demand for relief from the seeming injustice of some hazard influences the Green committee to eliminate a salient of rough upon which the whole scheme of play hinges and in a few years, when the old setup is forgotten, players ask, "Who built that silly, meaningless bunker No one ever gets into it!"

The rough costs comparatively little to create and little more to maintain properly than to neglect. Properly outlined and conditioned, it is an important factor in the strategy of each hole. Thought expended on its location and vigilance in maintaining its outline when proven is more than worth while.

PROS TELL IDEAS

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Cheaper sweaters, shirts, socks, etc., are poor sellers and the amount of profit derived from them is very small compared with the top grade goods. A wide variety of hats and caps, fancy and otherwise, alone grosses \$2000 annually.

"Criticism of members' clubs is not permitted by me, but we do suggest that better clubs are made when such is the case."

Stage "Clearances" With Care

Howie Atten, well trained as an assistant and now doing a fine job as pro at the Dubuque (Ia.) G&CC says:

"For a club the size of Dubuque G&CC, I find that running blind bogeys during the early part of the season with many small prizes creates interest. Along toward the latter part of the season, after building up interest with many winners of small prizes, I clear inventory of sets of clubs with a few large winners. Running bogeys on Saturday and Sunday, one can get rid of a set of woods one day and a set of irons the next. In smaller clubs, one set of woods or irons for both days would probably be the better way. This type of clearance could run from Aug. 15 on.

"If reductions in price are the manner of clearance, too many wait and look for the 'bargains' and it spoils the potential

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