

Modernizing the Course for Pleasant Play, Economy

By JAMES GILMORE HARRISON

Most golf courses built in the mid-1920s have maintenance costs higher than necessary. Golf course architecture and construction did not contemplate today's high manual labor costs or today's frequent inability to get manual labor for course maintenance work at any price. In that period when many courses were being built none of the designers, builders, or men responsible for course maintenance could plan for the extensively mechanized work that must be done on well-maintained courses today.

Something else many may forget, as they consider the need of course alteration work today, is that the present standards of turf condition are infinitely higher than were acceptable a quarter century ago. The representative first-class golf course in a medium-size city today must be in better condition than the most expensively maintained championship courses 25 years ago. Developments of finer turf strains, chemical treatments for weeds, pest and disease control, more scientific fertilizing and watering operations, better drainage, aerifying and management in more effective use of man-hours have changed the course maintenance picture.

Change Is Constant

And we are by no means at a point of easing-up in this program of progress. In machine maintenance alone the development is showing interesting and economical use of electric equipment, powered by portable generators, for important jobs of grooming about the course. It is not unusual for these outfits to save their cost in a season's work at the current high prices of manual labor.

The character of the greenkeeper's job has changed to that of course superintendent at every first-class club. The nature of the green-chairman's job also has changed. Now the chairman's presentation of the economics of course operations to the board and to the members, and the decisions he must make in collaboration with the superintendent constitute a far more serious responsibility than a chairman had 25 years ago.

Fundamental conditions also have changed considerably. Only a few factors remain unchanged. One is that in golf the player, rather than the course design

or turf, is the first and all-important governing element. Everything in the progressive program of course usefulness must be based on the pleasure of the player.

The basic nature of the game, which has stood the test of changing generations and various national temperaments and geographic conditions, is unalterable. Playing conditions can be less exacting for the less proficient but a golf course without problems, penalties and rewards isn't attractive enough to be popular.

New Factors in Design

Now, as contrasted with 25 years ago, we have some fairly new factors that should be considered in the modernization program of a course.

One is easing the route of the course so there won't be exhausting climbs. Despite the great growth of golf among younger people during the past ten years, the average age of private club members is much higher than the club average of 25 years ago. The "Thrombosis Hills" of many courses that were constructed during the 20s have no place in today's golf architecture. These climbs also slow play of middle-aged and younger members, and that's a factor to be eliminated at many places where slow play and crowded courses discourage golfers.

This reduction of the steep uphill grades is often a very difficult problem for the golf course architect who has an alteration job as he is primarily confronted by a clubhouse location on a hill to which players come by automobile, and to which they must get back with an uphill climb after 18 holes of play.

In many instances the alteration problem also involves layout and construction of a practice range area convenient to the clubhouse. A quarter century ago it was customary for the professional to give lessons on some fairway handy to the clubhouse, and play wasn't heavy enough, except on week-ends and holidays, to mean much interference.

Now the pros' lesson calendars are crowded. Members are practicing long, medium, approach and trap shots when they can, and the private club member often wishes that his club had night-lighted practice facilities equal to those of a good driving range. The practice put-

ting green no longer is adequate for the club members.

Chemical control of insects that are drawn by lights now is routine procedure at many ranges. The range night business is an indication that many private clubs are deficient in facilities that attract and entertain members and give them full value for their entrance fees and dues.

That's the over-all course alteration situation that golf faces today. The specific jobs of modernization always have their limitations of area, topography and money but very, very rarely, so far as competent golf course architects have seen, are these limitations such that they prevent modernization with greater enjoyment by the players and sound economy.

Modernize at Irwin (Pa.) CC

A representative case of a course that required modernization to satisfy its players and to keep maintenance costs and standards in line with members' wishes, was the case of the Irwin (Pa.) CC.

The Irwin members, now as in mid-20s when the course was constructed, want design that provides testing and alluring golf, and not an ordeal. The punishing element of hazard location and design that bore down on average players in the 20s had become obsolete.

Like other courses built in the 20s the Irwin CC course had a maintenance cost that was higher than it should be because of old design and construction. There was a great deal of hand mowing around old bunkers, useless mounds and steep slopes around greens. In most cases the old greens were not built properly with regard to the amount of fill; the main body of the green was not raised enough to permit surface drainage; the sub-grades usually were not correctly formed, nor carefully graded; tile drainage was not correctly installed; top soil was incorrectly mixed with resulting layers of sand and humus causing shallow root growth. These were all leading factors of constant trouble.

Green Physical Condition

A green's physical condition should be the first consideration to the architect because sogginess, seepage, or outer surface water will be the cause of constant worry. Here again, proper architectural design will eliminate these dangers.

Have you noticed the pride superintendents have in their greens? Most of them steer you to their best green on the course and tell you the most minute details that go into the upkeep. Usually you will find that perfect architectural design and construction exist where the greens are in such excellent condition that warrant the greenkeeper's pride.

At the Irwin CC, the first time I saw it,

there were five outstanding disadvantages to good golf, viz:

1. To play the hole the golfers had to walk up the steepest part of the course;
2. Too many and useless mounds and bunkers;
3. Badly placed tees;
4. Fall-away greens that would not hold shots; and
5. Too many parallel holes.

To overcome these problems a complete survey and study was necessary. We had several green locations where there was no surface drainage and seepage from surrounding areas. Cutting and filling was required to produce the desired putting surface. Subgrading was then constructed so as to eliminate any depressed area.

There were several greens also where seepage or underdrainage was the problem. This was solved by raising the body of the green above the natural level and digging a swale on the high side of the green; the bottom of the swale being two feet below putting surface.

Reconstruct Greens

The next step was to cover the entire surface of the green with a porous material, such as crushed rock, to a depth of 6 in. This material was carried at least 25 or 30 ft. out on the approach to the green. A tile line was installed to pick up the surplus water from the approach of the green and carried off into the rough.

After this operation was completed we applied 4 in. of porous top soil spread evenly over the green and carefully graded. For the final grade a special material was mixed consisting of one part sand, one part humus and two parts soil. This material was mixed several times and then applied to a depth of 4 in., spread evenly over the entire surface. This particular procedure is applicable to all putting greens regardless of location.

In order to avoid steep climbing on several of the holes I reversed the play, thus eliminating about 45 per cent of up-hill climbing. Useless mounds and bunkers were replaced by proper tree planting and traps. Tees were replaced to avoid playing along hillsides. Fall-away greens were rebuilt and in some cases relocated. In rearranging the course we eliminated the parallel holes to a great extent by designing dogleg and semi-dogleg holes.

During the entire construction play continued with no interruption, except for one temporary green.

I have an organized crew trained to build greens with the latest dirt moving

equipment. Therefore, we accomplished our work at a minimum cost.

After the Irwin CC course was completed and in play they discovered their maintenance cost was much less and the course was easier to maintain than prior to remodeling; also their revenue increased. I can safely say that by the increased revenue and their savings on maintenance costs the club will regain their outlay over a period of three or four years. Not a bad venture—a good investment.

British Set Up Foundation to Make Golf Great Again

Golf Illustrated, the weekly magazine for the golfer in Great Britain carried a feature story in 1949 on the activities of the National Golf Foundation in the U.S. and later proposed work of a similar nature be undertaken in the British Isles. The ground work has been laid for the British Golf Foundation by an enthusiastic group who have started instruction programs in some of the schools. Progress made and plans for further activity are reported in an article in a recent issue of Golf Illustrated which says:

"You will be hearing more about the British Golf Foundation soon, but I can tell you that its object is to encourage more people to take up the game, particularly young people, which, of course, is what the game is needing in Britain.

"Although nothing has been previously announced about the Foundation, those behind it have in fact done a great deal of work. Starting with schools which would seem to be most logical, they have already sent out professionals giving lessons and demonstrations—at one school, Bill Young, the Sonning professional, was faced with a class of eighty on his first visit. Another school, a Scottish one, said they were sorry, but that they could only give two afternoons a week for golf lessons!

"I mention these two just to prove that the idea has caught on, and the whole thing cannot even be said to have properly started yet. That it will grow is certain. At the moment the organizers cannot cater for anything like the number of schools who wish professionals to go to do coaching, and they will not be able to meet the demands without money.

"In due course appeals will be launched to firms in the golf trade and no doubt to golf clubs. But it is no secret that money is required at the moment so that the great work which has been started cannot only be carried on but extended a hundredfold.

"Golf Illustrated has constantly drawn attention to the fact that we need more golfers, and having got them, that first-

class coaching and plenty of it is also required if we are to breed a new generation of great players who will restore some of the golfing glory we have lost.

"The scheme has been launched in schools in the first instance, but later junior sections of golf clubs, factories, etc., will be tackled.

"But again I emphasize, that this great work cannot be carried on without money, which is required urgently.

"May I appeal to you to send any amount, large or small, to Mr. Cyril Gray, 'Jesmond,' Hollybank Road, West Byfleet, Surrey. All subscriptions will be most welcome and will be acknowledged.

"If this scheme receives the support it deserves, then in a few years' time I am certain we will be able to bring back the game we all like so much to its former greatness, and will in addition have driven away the wolf from the doors of so many clubhouses around which it has been lurking."

Women's National Trophy Oldest of U.S. Prizes

The trophy presented to the first winner of the USGA Women's Amateur championship has been given to the USGA and is now in "Golf House," the USGA headquarters.

Archibald M. Brown, New York, a son of the winner, recently removed the solid silver pitcher from a trunk stored in his summer home at Southampton, N. Y., and presented it to the USGA Golf Museum.

The trophy was given for competition by R. D. Winthrop and William H. Sands at the time the first Championship was scheduled at the Meadow Brook Club, Westbury, N. Y., on November 9, 1895.

The late Mrs. Charles M. Brown, of New York, won it by defeating 12 other contestants with an 18-hole score of 69-63-132. Nine holes were played in the morning and nine after lunch.

Prior to the second Championship, the Hon. Robert Cox, M. P. of Edinburgh, Scotland, presented the permanent trophy which has since been emblematic of the USGA Women's Amateur Championship.

The original trophy is the oldest in the USGA's possession. The Amateur and the Open Championships were the first USGA tournaments in 1895 but both original trophies were destroyed by fire.

The inscription on the first Women's Championship prize reads:

*Meadowbrook
Ladies Golf Championship
of the United States
November 9th, 1895
Won by
Lucy Barnes Brown*