

Sound Balance of Many Factors Tests the Course Architect

By WILLIAM B. LANGFORD

GOLF, more than any other game, provides social relaxation as well as keen competition for its participants, and not on a standardized field but usually in the most beautiful rural setting available to the community.

Since players do nothing physically to interfere with each other's performance, the golf course—not the man he plays—is a golfer's chief adversary, while his surroundings set the stage and contribute immeasurably to his enjoyment.

No golf course, therefore, can be properly developed to function as it should unless the designer appreciates the complicated relationships between the course, the mechanics and strategy of the game, and the player's psychological reactions.

The well-designed hole should require players to think before they shoot and offer alternate avenues of play for consideration by golfers of varying ability, thus not only saving them strokes by intelligent planning and adding infinite interest to the game, but also concentrating their attention on constructive things instead of worrying about results. In golf one has so much time to think that the firm decision and crisp execution so essential to winning play is frequently ruined by indecision.

If the element of uncertainty were removed, if every bounce were true and every lie perfect, golf would become a lifeless mechanical thing without appeal or challenge. To be a golfing giant one must accept the unjust vagaries of chance with equanimity and accomplish miracles with alert but completely relaxed concentration.

In this game most anything can happen and it is the architect's task to see that it is very apt to, especially to the Titans.

It has been said that a fellow goes to college to learn how to loaf through life—an inaccurate and unfair analysis. It is certain, however, that the successful golfer must soon learn to play the easy way, not to make any shot without first thinking of the stroke to follow, weighing reward and penalty, and always playing with the odds in his favor. A fine me-

chanical effort may be very expensive if improperly planned, for no matter how well it was hit something must have gone wrong with the player's headwork if a better spot to receive it was open.

The Architect's Problems

Thus, the golf course architect's problem is not only a geometric one—which results in a loop of 18 holes starting and finishing at the clubhouse—but to create a series of holes:

1st, upon which every golfer, good or bad, young or old, can enjoy himself and improve his game;

2nd, where play is uncongested and as safe as possible;

3rd, with no completely blind shots to the green or near severe trouble;

4th, where there is a minimum of arduous heart-testing climbing—especially on the finishing holes—because golf is played by both strong and weak of all ages and both sexes and the golfer who does not play a good game because of fatigue experiences frustration rather than pleasure;

5th, where there is no sequence or preponderance of similar type holes and where the hole lengths are so balanced that the clever short game player can fight it out on even terms with the slugger. In golf brawn should play second fiddle to versatility and finesse;

6th, where the terrain is utilized and, if necessary, hazards are constructed to create varying problems which make the player map out his campaign, tempt him to bite off more than he can chew and properly reward his judgment, courage and skill;

7th, which, since the unconscious reaction of the player to his surroundings is so important, comprise an overall layout soothing to the nerves and pleasing to the eye; where nature is at her best, and all man-made alterations merge imperceptibly into the landscape, becoming integral parts of it, never noticeable additions;

And 8th, where consideration of economy in both construction and maintenance—important as it is—has not been permitted to impair the value of the course



ORGANIZE CENTRAL ILLINOIS SUPTS.' ASSOCIATION

Central Illinois supts. at Tilden Hall hotel, Bloomington, Ill., June 21, formed the Central Illinois Golf Course Superintendents' Assn. Potential membership in the area between Princeton on the north and Effingham on the south is between 40 and 50. A joint meeting with Indiana supts. was scheduled at Danville (Ill.) CC July 12. The 28 supts. present at the Central Illinois organization meeting elected officers who are, starting with second man in first row, L to R: Director Frank Sundy, Bloomington CC; Pres. James Brandt, Danville CC; Sec.-treas. Floyd Mendenhall, Decatur CC; Director Fred Sprenger, Newman CC, Peoria; VP Charles W. Jones, Champaign CC; Director Charles Carr, Mattoon CC. End man on right is Joe Kelly, George A. Davis, Inc., salesman who helped group organize. Sec. Agar Brown of national GCSA was present and steered organization procedure.

as a fair, interesting and stimulating test of ability in all departments of the game. If the architect fits his design to the terrain, altering it as little as possible and avoiding all unnecessary earthworks, economy is usually well served.

Balance Course Elements

The golf course is the whole property of the club. I would not say that all sections of it are of equal value, but each plays an important part in the final composition. The design and condition of the greens, hazards, fairways and tees are obviously essential details, but the rough, the apparently waste areas and the various service items play a vital role in establishing the excellence of the complete layout from the standpoints of beauty and usability, and as a fair sports battleground upon which to build up a better game.

In developing a golf course plan the architect draws on his extensive knowledge of many golf courses and adapts the features which have made other holes famous to the terrain at his disposal to create new combinations.

Proper Selection Very Important

If he is canny he does not attempt to slavishly copy his model but, understanding the subtle influences which have made it great, uses them in new but similar

situations where, if the gods smile upon him, he may exceed his fondest hopes.

The character of the property offered for any golf course development has a profound influence on the quality of the resulting golf course. A diversified warped terrain can produce a course which will demand of those who play it the ability to make strokes from all sorts of stances and lies, and to place their shots to allow for and take advantage of erratic bounces. Such conditions can only be created economically on an area which is naturally undulating; only on such terrain can difference in elevation play its proper role in the game.

A good testing golf course can be made on featureless property, but on a flat area only a two-dimensional layout can be created. There nature has not already built up through the centuries, without cost, features which do not have to be artificially constructed and which are there to use if the designer has vision and experience. On level land it is not only expensive to create interest and the illusion of surface variation, but difficult to preserve visibility; and the drainage problem is always acute.

To create a fair, attractive, uncongested, testing course an adequate area should be provided. Surplus acreage is

needed to preserve existing beauty, to give individual character to each hole, to permit proper utilization of terrain to minimize climbing, and to create a course which will challenge the expert and which can, at the same time, be enjoyed by the duffer.

The rougher and the more wooded the property, the greater the area demanded. The shape of the tract also has a great effect on the space required. While good 18 hole courses have been developed on as little as 60 acres, at times 200 acres can be scarcely sufficient.

Site Selection An Expert's Job

Many factors must be considered in selecting a golf course site. Among them are soil conditions, water supply, drainage, proximity and character of electric power, sufficient north and south yardage to eliminate sun holes, accessibility, natural beauty of the property itself and of its surroundings, severity of the surface warp, the probable trend of future neighborhood development, and the cost of purchase, of construction and of maintenance.

TURF MEETING CALENDAR

Aug. 3

Turf Field Day, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N. J. Dr. Ralph E. Engel.

Aug. 9

Texas Turfgrass Association Field Day, Cedar Crest Golf Course, Dallas, Tex. Grover Keeton.

Aug. 19, 20

Twenty-third Annual Turf Field Days, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, R. I. Dr. J. A. DeFrance.

Sept. 8, 9

Turf Field Days, Pennsylvania State University, State College, Pa. Prof. H. B. Musser.

Sept. 15

First Annual Rocky Mountain Turfgrass Conference, Colorado A. & M. College, Ft. Collins, Colo. Prof. A. M. Binkley.

Sept. 17

Utah Turfgrass Conference, Salt Lake City, Utah. A. R. Emery, 721 East, 3120 South, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Sept. 21, 22

Eighth Annual Regional Turf Conference, State College of Washington, Pullman, Wash. A. G. Law.

Sept. 27, 28

Midwest Regional Turf Foundation Field Days, Purdue University, Lafayette, Ind. William H. Daniel.

Sept. 30

Northern California Turfgrass Conference, University of California, Davis, Cal. R. M. Hagan.

All in all, the selection of site is so important that a competent golf course architect should make it, and it is also vital that no hope of expediting construction or of saving money should induce the owners to go off half-cocked and do preliminary work of any character—clearing, cultivating, drainage, grading, anything at all—before the final plans are prepared and accepted, and without the architect's knowledge and approval.

A well designed layout is fitted to the terrain to give better and less laborious golf, to hold down construction costs, and can be improved from time to time and kept abreast of the development of the game without expensive rearrangement.

The cost of building golf courses varies widely, depending chiefly upon the nature of the property to be developed, local labor conditions, equipment, and the character of the course created.

The cost of executing any given plan is, for the most part, determined by the efficiency and quality of the work done. Though the cost of earthmoving, drainage, irrigation, soil preparation, planting, etc. may be arbitrarily controlled—it all depends on what you are shooting at and how intelligently the work is planned and carried out—the best assurance of economy is a sound design, unaltered without the consent of the architect, and competent construction management.

Ten-Week Turf Management Course Dates Set

UNIVERSITY of Massachusetts 1955 ten-weeks course in fine turf management again will be held at Amherst, under the direction of Prof. Lawrence S. Dickinson, starting Jan. 3.

This course, established in 1927 as the first of its kind, is open to anyone having had practical connection with golf course turf management. It combines the business and cultural growth aspects of golf course maintenance. Students vary in age from 21 to 50 and come from all parts of the U. S. and Canada.

The course, with the exception of the war years 1943, '44, '45 and '46, has been an annual special course. Certificates indicating completion of the course with satisfactory rating have been awarded to 398 men.

Enrollment is limited. Further information and application blanks may be secured from Prof. Lawrence S. Dickinson, Stockbridge Hall, U. of Mass., Amherst.