

Tees that Please Player*

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WHAT IS THE psychological purpose and relative value of the tee to the golfer? The tee must be a thing of beauty. It should be pleasant and inviting. It should welcome the golfer to enjoy this great game of golf. Most of the waiting in golf is done on the tee. This area is scrutinized more closely. In these moments of restful waiting the player notes the beautiful grooming, the thick grass, and many other related niceties. He becomes aware of the neat manicuring that silently suggests that he, too, is responsible to keep the course clean and uncluttered.

Good tees can be used as a wedge for a larger budget. If the tees are excellent, the membership realizes the supt. is competent and will allot more money for better fairway maintenance. In other words, the contrast of good tees and poor fairways is such that something must be done for the fairways. I have seen this happen two or three times.

A tee should look inviting. Has it ever occurred to you that on the tee all men are created equal? It is the only place where the professional and duffer are the same. Each has the same chance at the ball. They can tee it up on a peg as high or as low as they wish. They can change the location of the ball if their stance is bad. At no other time during the game of golf can they do this legally. Note I say legally! All golfers then have the same start on each hole.

Meadowbrook Tee Program

Now to bring home my point—make the tee as attractive and as good as possible so that the golfer cannot blame you or the tee for his poor shot. But I have news for you—he will still put the blame on you or the tee. Try to eliminate every opportunity for him to blame the facilities for his poor game, poor sportsmanship, and poor score. The golfer has come out to enjoy the game, believe it or not. By barring every occasion to gripe, we may make a better person and club member out of our golfing friend. I feel that one of the greatest differences between top-notch and ordinary supts. is the emphasis on the many little things that sell golf to the golfer.

At Meadowbrook CC we try to have our

tees as much like greens as possible. In grasses, we favor the bents. The creeping bents are highly desirable, but more expensive to maintain.

We have had good results with a mixture of Highland, Astoria, and Seaside. The turf is good, the color was excellent all season due to the Colonial mixture; the recuperative qualities of Seaside especially were desirable. We used to repair divots with topsoil and rye. We now use Seaside instead—it germinates almost as fast. It is a good method to change over to bent.

Strange as it may sound, we do not object too strenuously to *Poa annua* in our tees. I have seen some very good *Poa* tees. We like to think of it in terms of a companion grass. It flourishes in the early Spring and late Fall when the bents are dormant. When the heat of the Summer weakens *Poa*, the bent becomes aggressive and takes control effectively. It does tolerate a low cut and recovers quickly from injury.

Another grass many top-drawer supts. favor is Merion bluegrass—Joe Valentine's baby. Because of its tenacious root structure and near indestructability, it appears to be an ideal tee turf for both wood and iron play. It concedes to a half inch cut. Colorwise it adds a great deal of attractiveness to the over all picture of the golf course. Tees that I have seeded with Merion proved tough and difficult to scar. I would recommend sodding with Merion rather than seeding. It looks so much better the second season. You are all aware that it is difficult to overseed existing grasses with Merion.

Poa trivialis or rough stalk blue is a grass that serves a specific purpose. It is highly shade tolerant and thrives on wet, poorly drained soil. We have a tee that is surrounded by trees and is low and damp. *Poa trivialis* gets the job done here and, therefore, I cannot sell it short. It is shallow-rooted and does bruise easily. Pivoting spikes, etc. do damage it.

We favor a low cut about $\frac{3}{8}$ in. or lower. We do not use a fairway mower but use two Professionals on our tees. The tees are cut three times a week. We operate on the theory that short turf makes the ball set up like a balloon. There is less tendency on

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the player's part to feel he is compelled to dig down after the ball. My experience has been that a tightly mowed turf shows fewer divot marks than a luxuriant long turf.

Our tee fertilizing coincides with our greens program. In the Spring, we spread a 50 percent organic 10-6-4 analysis liberally. During the summer we feel nitrogen is necessary to recuperate turf. We use Milorganite every two weeks. In the Fall, we use phosphate and potash as indicated by soil tests. We use the large fairway spreader in tees where feasible.

Cultivating or aerifying is easier for tees than greens. Since there is no effect on player or ball, we aerify once a month throughout the season. We have found the following practice most beneficial, not only to tees but more so to greens. After aerifying and allowing the plugs or cores to dry we use our Verticut to break up the plugs. This operation not only pulverizes the cores but does an excellent job of topdressing.

Our watering policy demands a lot of water at one time. Our sprinklers are set for 4 to 6 hours without being moved. Since we favor large tees, it is not impossible to water the unused part of the tee during week day play. It does not effect play, the golfers do not mind the water sprinklers, and it keeps those players who ignore markers away from recovering areas. We find we create quite a rough problem when we over-lap our watering. The water that carries out on to the non-tee, non-fairway area pushes that grass. We find it necessary to bring our rough unit out to trim this heavy growth.

Our fungicidal program is one of cure rather than prevention. Unless weather conditions warrant spraying or disease is present, we do a minimum of treating.

Topdressing is done only when necessary in the Spring or Fall. Reseeding is also done at this time.

Tee Construction Procedure

Now for construction of tees. Our long range program at Meadowbrook calls for the construction of at least one new tee or the enlargement of a present tee each year.

We have already discussed grasses. The soil condition should be such that a firm level foundation is afforded the golfer.

The shape and form of tees depends on terrain and individual taste. I prefer a wide and expansive tee since it permits more flexible tee marker positioning. While flatness makes for easier maintenance, it sometimes proves monotonous. Some sloping is not undesirable. Sloping should be soft and not unduly sharp; easy for both

player and machinery to negotiate.

It is essential that tees point in the right direction. Let us not have them pointing off into a group of trees or tough rough.

In planning renovation of tees, we study all angles and possibilities. Consider whether the tee may be lengthened or widened, or two tees be combined. If we find the turf fairly good (and in most cases it is because of its immediate location) we nurture this turf. Let us say we want to connect two tees: we fertilize, mow, water, aerify and seed this area if necessary. When the turf is ready it is a simple matter to lift the sod, rebuild the tee and replace the sod. It works out very well.

I prefer a great variance in tees. I like three sets of tee markers: championship, regular, and ladies. They should be so flexible that on a short hole the average golfer may one day use a 5-iron and the next day a 3-wood. Good tee marker placement can toughen or soften a short hole — you are all aware of this. On longer holes, it is the second shot that is affected. On week-ends the golfer who plays on Saturday will find a different course for him on Sunday because of the flexibility of tee marker positioning. The hole that was tough Saturday is softened up Sunday, and vice versa.

One suggestion may be of some value. We put 2 or 3 cups on some tees where congestion and waiting occur. Thus players may practice a few putts or chips. This idea has been well received.

MANAGERS AWARD JONES MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



National President of Club Managers, Assn. of America, Carl J. Jehlen of the Baltusrol GC, Springfield, New Jersey (R), presents Prof. J. D. Anderson of University of Florida with a check for a scholarship in memory of Thomas Phelps Jones. U of F Senior, William Wiener (L), of Miami Beach is recipient of scholarship. The scholarship was given during the second annual conference on Club Management held at the University of Florida and the Gainesville (Fla.) G & CC. Sixty-three club managers and officials from the Southeast attended.