

Would Modernize Design

Architect Calls for Re-Examination of Golf Course Construction

By Charles B. Schalestock

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THIS fall there again will be programs of mistakes conducted at courses in the hope of correcting previous mistakes in course design and building.

This past summer, as in previous summers, at least a third of the troubles in green and tee maintenance was the result of bad construction or design. The percentage of bad greens due to original sin in building probably was higher, but by conservative estimate a third of the trouble was due to improper building and the other two-thirds to errors in management, lack of money to do the required work properly at the right time, adverse weather and the mysterious, inevitable bad luck that happens in golf course maintenance as it does in playing golf.

That gives you the operating picture as it is at the better courses among the 5,700 in the United States.

This year there probably will be a slight increase over the maintenance costs of last year even though labor, in many districts, was easier to get.

The Horwath and Horwath figures of golf course and grounds maintenance costs in 1957, based on the accounting firm's studies of 52 clubs ranged from \$1887 per hole average at the small clubs to \$2767 at the large clubs. The ratio of gross maintenance cost of course and grounds to membership dues ranged from 40.5 per cent at the small clubs to 26.3 per cent at the large clubs.

How much of those costs were course and how much grounds, nobody knows. Superintendents themselves rarely have any close accounting division between course and grounds.

But the over-all figures show that golf costs a lot of money. That is a conclusion

the superintendent regrets to reach because he doesn't get any too much of what golf costs, although labor costs of maintenance of good courses range from 65 per cent to 75 per cent of the budget.

Golf also costs a lot of time. How much of the 4- and 5-hour rounds are due to bad habits of players and how much to defects in design is a subject for examination and argument. Certainly slow play is a factor in increasing the cost of golf.

Golf is due for an extensive and intensive self-examination.

Some of the answer such an examination would bring forth already are known to the experienced businessmen in golf. For instance; they know that the architectural revisions that will be made by Green committee chairmen and members this fall will be unsatisfactory and a waste of money about 4 times out of 5.

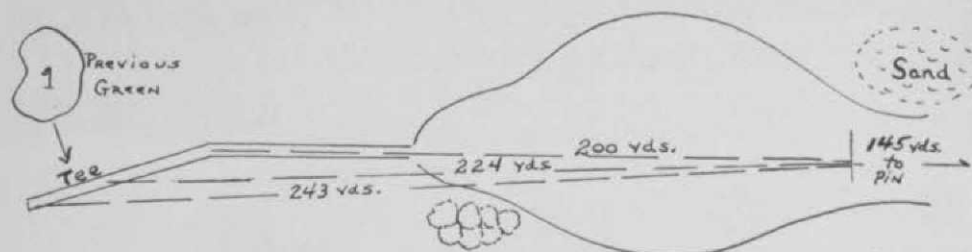
Penny Wise; Pound Foolish Clubs

They have seen innumerable cases of clubs whose officials have said they couldn't afford competent architects eventually spending many times the cost of a first-class architect's services in redoing a bad job.

These experienced golf businessmen have seen thousands of dollars spent in efforts to correct what could have been built properly at the cost of a few hundred dollars over the amount allotted.

The alteration and correction projects at golf courses also are handicapped by usually being capital improvement work added to the normal program of golf course maintenance.

Probably the policy and practice of course alterations will continue on the illogical and wasteful basis at the major-



Easier maintenance, yardage variation is provided for in this type of tee.

ity of clubs even though the better operated clubs are making use of expert and economical architectural service in their remodeling.

One sign of progress in golf business is seen in the power given architects in the planning of the new courses, especially those courses that are part of a real estate development project.

Architect's Many Responsibilities

The architect now has to be the artist primarily, then the engineer, builder, agronomist, management consultant and budget officer on the job. If he isn't the rare and versatile genius who is master of all these jobs he's got to have the cooperation of specialists and an over-all working knowledge of the various phases.

The truth is that the golf architect usually is hired and works under the control of enthusiastic but technically unqualified men in planning a golf course.

For that reason mainly there are comparatively few really outstanding golf courses in the country. I have heard of only one 9-hole course in the U. S. referred to as a fine exhibit of golf architecture. That was a course in Kansas which now has 18 holes.

The golf architect is the key man in a critical period in golf history. His artistry, his building talent, his ability as a market analyst and his capacity to psycho-analyse the golfers are going to determine, to a great extent, how far the game will grow and how fast.

There are some indications that golf architecture has been misguided to cater to the whims of the low handicap golfers who pay a very small percentage of club dues and to solicit the approval of tournament professionals who pay no club dues at all. How far that mistake has figured in making courses unduly long and tricky, hence slower to play, is something to consider in modernizing golf course design and construction on a soundly attractive and economical basis.

Something else that calls for paying more attention to the architect is the choice of a course site. The advice of a competent architect on property to be bought for a course can save many times the architect's fee. The way in which property lends itself to a fascinating test of all classes of golf, the nature of its soil, its drainage, its scenic character or possibilities and its possibilities for economical construction and maintenance are factors the competent architect appraises in his inspection of a prospective golf course site.

And then comes the sound planning. Inadequate and inaccurate drawings and specifications account for millions of dollars wasted in golf course construction.

The golf course architect makes thrifty use of construction and operation funds by his expert advice on location of all buildings, roads, parking lots, swimming pools, tennis courts, service areas, etc.

There are styles in golf architecture and in course adjuncts. How many of the great older clubs have had to devise makeshift practice areas because the style of golf architecture didn't include practice tees when the courses were designed?

Sounds architectural style is a development that contributes to more interesting golf and to economical maintenance and eventually becomes almost standard, subject, of course, to individual interpretations.

Schalestock Tees An Advance

As a course superintendent, course builder and architect I have figured in some of the developments that represent progress in design for pleasant and testing playability and thriftier maintenance. Possibly most immediately and widely useful is the diagonal tee design I used in altering course design to reduce danger to players.

This type of tee shown in the sketch keeps foot and machine traffic to a minimum, provides for a yardage varia-

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here what you might do to stop the spread of the stronger, more vigorous grass that you do not like. Do you know the source of the bent you like? Where did the undesirable bent come from?

Seaside is inferior to Penncross over most of the country but you may or may not be successful in trying to seed Penncross into your Seaside greens. It will help to rake, comb and brush very severely and then aerate thoroughly before introducing the Penncross seed. It might work fine; yet you might get only 10 per cent results. Even so, it is worth a try. Sow 1 lb. to 1,000 sq. ft.

Browning at less than 5/16 cut means that your greens are matted or thatched. A thatch removal machine is called for, to be used at a time when the grass will recover most quickly (spring or fall). Topdressing on top of thatch will not help much. Remove the "junk" first, then aerate thoroughly, fertilize well and topdress. Then keep mowers at 1/4 in.

Re-Examine Course Building

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tion up to 50 yards, presents testing, interesting tactical problems and various pictures of design for each hole on which it is used.

Because it is approached and left by an acute angle foot traffic on this tee is restricted to the immediate playing area.

The width of the actual teeing area is 15½ feet, consequently a 7-gang mower need never turn on the tee. The tractor operator makes one cutting pass down the tee then proceeds to the next fairway.

My design has a minimum of 2250 sq. ft.

The design eliminates dull walks back into the woods. It also is a fascinating equalizer of players of different handicaps. Men and women play from different places of the same tee. That's a factor in reducing maintenance.

There are particular intriguing possibilities of my type of tee on the short holes.

As far as I know the Belair CC course in the Washington district got the first tees of this design when I built the course. The idea is being used on a course under construction in Pennsylvania.

1959 IGA Matches to Australia

Seventh International Golf Championship and Canada Cup matches will be played in Australia on a date to be determined, in Nov., 1959. Fred Cocoran, IGA tournament director will visit Australia next spring to select the site of the matches. This year's matches are to be played in Mexico City, Nov. 20-23.

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