

Along with the cost of remodeling, members and officials fear the inconvenience and loss of business during construction. The author suggests an approach to renovation that will ease the bite on funds and keep operations on a near normal level

Does Your Course Need

Many golf courses built more than 20 or 30 years ago were not designed for today's high compression golf balls and long-range clubs. Thus, they have become little more than pushovers, yielding an abundance of cheap birdies and sure-fire pars. Under such conditions, golf loses its romance—its sense of conquest. And when this happens, a dedicated group of club members usually will begin agitating for changes. Once members take a long hard look at their venerable course, they will probably uncover a host of weaknesses which could easily be eliminated with the proper remodeling program.

Some of the common flaws found in most courses are poor condition and design of greens and tees, misplaced bunkers and water hazards, bad routing of holes, unfair shot values, blind greens and either a shortage or over-abundance of doglegs, water holes and sandtraps.

The golf course superintendent will also have his list of complaints. These are usually maintenance problems, such as standing water, hard-to-mow areas and poor condition of the soil, to name a few.

The students of the game will recognize more subtle flaws, such as green sizes which have no relationship to the length of the approach shots, bunkers and traps which are unrelated

to the play of the holes and a monotonous layout that offers little variety in shot-making.

All professional golf course architects will admit that no one—no matter how great—has ever designed a course which couldn't be improved by revising at least some of the original design.

E. Lawrence Packard, president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, says that remodeling programs are usually well worth the money, not only in added enjoyment of the game, but many times in

lowered maintenance costs.

"A newly-modeled course is a great source of pride for club members and is often a valuable asset in attracting new members," Packard says.

Naturally, any good remodeling costs money, anywhere from a few thousand dollars for rebuilding one green, to a quarter million dollars for re-vamping an entire course. Packard admits that it often takes powers of persuasion, however, to convince some players that the additional dues or assessment needed for re-



The water hazard at Stevens Point CC, Stevens Point, Wis., was improved by gently grading the embankments to provide both easy maintenance and playable lies for golfers.



Useless swampland (above, left) was dug out and cleared with heavy machinery (left), then dredged (above) to form an attractive and functional water hazard at the Innisbrook CC, Tarpon Springs, Fla.

a Face-lift?

modeling will be well spent. The holdouts are often the oldest members, who realize their playing days are numbered, and the youngest members, who have stretched their budgets to join the club.

"Many times, it is wise to invite a professional golf course architect out to the club to help sell the idea," Packard says. "They've been through this many times and can usually allay the fears of the more reluctant members."

The typical fears include club members' uncertainty over how long the course will be under construction, and the club manager's apprehensions over possible loss of restaurant and bar business.

Packard claims remodeling work—even extensive projects—can be undertaken with a minimum of disruption of club life and little loss in revenues, if there is proper planning and work scheduling.

To any club considering renovation, Packard suggests four initial steps:

1. Retain a professional golf course architect: there are many good ones available. For a complete list, contact the American Society of Golf Course Architects, 221 N. LaSalle St., Chicago, Ill. 60601;
2. Get an aerial photograph or accurate topographic

map of either the whole course or the holes to be remodeled;

3. List objectives and establish priorities;
4. Determine the budget.

Most experienced golf course architects suggest that the work be done in two or three stages over a period of two or three years. Six or nine holes can be remodeled, while the rest of the course remains open for play. On less ambitious projects two or three holes can be remodeled with very little disruption of play, especially if the work timetable is well planned. But Packard does warn against extending major projects beyond three years. Members often become impatient and decide to cut the project short.

If a city construction project—such as a new sewer system—is scheduled to cut through a golf course, club members can sometimes use the opportunity to do some course remodeling. Play will be disrupted on some holes anyway, so the club might as well use the opportunity to add a water hole, relocate a green or add a dogleg.

In addition, if a club is planning to install a new watering system, it's a good idea to first do any needed remodeling before the plumbing work has been installed. Of course, in any major remodeling plan, it's ideal to have unused land ad-

joining the course, making it possible to design and build new holes without affecting play.

On major projects, architects will ordinarily present club members with several different plans. As a typical example, an Illinois club recently decided to remodel its golf course. The members reviewed three plans. The first proposed following the same general routing, basically changing only the trees and greens. The second plan—costing about 50 per cent more than the first—included extensive re-routing of holes and addition of doglegs. The third approach—about twice as much as the first—included extensive changes which would have provided members with a championship course. Although the third approach caught the fancy of the remodeling committee as well as many other members, the second plan was used because of budget restrictions.

The work timetable is an important consideration, since it is often possible to begin work on a limited number of greens, sandtraps and tees after Labor Day, and have the course back in shape the following spring. In the South, the work can be done early in the spring and seeding can be done in May when the bermudagrass begins to grow.

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Budget

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personnel changes, when in actuality such action often has a reverse effect. And this certainly cannot be afforded in these days of belt tightening.

Many solutions rest with mechanization. Relatively recent developments in irrigation and triplex greens mowers are just a beginning. But more important than the acquisition of new efficient devices is the over-all adoption of a new philosophy toward needed changes.

Along with a competent superintendent, courses need professionally trained technicians. But unless constructive action is taken to create conditions that will attract such skilled personnel, budgets will become

valueless in the wake of more and more "unexpected" labor and equipment crises.

In addition, the golf club industry must develop the ability to anticipate changing conditions and prepare for them rather than resist them. The advent of the golf car is a classic example of a revolutionary change affecting play, golf course maintenance and budgets.

Make analysis and communication key starting points for budgeting and planning this year. Through this approach, final proposals are likely to reflect a greater relevance to today's maintenance problems and conditions. A simple rehash of years-old formats no longer will work. □

Face-lift

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The relocation and enlargement of tees is one of the easiest and most inexpensive projects, and one which can bring about immeasurable improvement.

Packard revealed that the normal cost of remodeling a tee runs between \$500 and \$1,000, depending if the course is located in a congested metropolitan area or an easy-access rural area. The trend today is to build tees up to 100 yards long, providing championship length from the back, and woman's yardage from the front.

Remodeling or revising a green is a more difficult task, and the cost usually falls in the \$5,000 to \$10,000 range depending on the course location. Naturally, if a green can be relocated, play can continue on the

old green until the new one is finished.

The cost of remodeling three tees and three greens would probably range from \$15,000 to \$35,000, depending on the locations and the extent of work.

Packard suggests that a decline in the restaurant and bar business can usually be avoided by scheduling extra, non-golfing activities to keep members coming to the club while the remodeling is underway. "Most managers who have lived through well-planned renovation projects will admit that lost business is no real problem," Packard adds.

A remodeled golf course can inject new enthusiasm and pride into a membership today—and for years to come. □



"The soil test lab reports that with our high pH, we'd have trouble growing grass in that particular area. However, they gave us three alternatives: parsley, carrots or beets."