



### Golf course construction: only for the expert

A rather new organization to which I wish lots of luck is the **Golf Course Builders of America**. Robert Vincent Jr. is president this year. I have seen many contractors, who didn't know course building, go broke and ruin what might have been a fine course. There have been too many cases of extravagant, wretched jobs being done by well-meaning local people using their own equipment and untold time and money being lost because the badly built course had to be virtually remade by the superintendent.

The importance of a competent and experienced golf course builder cannot be undervalued.

From what I've heard I believe that the first of the really great golf course builders in this country was the father of the Tull brothers, Al and Frank. He built courses for Dev-ereaux Emmett, who was an artist in golf design, but who didn't know how to build a course. **Tull Sr.** was a genius with cute little ideas about drainage and bunkers that looked natural. His son Al became noted as an architect of well-finished courses and son Frank became a superintendent distinguished by beautifully-groomed courses.

**Donald Ross** spread good ideas about building courses from his Pinehurst experience. He almost drove builders balmy trying to do with clay and hard, dirty stoney soil what had been done with the Pinehurst sand.

Old timers have told me about some of the great works of art that **A.W. Tillinghast** built as greens, which as targets for shots and for variety and fairness of putting problems and interesting cup locations, rarely have been excelled.

**Toomey and Flynn**, a notable team of course builders, were in the road contracting business and knew how to handle earth. So when the golf

architect member of the team had an idea of how he thought the Lord would make a golf hole in a few hundred thousand years, the road contractor partner got the idea and handled the earth accordingly.

The great **Dick Wilson** learned, when he was working for Toomey and Flynn, how to create masterpieces of sculpture with earth. Earth sculpture and landscaping are primarily what a golf course is.

The finest tribute I ever heard paid to a golf course contractor was delivered at a superintendents meeting to **Chuck Maddox**, a midwestern pioneer who made sense out of golf course building and established a reputation that his son is nicely embellishing.

The superintendents were talking about troubles in drainage, erosion, green contours for mowing, bunker construction, the water system, the road work, and other things about new courses that can cost superintendents their jobs in the first few years of operation as well as force members to pay heavily for getting, when they do, a satisfactory course.

The answer came from a superintendent who said, "For a few bucks more than they spent, they could have had Maddox, who is the guy who finishes a golf course so it can be turned over for play and maintenance."

There are others besides Maddox who can do that, of course, but not enough of them. Maddox made architects famous by doing what they forgot to do to get a course ready for satisfactory play a few years ahead of the customary time.

Golf course construction is a specialist's job now. They've learned a lot from everybody. **Sil Paulinie**, the New England course builder says, "What was learned from the Seebees in World War II about handling earth makes it possible to build any kind of a course now without throwing away money. The soil ex-

perts, the pump and water and drainage specialists, the electricians, the seed geniuses, the fertilizer boys, the equipment salesmen and the rest of the fellows who know what can be done to make a golf course into a fine building job have to be used by the course architect, and that costs money."

Too many contractors who don't know about golf course building have gone broke on golf jobs. That's their tough luck, but the golf club officials who thought they were being thrifty probably cost their clubs more than the contractors lost.

New club or fee course officials rarely seem to appreciate that the time they save on an expertly done, actually finished job of course construction means money coming in instead of going out.

In the 40-some years I've been covering golf, I've seen hundreds of new courses, but I doubt if I've seen a dozen that really were ready for play when they were opened. That shows what golf course builders are up against.

*Pythium* hit a lot of midwestern fairways and tees last mid-summer. Damage was severe in the Chicago district. In comparing notes with other superintendents on possible causes, prevention and cure **Fred Opperman**, superintendent, Glen Oaks CC, noted that *Pythium* attacked sunny portions of his tees and left the shaded areas untouched.

**Orville Clapper** was honored by GCSA of New England for his valuable services to superintendents and golf in general in that part of the country. In 1922 Orville went to Newton, Mass., from Philadelphia where he and the late T.L. Gustin had formed the Philadelphia Toro Company, the first of the Toro distributor organizations. Orville's father, Sam, was a founder of the Toro Company in Minneapolis. In developing the New England Toro Company, which later became the Clapper Company, Orville inaugurated many of the equipment and supply practices of stocking, delivery, demonstration, service, repair and consultation that later was extensively adopted in working with superintendents to improve course maintenance standards. Orville's son, Sam, is active head of the company now, but don't think Orville is inactive. At 76 he's looking ahead and making some intriguing forecasts. □