

MAINTENANCE AFFECTS PLAY

by JERRY CLAUSSEN

Sometimes a superintendent and his crew can get so wrapped up in the process of growing fine turf that they forget the real purpose of their work, which is the larger goal of creating and preparing a total golf playing area.

Maintenance affects fair play in a variety of ways. Good judgment and an eye for detail are important qualities in a superintendent. The green chairman and committee, or course owner, also have a responsibility in creating the golf environment; they must represent the golfer's viewpoint and suggest, then support, procedures to improve the course.

How does the maintenance program affect fair play? Here's how and what should be done:

MARKING THE COURSE

- Set tee markers frequently, so there is good turf between and two club lengths behind, on level ground;
- Rotate every day tee markers and pin placements, so six holes play long, medium and short. This offers shot variety, but retains about the same total course length each day;
- Set tee markers so that they are at precise right angles to shot line up the fairway or on par threes, to

One example of a poorly placed car path. Note criss-crossing tire marks.



the green;

- Set cups at least five paces from the edge of green in a fairly flat area that has the same contour within a three-foot radius;
- Mark ground under repair so there is no question about where a ball may be dropped out;
- Mark man-made obstructions that may interfere with play and thus permit a free drop;
- Clean around water hazards so a player knows exactly whether a ball is in or out;
- Mark hazard boundaries clearly and define the point where a water hazard becomes a lateral hazard if a lake or creek parallels then crosses a hole, so a player may drop correctly;
- Measure each hole correctly, from center of tee through the middle of the fairway in the air to center of green, and correctly list these distances on tee markers and scorecards;
- Make yardage distance markers, if used, as natural as possible, preferably using a native tree not a sign;
- Put up directional signs from green to next tee in cases where routing may be confusing, the next tee cannot be seen or where guest play is heavy;
- Place benches, ball washers,

standing markers and fountains even with, or in back of, tee markers so that they do not interfere with sight lines or wild shots.

MAINTENANCE PRACTICES

- Mow all surfaces so the height of cut is consistent and fair, as dictated by the grasses, climate and season;
- Mow fairway widths to 50 yards or more except where hazards compress the target area;
- Manage irrigation programs so that greens aren't hard while front aprons are soft, and tees are firm under foot;
- Cut bunker edges and fill with sand so there is no sharp line on the back edge, no overhang over the front edge;
- Keep rakes available at all bunkers, and rake and clean sand as often as crew man hours allow;
- Repair depressions from natural settling, broken drain tiles or irrigation lakes to minimize possible bad lies through the green;
- Keep equipment parked out of the line of play when crewmen are on the course and any irrigation hoses coiled up and away from tees and greens when not in use;
- Trim trees, if possible, to allow golfers to walk under if not swing full underneath.

CONSTRUCTION

- Build or rebuild greens to allow adequate size—5,500 square feet is average now—gentle contours for fair putting and maximum area for pin settings;
- Build or rebuild tees to allow adequate size for frequent resetting of markers and flexibility in hole length;
- Place hazards, both sand and water, so they can be seen and do not demand a perfect shot by the average golfer;
- Plant new trees so they help frame or background a hole, but do not severely pinch the target area or block good shots;
- Cut in golf paths to agree with preferred golfer traffic patterns, but not in line with the hole, nor within 20 yards of a green.

These are just a few of the major considerations in caring for a golf course. The game is more than growing grass.