

Blindness is certainly a subject in golf that one can go blind arguing about." That was architect Max Behr talking back in the 1920s. Since then, golfers and architects have stopped arguing about obstructed views and spent millions to do away with blind shots altogether.

But if you know a golfer begging to do away with the last-remaining blind holes in America, give Mr. Behr a chance to make his case for salvaging those view-hindering hills and mounds.

"Blindness is the one type of hazard in golf which contains the element of mystery," Behr said. "If we were not all so concerned with our scores, and instead played golf for the pleasure in playing the strokes, blindness would not be so abhorrent to us as it is today."

Amen, brother! Please continue.

"Correct design includes the element of mystery," Behr added. "For surely, no engagement is worthwhile when all can be known about it beforehand. Indeed, illusion, if it can be created, gives a hole distinction.

"Blindness is on occasion a legitimate and delightful hazard, and especially so when it forces the player to make a placement shot to attain visibility."

Ah, yes, that strategy stuff, like a bold tee shot skirting trouble in order to open up a view of the green. Meanwhile, the less bold or errant tee ball is left with a blind approach shot.

But Max, those kinds of options require golfers to think about how to best attack the hole. Or they require golfers to make mental notes of design features, and worst of all, means they won't know exactly what to do the very first time they play a course.

We can't have that!

"Blind shots are a way of life on linksland where the game began," Behr stated. "Blindness in an undulating, tumbling terrain [that] linksland presents is quite different from that [which] we are subject to in this country.

"The greens are not separate creations apart from the whole. They are as the Creator made them. They belong. The eye can pick up distance as it wanders from one hillock to

Blind Shots and Blind Thinking

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



BUT MAX, MY MAN,
ISN'T IT A PROBLEM
WHEN GOLFERS
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the next till it arrives at the pin."

So a reasonable blind shot provides the perceptive golfer natural points of reference, say, hills in the distance or trees behind the green? I guess it's safe to say though that you would not approve of a guiding white rock set in the fairway or one of those goofy poles topped by a bullseye.

"It comes down to the question whether the character of the deception is legitimate," Behr said. "The pitcher in baseball cannot make a fake pass to throw a player out at first base. That is not playing ball. Therefore if blindness be such that we are continually deceived, it is only natural that we should object to it."

But Max, my man, isn't it a problem when golfers don't get to see their shots land, and they don't know what clubs to bring from the golf car? That seems unfair, especially when they've forked over \$100.

"Should the golfer, in all cases, become immediately aware of what his fate is?," Behr asks. "Is golf to be robbed of all illusion? Is the walk between shots to be, only, either a tragic or dull affair?"

"Does not the very essence of a sport lie in that suspense between the commencement of an action and the knowledge of its result? Is it not this suspense that in hunting, shooting, fishing and in all sports sublimates the mind and heart into a region of no knowledge, a region where for a moment we are permitted to dream impossible things and become heroes?"

Well, let's not get carried away! But I see your point.

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