

**I** don't need to tell anyone what the impact of rising oil prices is having on the golf business in general and specifically on maintenance budgets. I don't pretend to be an expert on predicting where the business of golf is going, but I do know that the business faces a challenging time. However, there will be no shortage of simplistic answers to these challenges that will be based on the "good old days."

We will be faced with ideas such as, "We need to maintain all of our golf courses like the old links courses," or "I remember when we mowed greens at above one-fourth of an inch three times a week and the golfers were happy" (they were also happy to pay only \$2.50 for a round of golf).

Given my short, oversimplified diatribe, I have decided to share my new simple idea, although in reality it is an old idea for building a new type of green. I'm talking about a sand green. I came across the idea when I was in Dubai last fall, where it was a pleasure to visit a "desert golf course." Desert golf courses have sand greens. Interestingly, they also have sand tees, fairways and roughs. I'm still having a hard time visualizing those bunkers, but why digress. For me, I had never been on a sand green until then, but it was pretty cool and seemed to require little maintenance. Additionally, there is a rich history to sand greens.

It is well known that Pinehurst No. 2 had sand greens prior to 1935. What may not be known is that some famous people have played on sand greens. Take, for instance, the 1908 New York Times with the headline, "Augusta Welcomes Taft; President-Elect Finds Sand Greens Troublesome on Golf Links." The article reported that then President-elect William H. Taft immediately played a round of golf upon arriving in Augusta and pronounced that the golf course was "much to his liking, although he said he would have to become familiar with the sand greens, which were a little difficult after his play on grass."

Talk about a simpler time.

Besides the potential for sand greens to be more difficult to play, I found the rules for playing on sand greens can be complicated. For example, read this from a list of local rules: "A fellow competitor or the opponent of the last player

## Simple Approach Is Not Always So Easy

BY KARL DANNEBERGER



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to hole out shall cause the sand within three smoother widths of the hole to be smoothed, with the smoother edge of the implement I provided (not the rake top)." I will not bother you with the remaining etiquette, definitions and actual rules. It makes the United States Golf Association's Decisions on the Rules of Golf read like a "People" magazine article.

It might appear the maintenance and construction of sand greens would be easy, low cost and environmentally friendly. But I came across a 1931 article entitled, "How We Built Our Oiled Sand Greens," that tells otherwise. I was struck by the following quote in the article: "Our sand greens are 42 feet in diameter and are built on the native soil. In rebuilding them, three barrels of rather heavy fuel oil are first put in the base and allowed to soak in for a few days in order to kill the vegetation and to help keep the base from absorbing the oil out of the sand on the greens."

I don't think the Environmental Protection Agency would look favorably on dumping used motor oil on the soil. Other types of oils, such as soybean-based oil, coconut oil and vegetable oil could be tried, but a problem with them is the tremendous amount of weed pressure they can cause.

In areas where it rains, runoff and erosion can also be a problem on sand greens. This brings me to drainage of the green, how to set the cup (don't have to worry about pin placements) and other maintenance requirements, but those are discussions for another day.

Actually, my enthusiasm for my new idea is not as high as it was earlier in this column. I'm sure there is a place for sand greens, but simplistic answers never seem to be simple.

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