

One sure way to build a better golf course



CASE IN POINT: The new Belvedere Country Club in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Designed by architect Bert Meade, this championship golf course is one of the finest in the country.

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luxury. Clubhouse, course, swimming pools, tennis courts, maintenance buildings are as plush as any you will see. Yet, somehow, I did not feel that I was reveling in a golfer's paradise. The greens are huge, averaging over 10,000 square feet, smooth as glass, without a weed or a ball mark in them. The fairways are wide and lush. Several lakes sparkle through the course. A stream splashes in and out of many of the fairways as it winds through the course.

Test of Endurance

But the course is tiring. It is too long — 7400 yards, and spreads over too many acres — 204. A round of golf here, even with a car, takes close to five hours.

There always will be competition to see who has the shortest or the longest golf course in the world. Of course, it is usually the golfer who pays for these absurdities. Thirty- or 40-yard holes are not exciting to play; 600-yard holes are just

too long for the average golfer.

During my 40 years in the golf business, I have seen many changes in the design of golf courses, especially the greens. They have gone from the round flat to the table top, to the punch bowl, etc. These innovations, as a whole, were vain efforts to gain character, win distinction for the course. Needless to write, none of these "distinctive" features are favored today, but the struggle for distinction still goes on. The efforts still being made to achieve distinction are no less ridiculous than the table top green.

Closer to Town

Going back, that course which built a catch basin to capture the winter rains had a choice of two properties, the one which was selected and another one about a mile farther from town. The land that wasn't selected has an artesian well spouting forth 6,000 gallons of water per minute on it. Yet, the club chose the other site

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because it was a mile closer to town, and because it was decided a lake on the course "would look nice."

Native Soil Better

In another case I know of, a new golf club brought in topsoil for its fairways at a cost of \$250,000, even though the native soil was better than the imported soil.

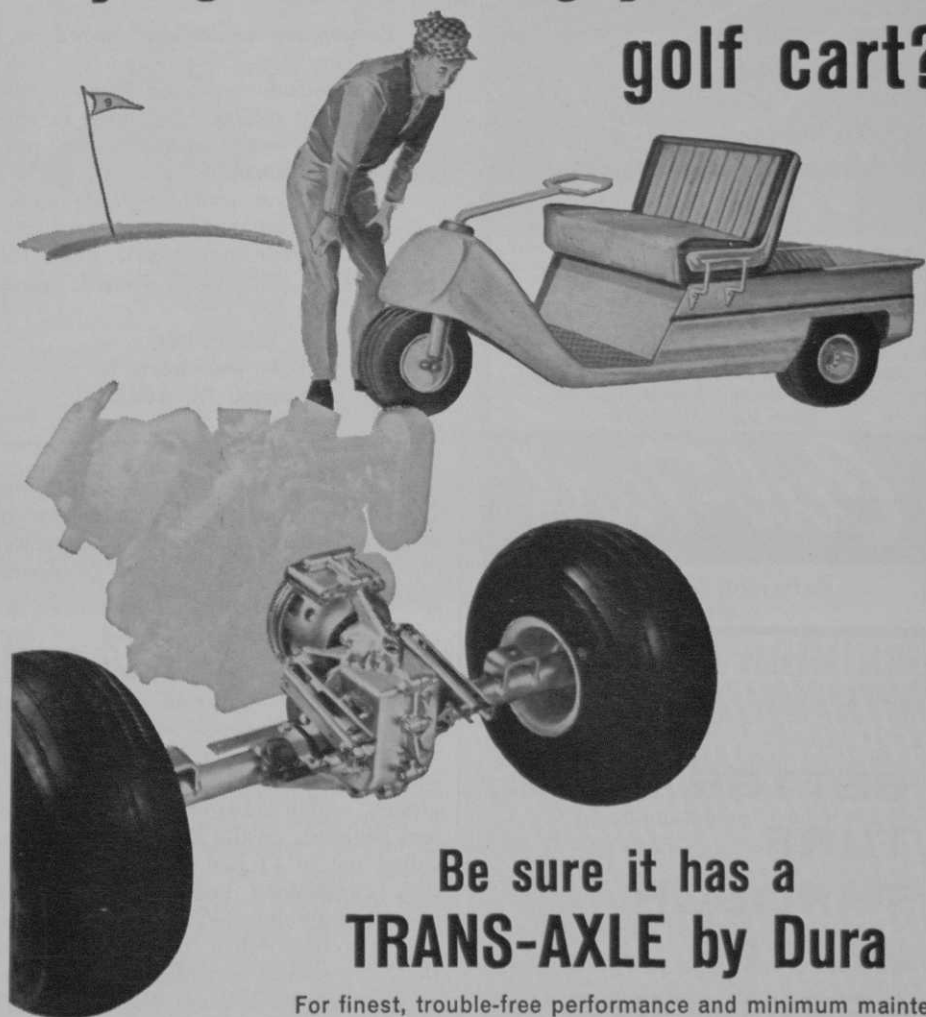
Not long ago a private club in the West installed a fully automatic pumping system at a cost of \$120,000. As everyone knows, the installation of such a system requires the movement of a substantial amount of soil. Yet, a few months later, I played a round of golf with one of the members at this club. We came to a time clock station. This member said to me, "Look at that! We paid \$120,000 for that!" He was disgusted and annoyed. As far as this member was concerned his course was no better than it was before the expenditure. And in many ways, he was right. The course was built about 35 years ago when horses and Fresno scrapers moved most of the dirt. The greens are small, poorly designed and several of the tees poorly placed.

This type of a fairway is a monstrosity. A good drive up the middle invariably bounces to the right or left. It seldom bounces straight. Then the golfer is faced with a blind shot to the green. An expenditure of \$40,000 more would make this golf course really modern, one of the best in the area.

Must Know The System

A competent architect knows which is the best type of sprinkling system for a particular need. Above all he knows how to install it. Recently, a new golf course had 120 breaks in its irrigation system in the first two months of operation. All because the nature of the sub-soil was not considered in the installation plans. The trenching was done with a scraper blade instead of a trencher. The job had been given to the lowest bidder, and the contractor wished to save time and money. The trenches were rough and uneven, and many of the larger rocks were not removed. The pipe was laid so that it came in contact with some of the exposed rock. The hammer action of the water flow

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caused the pipes to vibrate and pound against the rock. Abutments were neglected at critical points and the pressure of the water caused the pipes to separate at these points.

Should Know Seed

The architect knows seeds, and how to use them — or he should. Several months ago a new golf course was opened in a city not many miles away from my home. This course used Seaside bent on its greens, and a mixture of Highland bent and Bermuda on the fairways. When they called me in (I had supplied the seed) they complained because Bermudagrass had strongly infested the greens. When they purchased their seed, I emphasized that they should keep the fairway mixture at least 20 yards from the greens. The workmen who had seeded the course told me that this was not done. In addition, when the fairways were seeded a fairly strong wind was blowing. No doubt the fairway mix had blown onto the greens.

The cases cited here illustrate only a few of the pitfalls that must be anticipated in building a golf course. Many are obvious, yet it is strange how they can be overlooked.

National Golf Day • May 31



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Grau's Answers

(Continued from page 74)

use has to be understood by the supt. or water-logging can result. Some day computers may be put to work to coordinate agronomic factors, infiltration and the use of cultivation devices. Then something like perfect turf, impervious to poa annua, and green all summer will be realized. Unless, of course, the members intervene!

Research also has shown that the rooting depth of different species of turf has much to do with water needs. I know, for example, where Merion Blue survived after a month of zero irrigation in arid country. Bermuda held color and life for over 100 days under the same conditions. Numerous other examples such as these can be cited.

Researchers, agronomists, irrigation specialists and, of course, supts. need to get together and put irrigation and fertility levels in the proper perspective. There is a needless waste of water and turf because their thinking has never been fully coordinated.

Penncross Vetch

Q. Please send further information on Penn-cross vetch as mentioned in *GOLFDOM* in a recent issue. We plan to seed our irrigated fairways to Highland bent and the greens to Penncross. What is your opinion? (Ohio)

A. Penncross for greens is a good choice. It is the best seeded bent for putting greens. Vegetated creeping bents are still very much in the picture but superiority depends heavily upon management.

A mixture of Colonial bents (Astoria and Highland) would be better than either one alone. Since all Colonial bent seed carries a certain percentage of creeping types, it is a safe bet that your fairways will become creeping bent. Why not go one step further and add five pounds per acre of Penncross seed to hasten the day when you can begin at once to manage for creeping bent. Those who warn that Penncross will develop thatch are right. But, since all turfgrasses develop thatch, why not start using current knowhow, improved fertilizers, lime, and specialized equipment to prevent thatch from becoming a nuisance. Certainly, you will be able to mow Penncross creeping bent fairways more closely and to irrigate less frequently. Diseases and poa will be less of a problem.

Incidentally, have you considered hydroseeding your bent seeds? Distribution is more nearly perfect, seeding rate can be lower and more accurate, and germination time is reduced.



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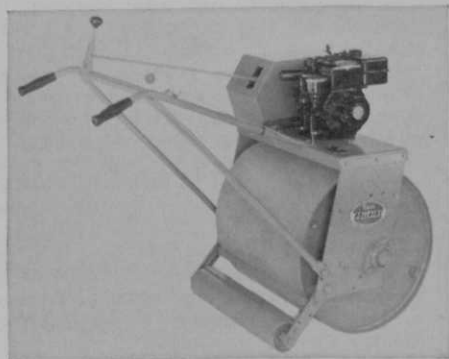
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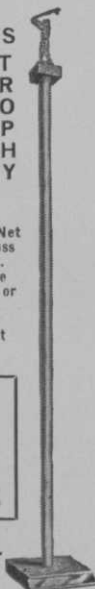


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Don't Forget That Date!

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Gene Sarazen, who was given the Golf Writers' William D. Richardson trophy at Augusta, Ga. during the Masters, is shown with Harry Colburn (l) and Joe Wolfe, Wilson Sporting Goods officials. Gene is the dean of Wilson Staff members. He won the annual Richardson award for his contributions to the game.

Boorish Members

Q: The green committee of our club has asked me to write for your suggestions on solving a problem which is common to all clubs: that of the conduct of a few members while playing. They disregard signs, run carts through prohibited areas, etc. We thought that a movie at one of our meetings would help if such a movie is available. Your suggestions will be appreciated. (Pennsylvania)

A: The few thoughtless members who disregard the rules of common courtesy and who make golf less pleasurable for their fellow players deserve consideration only if their continued association has benefits that outweigh their boorish acts. This is decision No. 1 for the Board.

The first approach might be for the green chairman to seek out each offender singly and, in a courteous manner, remind each of his transgressions and ask for improved conduct. If the offensive actions persist the next step could be the writing of a letter to each setting forth (1) the earlier oral reminder; (2) the continued undesirable acts; and (3) the possibility of a bulletin board notice naming those who persist in offensive conduct. If a bulletin board listing becomes necessary it remains only for the board to request a resignation if all requests are ignored.

You might write to the United States Golf Association, 40 East 38th Street, New York 16. The association may have developed a movie suitable for showing at club meetings where "Courtesy" is starred.

(Note: Readers are invited to comment on how this situation might be handled. Ed.)