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As golf courses look to improve or restore their design, the art of contouring fairways doesn't garner as much attention as it should. Fairway contours on many courses — old and new — tend to be too narrow, too systematic and of secondary consideration. With a little tweaking here and there, however, reworked contours can be the fastest way to improve the architecture and playability of most golf courses.

The creation of the straight, narrow fairway contour approach can be traced back to the early 1950s (USGA's Joe Dey). That's when protecting par and the host club's ego became more important than determining the best player. When courses around the nation heard about the revolutionary idea of pencil-thin fairways, many followed USGA's lead.

As golf's governing bodies continue to sit back and watch equipment outdate most of the pre-1930 courses where they prefer playing Majors, fairway contours are continually tightened. Golf course committees take this irrational setup approach to heart and follow suit. It's a bizarre infatuation to push the infamous "tough but fair" envelope, which we all know is an utterly meaningless concept in the everyday enjoyment of golf across America.

So as spring approaches and the subsequent growing season allows superintendents to prepare courses for play, there is no better time to do some in-house restoration on your fairways. A little tweaking here or there can not only make a course more enjoyable to play, but also increase speed of play and accentuate design features.

With those thoughts in mind, here are some basics on fairway contouring from an architectural point of view:

• **Wide as possible** — Unless you are under order from some governing body to impose a 25-yard maximum, fairways should be as wide as your budget and design allows. Green committees usually want to narrow things down to penalize those dreaded long hitters. However, narrow fairways only make the game tougher on the average player who struggles out of rough, but easier for the good player because it tends to keep that person's ball out of hazards like trees and bunkers. Worst of all, narrow fairways eliminate strategic design possibilities.

Fairway Contours Provide Quick Fix

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



THE ART OF
SHAPING FAIRWAYS
SHOULD GARNER
MORE RESPECT AS
COURSES LOOK
TO IMPROVE
THEIR DESIGN

• **Stay away from set widths** — Every hole is different, particularly sloping ones. Judge accordingly and allow more room for fairways with slope or contour because they end up playing narrower than flat fairways. Golf professionals tend to be most guilty of the every-fairway-must-be-the-same-width-approach.

• **Hug hazards** — Does anything look worse than seven yards of rough between the fairway edge and an important bunker? Expanding fairways to the edge of bunkers not only looks more aesthetically natural, but brings the trouble into play as the architect intended.

• **Contours don't need to get wet** — The shaved lake bank concept (which Augusta National probably kicks itself for not copyrighting) has taken the short-grass-next-to-hazards-concept literally INTO the hazards! Golf courses have mimicked the shaved lake bank look, but must we risk the lives of innocent maintenance staff to be like Augusta? An inch or two of rough around water hazards is more reasonable.

• **Avoid straight lines** — This doesn't mean you need to make your fairway lines look like they came off a landscape architect's drawing board. Trust your artistic instincts by incorporating some gentle curves, preferably creating contours that accentuate ground features and hazards. Avoid covering interesting humps and bumps in the fairway with rough because few hazards are more appealing than a tightly-mown mound.

So if the board nixed another year of upgrading your course or you are putting together a master plan, do not forget the most important playability aspect of any golf course — fairway contours. They are the cheapest and easiest way for a quick fix, and key to the long-term appreciation of any layout.

Geoff Shackelford, who has wrangled over fairway designs with fellow green committee members, can be reached at geoffshac@aol.com



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Big Fun in the Big Easy



Our five-minute guide on how to enjoy yourself in “N’awlins” – when you’re not doing business

BY CURT HARLER

If you’re headed to New Orleans for the big show, here are some tips to make your visit more fun and friendly. Say after me: “Laissez Les Bon Temps Rouler (Let the good times roll).” After all, that’s why we’re goin’ to New Orleans.

Getting there

It will cost \$10 for the airport shuttle and it leaves the airport for downtown every 10 minutes. Cabs charge a flat \$21 for two people, and \$8 for each additional person. If you’re driving on the Interstate, don’t look for signs to say “French Quarter.” The signs will say “Vieux Carre” (old square).

Best freebies

My boss doesn’t pay me any better than your boss does, so here are some great, cheap thrills in New Orleans:

- Nothing beats the free trip across the Mississippi on the Canal Street Ferry that runs between the dock at the base

PHOTO CREDITS: 1 & 2) RON CALAMIA,
3) MICHAEL TERRANOVA, 4) LINDA REINEKE

of Canal Street and Algiers on the other side. Just stay on the boat and it'll take you back. The round trip is about 35 minutes.

- Check out any of the above-ground cemeteries. Go during daylight and go with a friend or two. Don't go at night. (It's the live ones, not the dead ones, you need to beware.) Try St. Louis Number One at the edge of the Vieux Carre a block from North Rampart Street. If you have a car, see the Metairie Cemetery, which is unparalleled.
- The National Park Service offers one-hour walking tours from its office in the French Quarter twice daily. They have different themes, but all are interesting and informative. The French Quarter walking tour, published by the Convention and Visitors Bureau, hits the high points of the Vieux Carre and has a driving tour of the Garden District.
- There are some cheap thrills, too. For a couple of bucks, you can have a beignet ("bin-yay") breakfast at Café du Monde (see below). Or buy some pralines at any of the shops in the Quarter. My favorite is Old Town at 627 Royal.
- Eat muffulettas, a huge sandwich available anywhere. I'm big, and half a muffuletta is plenty for lunch. Get it "dressed;" that is, with the works.
- Walk Bourbon Street after dark. It's cheap unless you fall for the kids' "Betcha I know where you got them shoes, mister" routine (answer is "in New Orleans") or start hitting the bars. Watch the crowds, see the girls "earn" beads tossed from the balconies or listen to the music. A bit of trivia: In the United States, only New Orleans and Las Vegas

do not have closing laws. Once you settle in for eating or drinking, see "expense account" listings below.

Food off the beaten path

Dickie Brennan's Steak House at 716 Iberville, and Chef Horst and Karen Pfeifer at Chartres and Ursulines are two French Quarter restaurants worth a look. NOLA (get it?) is a spin-off of Emeril's and has the same good food, but the downstairs is more informal than upstairs. My personal favorite (but it's getting more press these days): Bayona at 430 Dauphine.

Among the newer spots getting good reviews are Iron Mike's Grill (owned by recently fired Saints head coach Mike Ditka); an Indian place, Nirvana, at 4308 Magazine; and Mr. John's Steak and Seafood at 2112 St. Charles. My favorite for Cajun food is Mulate's, 201 Julia. A close second is Bon Ton Café, 401 Magazine. For Creole, try Andrew Jaeger's at 622 Conti or Tujague's ("Two-jacks") at 823 Decatur.

Best expense account eats

If "they" are buying, hit places like Antoine's, Emeril's, Galatoire's, or K-Paul's (a favorite with the women I know). The Court of Two Sisters, 613 Rue Royale, has a decent jambalaya jazz brunch.

Ordinarily, I avoid hotel food, but I can recommend both the Grill Room at the Windsor Court Hotel and Louis XVI at the St. Louis Hotel. Both are superior.

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Talk Like a Local

- Bayou — from the Choctaw for creek, a natural canal.
- Beignet — "bin-yay," a delicious donut covered with powdered sugar that looks like a pillow.
- Café au lait — a 50-50 coffee and milk mixture.
- Cajun — descendant of French colonists who came to New Orleans from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Canada; the cooking is country-style, robust and peppery. Expect sausage, crawfish, and lots of seafood.
- Courtbouillon — "coo-boo-yon" is a rich spicy stew or soup with fish, tomatoes and onions.
- Crawfish — even if spelled crayfish it is pronounced "crawfish." A freshwater critter that you eat.
- Creole — descendant of an early French or Spanish settler. Cooking is much



Crawfish — a New Orleans delight.

spicier than Cajun and can be divided into the fancy Haute Creole, like Oysters Bienville or Oysters Rockefeller, and lower Creole like red beans and rice.

- Etouffée — "ay-too-fay" means smothered, usually in a tomato-based sauce.

- Gumbo — from the African kingombo for okra, a main ingredient in many foods.
- Lagniappe — a bit extra for free.
- New Orleans — say "N'awlins" or "N'yawlyuns." Don't say "Noo Orleens" unless you want to be made for an out-of-towner.
- Times-Picayune — the local paper. From a small Spanish coin worth 6.5 cents (two picayunes were a bit; two bits, a quarter).
- Parish — name for Louisiana's 64 counties; New Orleans is in Jefferson Parish
- Po' boy — local hoagie.
- Praline — say "praw-leen," and get the sweet made of pecans browned in sugar.
- Gris-gris — say "gree-gree," a Voodoo charm.
- Street names — Chartres is "charters," Conti is "con-tie," accent the "gun" in Burgundy; vieux carre is "voo ka-ray."

Big Fun

Continued from page 75

Need to eat fancy, but don't want the bill to kill you? Head over to the Garden District and enjoy a dinner at Commanders Palace at 1403 Washington. Or try Gautreau's with very good food at a reasonable cost.

Antoine's and Galatoire's, both in the Quarter, boast 100-year traditions. Arnauds also is a good spot. The food is excellent and the service is impeccable, but the tourist crowds can be a bit much. The dress code is more formal than most, so make sure you dress appropriately. If you like scenery with your food, try Bella Luna, upstairs at the French Market near Decatur and Dumaine. For a place with a view, the food's good.

Family attractions

• The Aquarium of the Americas at the foot of Canal Street is one of the better aquariums in the world.

• Take the streetcar tour along the Mississippi River.

• For \$4, take in a session or two at Preservation Hall at 726 St. Peter St. It will let the kids get a feel for real jazz,



not the fusion brand that's popular now.

• For a cheaper thrill, take a round-trip ride on the St. Charles Avenue trolley, all the way out of downtown to the mansions on Carrollton Avenue. The 13-mile run takes about 90 minutes and costs \$1 each way. A great way to see a lot of the city.

• The Audubon Zoo, at 6500 Magazine Street, is worth a visit.

• Swamp tours (there are many) leave most of the downtown hotels twice a day. Kids love the 'gator watching (no wild ideas about losing them in the swamp, Dad).

Call 800-672-6124 and get a copy of the Visitors Bureau pamphlet "More than 100 Things for Kids."

Adult attractions

There are still plenty of places to hear good jazz. Can Can Café at the Royal Sonesta, 340 Bourbon; Famous Door, 339 Bourbon; House of Blues, 225 Decatur; Jazz Meridien, in The Meridien, 614 Canal; Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville, 1104 Decatur; 21 Supper Club, 615 Toulouse; Palm Court, 1204 Decatur; Pete Fountain's in the Hilton; Preservation Hall, 726 St. Peter; the Richelieu Room at Arnauds, 813 Bi-

Continued on page 78

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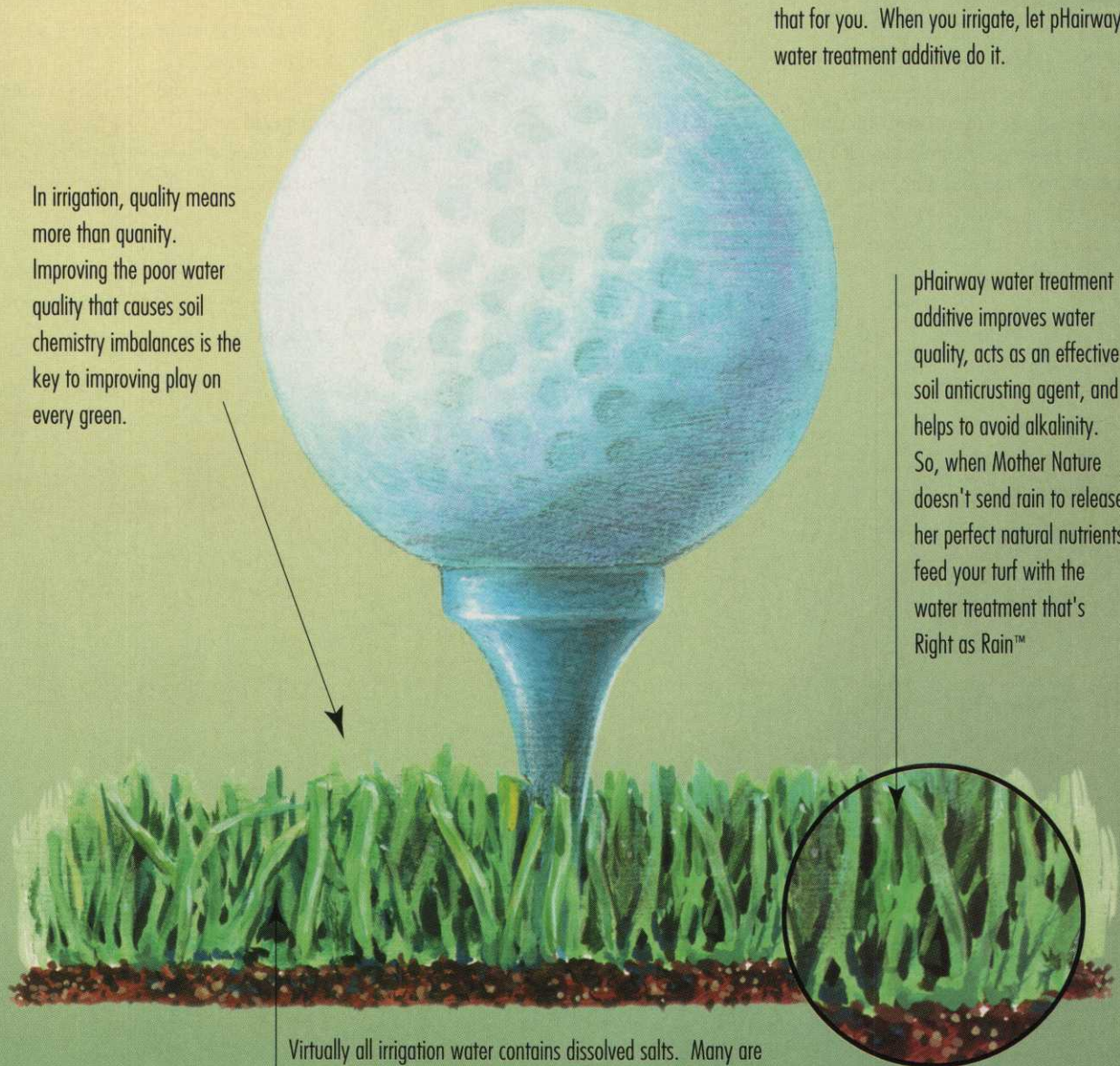
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Big Fun

Continued from page 76
 enville; and Tipitina's at 233 North Pe-
 ters or 310 Howard all are likely spots.

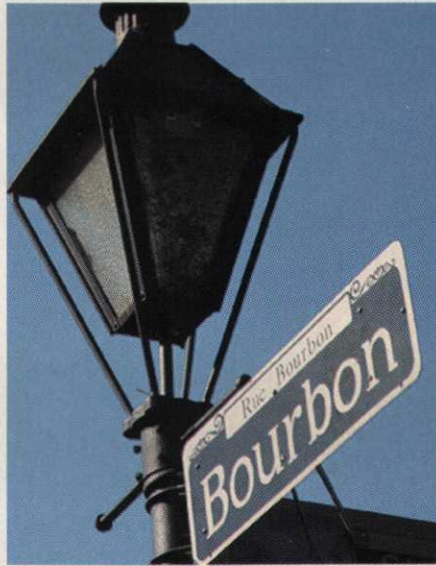
There is also gambling at Harrah's
 Casino, which opened in October, a
 block from the French Quarter and at
 other spots such as Boomtown Casino
 and Treasure Chest.

Outside town

- Take a boat down to the site of the Bat-
 tle of New Orleans at Jean Lafitte Na-
 tional Historical Park. It's a half-day trip.
- Check out the ante-bellum mansions
 outside of New Orleans. Several firms
 run tours to places like Oak Alley. Gray
 Lines can be contacted at 800-535-7786.
- Ride a stern-wheeler and see New Or-
 leans from the water.

Don't leave without:

- Having beignets and coffee or chocolate at Café du Monde.
- Go to Jackson Square and spend time people-watching.



- Listening to some jazz at Preserva-
 tion Hall at 726 St. Peter St.
- Trying out the various hot sauces
 for sale everywhere
- Eating a Po' Boy (the local hoagie).
- Learning to pronounce Tchoupi-
 toulas Street ("chop-a-too-las")

Other helpful tips

- Bring some self-sticking return ad-
 dress labels to make it easy to sign up
 for drawings.
- Wear walking shoes that have been
 broken in.
- Stay somewhat sober, especially on
 Bourbon Street. Pickpockets will be
 upset, but your boss will appreciate
 it.
- Get a U.S. Post Office Second-Day envelope and put the
 postage on at home. Mail literature back to yourself so you
 don't have to lug it on to the plane.
- Take extra business cards.
- Remove your trade-show badge. It screams, "Mug me." ■

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