



## A Player's Perspective

# OBSERVATIONS ON GOLF COURSE REMODELING



*By Dr. David U. Cookson*

Every green superintendent is called upon to consider or implement some type of course remodeling or renovation at intervals, be it as simple as refurbishing or replacing a bunker, or as extensive as a major rebuilding project involving greens and fairways. My observations have suggested to me that a few basic principles should be considered no matter the size or complexity of the job, since ignoring them through either neglect or being unaware of these premises too often leads to a highly unsatisfactory outcome.

First, one must have a definite plan — a simple starting point to be sure, but often not followed. I have seen bunkers and even greens remodeled with no prior insight into the final appearance, nor thought to all the steps necessary to carry out the task, with the subsequent result frequently needing to be redone. If the proposed project is a major one, and involves a significant redesign of the original architectural conception, outside advice should be obtained, and preferably from a knowledgeable golf course architect. If funds are not available for this (which is short sighted, since money can usually actually be saved here by a proper plan ahead of time), somebody, or a group in the club, who has an interest and

appreciation of course design with some knowledge of conditions and problems solved in other places, should be involved in the planning. It is imperative that the superintendent not only have some other input into the design of the remodeling, but also that the total responsibility for the final success or failure of the project be removed from the superintendent. A costly renovation that does not turn out well, and was not initially planned with the aid of a professional architect or a respected group of club members, is too much of a burden for a green superintendent to be able to bear.

The renovation or remodeling must be completed quickly and precisely. Far too often the superintendent tries to sandwich his renovation project in with other routine maintenance tasks, greatly to the detriment of the project both in the quality of workmanship and length of time needed to finish it. His full attention must be paid to the job until it is done, to make sure that the plan is carried out properly, and to ensure that the job is done completely without corners being cut. If it is done correctly it will not have to be repeated; and it will certainly be done correctly only if the superintendent is closely supervising the work. This is a simple truism I know; but I have seen many botched remodeling projects that were botched and needed to be repeated for just the reasons stated above. Again, nothing raises a membership's ire more readily than watching a renovation project, which should have been completed in a few days, take several weeks to finish. It just is not necessary.

Finally, time the project so that there is the least interruption possible of member play. This may also seem too obvious to repeat here, but I wouldn't say it if I had not seen several flagrant examples of violating this suggestion. Particularly if greens are involved, do the job quickly, at a time when the least number of players will be affected, then get the green in play and the members back on it as soon as possible. Your members will applaud you for your efficiency if you do this; and grumble incessantly if these considerations are not thoroughly thought through and implemented.

To many, the thoughts I have outlined here are basic and too self evident to write an essay about. I have been privileged to play at a golf course where projects have usually gone smoothly with proper application to the principles I have mentioned, but I also have noted too many times at other clubs projects being repeated over and over by not applying these principles first. We can all agree that if a job is to be done it should be done correctly, and I submit that paying attention to these basics of course renovation will make this happen.