



CROQUET - A WICKETT IDEA

BY

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Most remember the backyard game of croquet. Nine wire hoops in a double diamond configuration with an inexpensive set of balls and mallets with which you knocked your opponent into the next county with. Well, if you haven't heard by now, croquet is making a resurgence but not as the game we remember. This croquet is sanctioned by the United States Croquet Association (USCA) and is played with only six wicketts and one stake on a putting green quality surface of 84' x 105'. It requires much strategy and considerable skill.

Heavy iron wicketts just large enough to accommodate the passing of a finely machined ball, struck by exotic hardwood mallets with leather gripped handles constitute a USCA croquet set. A good set can be purchased for around \$1,000. It has been said Croquet demands a golfer's stamina, a chess player's concentration and a billiards champion skill.

After reading articles on croquet in the February, 1983 issue of Golf Course Management, our interest in Croquet at Maddens' was aroused. We immediately began assembling information and plans to build our own championship quality croquet lawn.

A site bordering the Madden Lodge Marina on one side and the tennis complex on the other was selected with construction starting in May of 1983. This provided a beautiful setting but because of its closeness to the marina it did pose several problems. The area nearest the marina required considerable fill. Because croquet demands such a level surface, care had to be taken to assure complete settling of the sand fill. To accomplish this two things were done. First the area was watered heavily to

promote settling, and secondly we used a vibrating roller of the type used in highway construction to compact it further. I was afraid this might be too severe at first, but because of the nature of the sand, this was not a problem. A second potential problem to overcome was that of muskrats burrowing into the bank causing uneven settling. To counteract this the edge of the marina was dug out with a backhoe and backfilled with rip-rap size rock.

Actual construction was quite simple. To provide the required flat surface with a very minimum slope for surface drainage, we decided to build it as you would a tennis court. Grade stakes were placed every ten feet with twine stretched across the section being worked on at the moment and leveling as you go. Six inches of a 3:1 sand and peat mix was applied and automatic irrigation was installed. The lawn was seeded with 2#'s/m of a Penneagle and Pencross blend. Eight days after seeding we were blessed with a 4 1/2" rainfall, completely washing the outer 15' of the lawn into the marina. With less than 30 days before our scheduled grand opening and accompanying publicity we were virtually starting over. Thanks to an extreme effort by the golf course crew and subsequent good fortune from Mother Nature, we made it.

The degree of publicity we received with our Grand Opening overwhelmed everyone. Apparently the novelty of championship croquet in Minnesota was a very hot news item. Coverage ranged from local media interviews to extensive coverage from KSTP, WTCN and KCMT television and both the Minneapolis and St. Paul Sunday papers. To top it all off we received an award and recognition from the USCA for best new facility in 1983.

Croquet has proven very popular with both our guests and the local public. This has prompted us to begin plans for a second lawn to be constructed this spring, hopefully in time to host the USCA's Regional Championship this July.

For those of you looking for something unique to add to your facility, croquet can be a very natural extension of your golf course and provide an added dimension to your club.