

Some Thoughtful Words on Teeing Grounds

by Dr. Douglas T. Hawes

The golf courses I visit have come a long way from those old, old days when you teed up your ball a few club lengths from the hole you had just putted into. The custom then was to take a pinch of dirt from that hole to make a small mound for your featherie or guttie (depending on the year). Tees at some clubs today are so finely mowed you can practice your putting on them, which is progress of a sort.

Still, there seem to be two problems with tees, even now. They are either not large enough or in the wrong place — sometimes both. Ideally, you should have 100 square feet of usable tee surface for every 1,000 rounds played per year, with that figure doubled for starting holes and par 3's and doubled again if the tee is in the shade.

Tees get rebuilt and moved a lot more than greens because it is cheaper and easier to do so. Yet, as tees get larger and the quality of their turf improves, their construction becomes more expensive. Multiple tees are now more common; Jack Nicklaus may put four on a hole, and I've seen at least one hole with five tees. Some of these are so small you can't turn a triplex mower around on them without leaving tight rings of wheel tracks. Even so, scattered small tees look a lot better than Robert Trent Jones' "landing strips."

On a busy golf course, however, those long landing strips are real practical. Wide middle tees are even more practical, since most golf courses find their heaviest play is from the middle tees. Shorter-than-average courses are the exception.

Architects as well as golfers are beginning to waken to the fact that even the best women golfers hit the ball only some 80% of the distance that men golfers of the same caliber do. Thus, if a 15-handicap man is hitting his second shot into a par 4 from 150 yards, slightly better than average women golfers should be able to place their drives within 120 yards of the green so that they can use the same club as the man for their approach. To achieve this means moving ladies (or forward, as the USGA prefers to call them) tees a lot further forward than they currently are on most golf courses in the country.

The next step is to encourage the very young, the very old, and most women to use those forward tees. The new USGA terminology of forward, middle, and back should help in this regard, and on over-crowded courses, it may be necessary to require weaker hitters to use those tees. It is no wonder that those three categories of golfers often take much longer to play the course, since they are often playing the equivalent of 21 holes of golf even when using the current "ladies" tees.

Shortening a hole, incidentally, does not always make it easier or less interesting to play. One new tee location I recently suggested for a par 3 shortened the hole considerably but left the golfer looking into the mouth of an awesome bunker; a short lofted tee shot was now demanded to carry this bunker with a prevailing wind from behind to a now relatively narrow green.

Care should be taken when selecting "forward" teesites when a carry over water occurs on the second shot. Some holes may work better if you change par for the players using the new tee. For shorter hitters, a par 3 might be better if played as a par 4, and vice versa. However, moving a "forward" tee back on a hole can lead to confusion and will only be workable at a country club or other course where there are few strangers playing.

Match Play Winds Up at Hunt Valley

The final and deciding rounds of the 1985 Match Play Championship will take place November 12 at Hunt Valley Golf Club, with the contestants scheduled to go off before the open players. Set for an 11 a.m. start are matches that pit Virgil Robinson against Ben Stagg and Jeff Miskin against Bill Neus. At 11:10, Bert Yingling takes on George Renault and Nick Vance plays Johnny Johns. The 11:20 group finds Walt Montross meeting Lee Dieter and Ken Ingram playing Dick Gieselmann, while at 11:30 Dave Fairbank takes on Mike Larsen and Steve Cohoon meets Jeff Yingling. The final scheduled time is 11:40, with Ken Keller playing Dan Rozinak.

Architects Debate Golf Car Worth

Two noted golf course architects recently debated in *Golf* magazine on whether golf cars are good for the game of golf, each representing widely held views.

Michael Hurdzan, president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, took the negative, saying: "The widespread, even required use of golf cars—a growing and pernicious trend—is a practice contrary to the spirit of golf. I have no problem with the limited use of cars by individuals who need them. Seniors, we're told, have to ride because they're not in shape. I believe they're not in shape, in many cases, because they ride. A lot of old folks, men and women, play golf in Scotland—and walk. But in this country, yesterday's joyride has become today's necessity. We think we need the cars. We don't."

On the affirmative side, Pete Dye said, "I hate golf cars and never ride one for more than a hole, but they are definitely beneficial to the game in this country, allowing many older people to play and providing needed income for courses and clubs. Senior and resort golf can't exist without golf cars. Do we want to go back to some purist tradition at the expense of millions of people for whom the game is a wonderful pastime?"

Hurdzan also pointed out that there are few caddies left because clubs make more money from cars, a regrettable fact of life. Strangely, neither architect mentioned the added wear and tear on turf or the intrusive existence of asphalt car paths, which often come into play.

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