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A Champion Tells Us

Francis Ouimet, who is the present National Amateur Champion and former United States Open Champion, discusses the conditions of golf courses from the standpoint of the expert golfer

By FRANCIS OUIMET

I HAVE often been asked whether or not putting greens should be kept soft enough to allow a ball to become slightly imbedded in the green at the end of an approach shot, and my observations as to what should constitute the perfect condition of greens are these.

In my opinion, no green should be wet or soggy because of the fact that pitch shots leave holes wherever they land. Balls become covered with mud, and foot marks leave their imprint over the entire surface, removing whatever skill there may be to the putting end of the game and bringing in its place a huge element of luck.

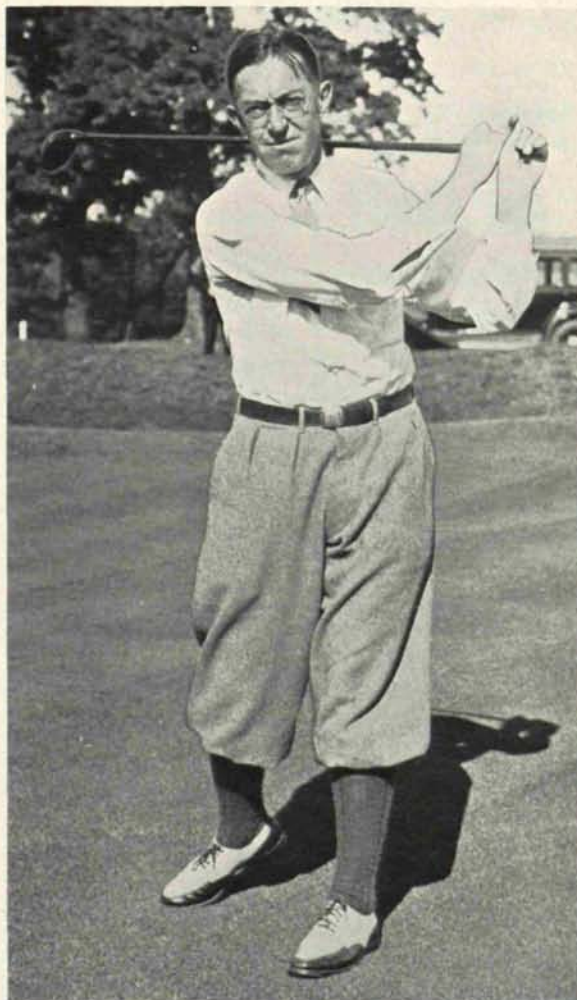
The best putting greens are those that are between what I would call a soft one and one that is firm. A good golfer in playing an iron shot to a green can hit a ball accurately enough so that if his shot carries all the way to the green, it will stop within reasonable distance of where it originally landed.

Greens do not have to be soaking wet with moisture in order to receive pitch shots, neither should they

be so hard as to cause the ball to bound several feet in the air. A properly played mashie niblick shot, for example, will upon landing take one long bound of say four or five feet and then settle down due to back spin or cut applied to the ball. Therefore, a

green, as I have said, that is neither too soft nor too hard is what I would call the ideal one to play to.

In the last few months, most of my golf has been played in Massachusetts and I would say that the condition of the greens at the Country Club in Brookline or the Oyster Harbors club at Osterville come as close to fulfilling the standards necessary as any I have played over. I might also include in these courses that of the Baltimore Country club at Five Farms, the scene of this year's Amateur championship. With but one exception, the speed of the greens at Five Farms insofar as the approach to them was concerned was perfect. They had just enough crust, so to speak, for the ball to dig in just the least bit and yet not leave any ungainly hole in the putting surface.



FRANCIS OUIMET

America's outstanding amateur golfer

OUIMET'S OPINION OF STOLON GREENS

I HAVE also been asked whether or not I like stolonized greens. I do not care for them. My experience with stolons has led me to believe that you cannot get a satisfactory putting surface where a putting green has three or more different "speeds."

There are stolon greens that can be cultivated to point where no "grain" is noticeable. Of course, these are oftentimes quite satisfactory, but the chief objection to stolon putting greens is the fact that the ball putted against the "grain" must be hit extremely hard whereas one putted with the "grain" must be barely pushed. In other words, there is no uniformity to the stroke and therefore, they do not make a perfect putting surface.

Furthermore, it is extremely difficult when putting against the "grain" of a green to keep the ball on line due to the stiff spears turning the ball here and there. I am firmly of the belief that the seeded putting greens in the long run furnish the most satisfaction.

GRASS ON GREENS SHOULD BE UNIFORM

IF I HAD an eighteen-hole golf course, I would do my very best to have the same sort of grass on each green, with the speed exactly the same, and with as few sharp contours as possible. The perfect set of putting greens are those that are uniform from start to finish and it is very unsatisfactory to play to one green, leave it, and then come to another with an entirely different growth of grass or change of pace.

Greens should be moderately fast. I do not mean by this that they should be so slippery that the player could not hit his ball firmly. He should be permitted to play a firm stroke without fear of having his ball skate away beyond the cup.

Insofar as tees are concerned, I think a firm teeing ground with as little moisture as possible and closely cropped grass makes the best sort of tee. Bent grass makes excellent teeing ground, in my opinion. Tees, furthermore, should face always in the exact direction towards which the tee shot is placed.

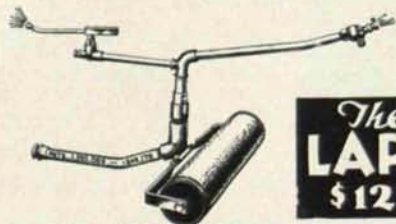
WHEN FAIRWAYS SHOULD BE WIDE OR NARROW

WITH reference to the wide or narrow fairways, I would say this. On holes of more than 400 yards and upwards, I would give the player a reasonably wide fairway to play to. Those holes calling for a drive and short pitch, I would tighten up to the point where I would compel the player to drive the ball accurately, because on holes of 325 or 350 yards, accuracy is the compelling factor and if the player is not kept within reasonable bounds insofar as the fairways are concerned, it makes a rather drab hole if the player is permitted too many liberties.

Fairways should slow the ball and absorb the bounce to some extent. I do not mean by this that a ball landing should stop immediately. The ground should be firm enough to permit the ball to bounce moderately after it lands, but in no case, should a fairway be so hard that a ball will roll indefinitely after landing.

Again I wish to refer to the Five Farms course at the Baltimore Country club which, at the time of last year's U. S. G. A. Amateur championship, was in as fine playing condition as any course I have had the pleasure of playing over in the last few years. The speed of the fairways, the texture of the greens and pace of putting greens were about as perfect as one could hope to have them.

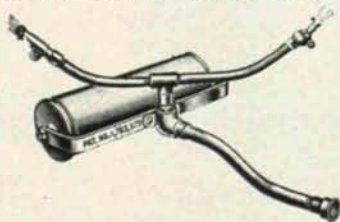
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