

PROSCAPE

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Q: *It is my belief that our course is the subject of poor design. In an effort to speed up play we made it too simple. How does one go about choosing professional design assistance?*

A: All improvement planning must be done by those who have the professional expertise and experience to maximize the time and money allocated for such improvements. This is more important now than it was even 4 or 5 years ago, for several reasons. First, the cost of construction has risen to over \$30,000 per hole and the cost to rebuild just one green is close to \$15,000. With such large expenditures probable, it is a false economy to save a professional's fee and risk such large sums of money. This point is best illustrated by the next reason for retaining a competent golf course architect: that is, the technical sophistication of current construction methods.

The hiring of an outside golf consultant also allows the course to be viewed impartially and objectively. If improvements to courses are based on the greens committees' personal opinions and prejudice, we have a classic case of the horse designed by a committee that ends up being a camel. Further, with each change of the board you have a change in "what the golf course needs." Any improvement program that must run one or more years must have a thread of continuity that keeps the progress moving in one direction.

Lastly, any improvement to a course should be based on accepted design standards to avoid possible legal complications later.

It is natural that not all golf course architects, of which there may be as many as 250, will have the same approach to an improvement plan or study. Therefore this professional should be very carefully selected, so that the long-range objectives of the club are fulfilled. The golf course architect should not be selected only on the basis of reputation or the number of advertisements in magazines. Rather the golf architect should be hired on the basis of his past performance with nearby clubs, his personal philosophy of golf, his demonstrated knowledge of technical matters, and his projected schedule of planning and inspection visits. In our opinion, the golf architect should be "local" to the area, so he is accessible to provide maximum inspection of all improvements. The implementation phase of the design process is as important as the planning phase.

Further, the golf course architect should do all planning within the guidelines provided by the improvement committee. This will help insure consistency with the club's goals and objectives.

After the club has interviewed several firms and selected the golf course architect, the process is for the club to provide the architect with a re-

cent, scaled aerial photograph and matching topography. The most inexpensive source of these maps is through the county or state highway department.

Once the golf architect has these scaled maps, he is ready to analyze the course. He should walk or play each hole, looking at it from many different points, to internalize the conditions faced by golfers of all skill levels and by the golf course superintendent. Once he understands the design intent of the hole, and existing maintenance problems, he begins to evaluate what improvements might be made to solve problems in a manner consistent with the strategy of the hole.

Finally, the architect should make a list of priorities of work that should be done and also provide a rough estimate of the cost of these improvements by hole.

The cost of such a study can be either a flat fee or based on an hourly rate. Since the planning phase is so important, it is good economy not to be overly restrictive on the golf architect's time. An average study will involve 100 to 125 hours of work including meetings, time on the course, travel, design and drafting time, and presentations. It should be noted that these are not construction drawings, but only schematic plans showing relative size, shape, and position of improvements. Before actual construction begins, detailed construction drawings are required, usually covered under a new agreement with the architect.

Detailed drawings and specifications permit the contractor to bid intelligently and more competitively, for all elements of construction are fully defined — so there is little guessing about labor and materials needed. To build a green or golf course with only routing plans or a rough drawing is like building a house with only a floor plan. It can be and is done, but it usually forces the contractor to over-estimate his projected cost because he can not accurately define and estimate the extent of his problems and liability.

We also consider it grossly unfair for an improvement committee to force a superintendent to be responsible for construction work. For if all works well, then it is expected and little thanks is given — if not, the superintendent must bear the blame and perhaps lose his reputation or job.

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