

PROSCAPE

By Michael Hurdzan, Ph.D., golf course architect and consultant

Q. *We plan to rebuild some tees — what should we consider? H.M., Bedford, In.*

A. You should consider: (1) the number of rounds of golf played each year, (2) where the building material will come from, (3) who will do the rebuilding, (4) the possibility of incurred liability if you change the tee angle or position, (5) the time of year, and (6) the turfgrass that will provide the tee surface. This list is by no means comprehensive, but it should answer most of your questions.

First, the number of rounds of golf you anticipate will be played each year will help determine the size of your new tees. (In the northern latitudes about 40,000 rounds a year is a very busy golf course whereas in more moderate climates it is not unusual to play two to three times that amount.) The rule of thumb is to allow 150 sq. ft. for every 1,000 rounds on a wood shot hole and 200 sq. ft. per 1,000 on an iron shot hole. This means on a course playing 40,000 rounds per year, the tee on wood shot holes should be 150 sq. ft. x 40 = 6,000 sq. ft. and 8,000 sq. ft. on an iron shot hole. Naturally this figure reaches a limit of practicality no matter how many rounds are played a year and it is a maximum of about 10,000 sq. ft. This figure refers to usable space with normal soil conditions, so that the injured turf can have time to heal itself.

Many superintendents either do not have the luxury of space to build such large tees, or do not wish to maintain such large areas during the healing process and prefer a tee surface that permits more intensive management to accelerate recovery. Thus, when building or rebuilding tees they have chosen to employ a U.S.G.A. type construction or a PURR-Wick system. Although much more expensive to build than a soil tee their performance is superior. Others who do not have the money to build such sophisticated systems have simply opted to incorporate about 60 percent sand into the topsoil to increase the resistance to compaction, to improve internal air and water spaces, and to encourage deeper rooting and hence stronger turf plants.

It is normally recommended that a tee have a slight crown in the middle of about 6 in. on a 60 ft. wide tee to give some surface drainage.

The second consideration in rebuilding tees is where the building material comes from. [I am of course assuming that the tee will be elevated above the existing terrain to provide it with surface drainage, give the tee definition, and improve the visual presentation of the hole.] If the material is to be trucked in, there is the resulting damage from the trucks and the increased chance of differential settling resulting from the condition of the fill material (composition and consistency) not to mention the possibility of widely varying chemical or physical properties unless taken from the same source. If the material is available on the property, not only will its cost be less and its response be more predictable, but also it may allow for moving

the fill during dry periods with less damage to the turf and as men and resources are available. Usually fill material will settle 15 percent of its depth but since this is so unpredictable it is suggested to place the fill in the proposed location in the dry season, assuming it does not adversely affect play patterns, and allow it to settle over the rainy season.

Who does the rebuilding of the tees will influence not only the cost but also the scope of the rebuilding. A professional golf course contractor is the best buy but funds may dictate that you must subcontract the work or do it yourself. A golf course contractor has the special equipment and operators to quickly and efficiently do any size job so that the turf is either sodded or planted with maximum establishment time and with the highest quality.

A book could be written about the assumed liability that a club takes on when ever they change the tee location or playing angle. Since safety to other golfers is paramount and neglect of safety leads to law suits, one must be careful about the proper siting of a tee. It is a well known fact that 80 percent of golfers slice the ball and the play emphasis is to the right. To neglect this fact and other such information and place a golf feature in unsafe position is a risk too great to ignore. If any change in play pattern may result from a tee relocation, it is strongly suggested that a competent golf course designer be retained for the project. A list of golf course designers is available from the American Society of Golf Course Architects, 221 N LaSalle Street, Chicago, Illinois 60601 or from The National Golf Foundation, 200 Castlewood Drive, North Palm Beach, Fla., 33408.

The time of year that the tees are to be rebuilt is a consideration, especially if the new tees will occupy the exact position of the old ones. Since few golfers want to play from poorly conditioned or temporary tees, new tees should have 6-8 weeks of good growing weather after seeding, sodding or sprigging to establish a strong, tightly knitted sward. Therefore in northern climates the ideal starting date is just after Labor Day and in bermuda grass areas it is early to mid May. Consider your manpower, normal maintenance, irrigation needs, and weather of these periods if you intend to rebuild them yourself.

Since 20 percent of golf shots are played from the tees (by the average golfer), with a turf damaging golf swing, it is reasonable that the tees should not only be as large as possible but also have the best turf quality. Therefore it is recommended that the very best cultivar or blend of cultivars be selected and used, for the cost increase will be small compared to the maintenance savings. All things being equal using the most aggressive varieties for wound healing is a very important consideration.

You asked me for the time and I told you how to build a watch, but rebuilding tees should be considered a major construction project. **WTT**