

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

INCORPORATING LAWN CARE INDUSTRY

Re-making problem holes: Is it worth the risk?

Whether it's a re-design or re-construction or just plain tinkering, superintendents feel that—at the very least—some of it is their responsibility.

■ You—the golf course superintendent—have a problem hole. It may be a bunker that won't hold sand, or one that holds too much water. It may be a tee that is often pummelled with balls from an adjacent green. It may be a green that is infested with weedy grasses.

Whatever the problem, you have to make a decision: try to change the hole by yourself, with existing staff; hire additional staff; or hire specialists like a golf course architect and/or landscape construction company.

The temptation is to try and do it yourself, if the project isn't an overly large one.

"Every golf course superintendent feels (some re-design) is in his realm of responsibility," says Mark Jarrell of Palm Beach National Golf & Country Club in Lake Worth, Fla.

Architects sometimes disagree with that concept. Like Dr. Mike Hurdzan of Hurdzan Golf Course Design in Columbus, Ohio.

Taking a risk—"Does the superintendent want to put himself in the middle of the politics of his club?" Hurdzan asks. "I feel that if 51 percent of the people like the job, I've done it well. If I were a superintendent, I would not want to take that risk.

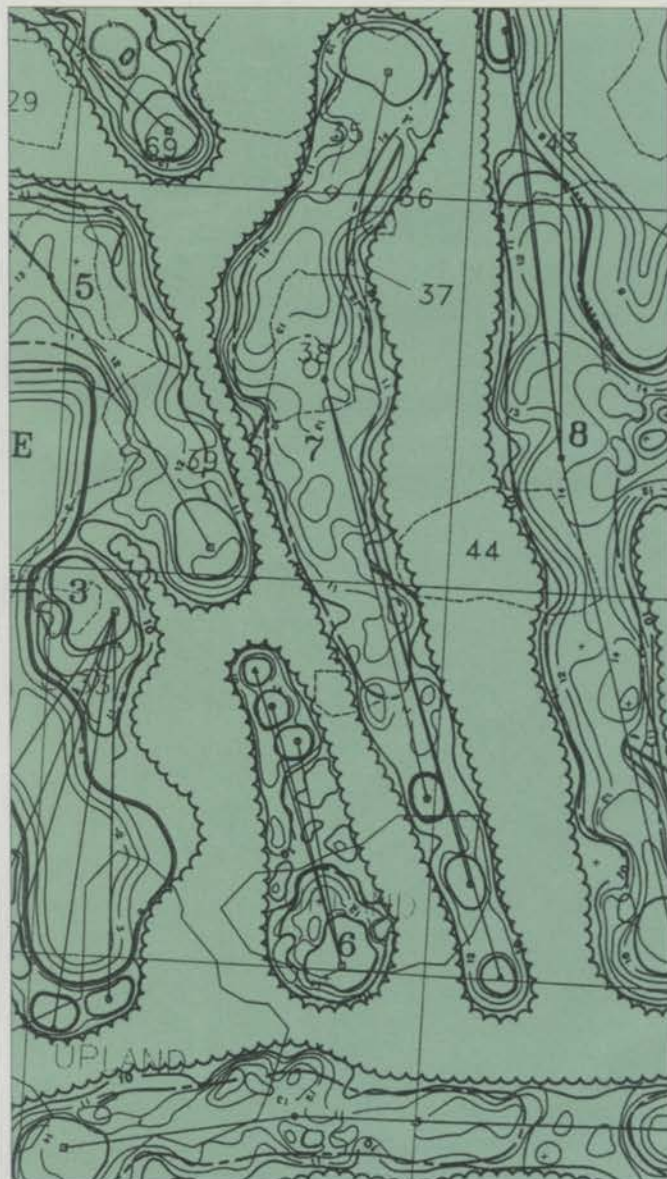
"Rarely have I seen a superintendent who can maintain his course to golfers' expectations while doing significant golf course re-construction." (The key word in that statement: "*significant*."

Tim Nugent, vice president of Dick Nugent Associates in Long Grove, Ill., believes the answers to problem holes must be solved in the best, cheapest, least disruptive manner.

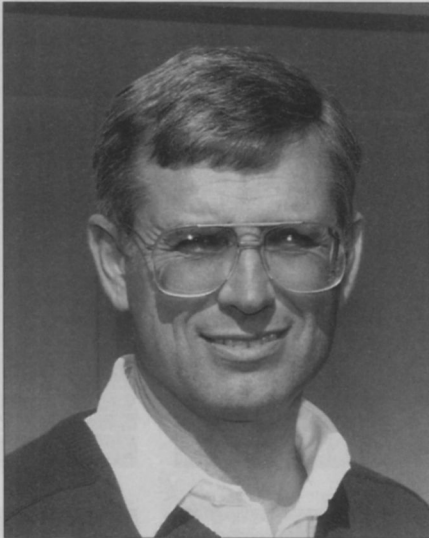
"Usually, the superintendent is up to his eyeballs trying to maintain the course," Nugent says. "What it boils down to is this: Is it something you think you can deal with? And you have to remember that golf course architects deal with these kinds of problems every day."

Answer these—When addressing design concerns, Hurdzan believes the following questions must be answered first:

1) Is it worth the risk? What if problems arise that prevent



The seventh hole and surrounding environs at Naples National Golf Club, Naples, Fla. Drawing by Mark Hardy, Hurdzan Golf Course Design.



Dr. Mike Hurdzan: maintenance more important than design

timely completion? Are you prepared if the newly-built system fails in some way? If you succeed, will you be warmly thanked or richly rewarded, or will they simply expect more of you next time?

2) Is there a safety or liability problem? If not, will one be created: a foreseeable danger to golfers, maintenance persons or adjacent landowners? ("Changes can cause a chain reaction of liability down the road," Nugent adds.)

3) How do you make it the most enjoyable for the most amount of people? Is there a group of golfers that hasn't been addressed?

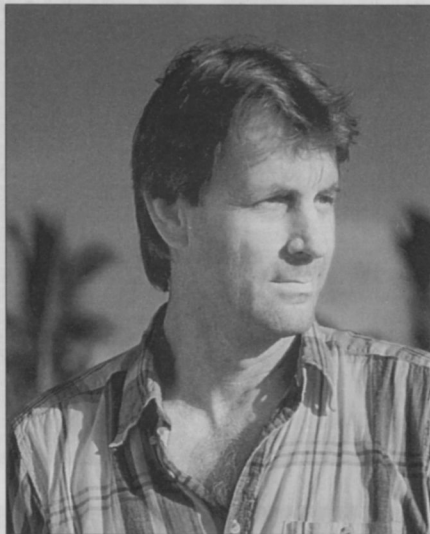
4) Can you develop a unified plan? Do you have proper installation training, adequate equipment, installation time, experienced workmen or foreman?

5) Do you harbor no false expectations? Will you be able to *guarantee* your final product to your greens chairman and members?

Hurdzan maintains that the design is often not the source of the problem(s). "If you've got money to spend, a good golf course begins with drainage. Irrigation is second, grass cultivars third," he observes. "Encouragement of wildlife is also becoming a big part of golf course aesthetics. And not one of those things involves changing tees, greens and bunkers."

Jarrell, who is re-establishing many of his greens ("there are some design changes involved"), is familiar with problem holes.

"You have to evaluate the scope of the problem and react accordingly," he notes. "When I rebuilt two greens, I hired two temporary guys for three to four weeks. We did two greens in May and opened



Supt. Mark Jarrell: spending \$3500 re-grassing each green

them in July, and two more greens in August and opened them in October."

Design factors—Greens are the most controversial part of the golf course, says Hurdzan. "Everyone wants an instant playing surface, but it's a three- to five-year process. The mat layer between grass and sand is the single most important thing, and it takes two to three years to develop. Growing in a green and long-term mainte-

nance are two different things."

Tees, Hurdzan contends, should be three sets of markers wide and drainage should be emphasized. "People appreciate new tees. They're easy to do, hard to screw up," he says.

Fairways could cause troubles with the bulk of the club's membership because irrigation design has dictated narrower fairways. "Modern golf courses should go back to the old Augusta style: maximum fairway, 50 to 70 yards wide, minimum rough."

Jarrell has an added advantage: internationally recognized golf course architect Joe Lee is a member of Palm Beach National. "He's constantly helping us make decisions," Jarrell states.

Yet, every golf course superintendent does not have that luxury. So when the decision to change a problem hole is imminent, every effort must be made to handle the project, as Nugent says, "in the best, cheapest, least disruptive" manner. In certain instances, it will mean doing it yourself; most of the time, however, it must involve the opinion of an expert in golf course design.

—Jerry Roche

Do it or bid it?

■ *Realistically assess the scope of the project by going through a potential risk evaluation. Honestly determine if the following sources of potential liabilities are high, medium or low. Check each block and add up your score for problems that might arise:*

SOURCE OF PROBLEM	Probability of trouble		
	High (3pts.)	Medium (2 pts.)	Low (1 pt.)
1. Unskilled work crew mistakes			
2. Improper installation equipment			
3. Insufficient installation equipment			
4. Inadequate installation training			
5. Inexperienced in recognizing problems			
6. Extended installation period required			
7. Workman compensation claims			
8. Improper irrigation functioning			
9. No guarantee of workmanship			
10. Perhaps no product warranty			

SCORING

15 or less: do it yourself

16 to 20: try to lower risks by examining your weaknesses and correcting them.

21 or more: contract it out

Source: Dr. Michael Hurdzan