

GOLF & ATHLETIC TURF

HINTS: How to tell if a redesign is near

Is your course fair—and fun—to play? Player complaints and marathon rounds might be signs a redesign is needed.

■ Longer rounds that aren't caused by increased traffic. Slow-growing greens. Poor drainage. These are all hints that it might be time for a redesign. And it's especially true if you're hearing complaints from low and high handicappers alike.

"It's easy, for example, to attribute turtle-paced rounds to slow golfers," says Don Knott, past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. "But

slow rounds can result from more than just slow golfers. They may result from what is actually an outdated golf course."

A classic reconsidered—In 1992, ASGCA member Jeff Brauer provided design services for a complete renovation of the Great Southwest Golf Club, Grand Prairie, Texas. The course redesign was part of the club's overall renovation plan, which also called for a remodeled clubhouse, driving range and golf school. According to Michael Akeroyd, general manager of the club, Great Southwest was nearing its 30th birthday and had come to the end of its "first life."

The problems were caused by tiny greens, poor air circulation, inadequate drainage and poor greens mix. Diminished

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This sculptured lake added to Rio Hondo separates tees from greens and provides an all-around better look.

Redesign signs

Look for these signs that indicate it may be time to redesign:

GREENS

- Standing water on greens, even after minor rain showers.
- Too small to hold long shots or too big for short shots.
- Golfers complain that certain parts of the course are 'unfair.' (If you hear this from both low and high handicappers, it's probably true.)
- Speed of play is a good indicator of an outdated design. (Remember, with increased popularity of golf comes heavy traffic and an greater need for faster play.)

BUNKERS/OTHER HAZARDS

- Do they challenge the players? Advances in equipment used to play the game and maintain the course can make certain original design challenges obsolete.
- Do you see a major increase or decrease in the balls you find in hazards?
- Have you had to alter your irrigation program in a significant way? Is your current system meeting the course's demands?
- Do you have a decent practice facility? With more golfers using driving ranges, a practice facility can be an important source of revenue.
- Are the red tees fair to women and junior players?

BUDGET

- Is the maintenance budget increasing? It could be you're spending more money on routine maintenance, with more costs to come.

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play after the warm summers of 1991 and 1992 convinced club management to solve the problems.

Brauer advised that all greens be rebuilt according to USGA standards. Some trees were removed to improve air flow and sunlight penetration around the greens.

SR 1020 bentgrass was chosen for its heat tolerant properties.

Design changes included softer contours for faster green speeds; larger greens to allow for more varied pin placements and a larger target area; and larger, more visually appealing bunkers for easier maintenance, more challenging shots and aesthetics.

Greens banks and shoulders now allow easier access from the cart paths, and are in line with federally-mandated ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) guidelines.

Both membership and income at the course have increased since the redesign.

Traffic tells a tale—Rio Hondo Golf Course, another classic from the 1920s, was host to more than 100,000 rounds of golf in 1992.

That's when superintendent John Rodriguez noticed that the greens were too small and were not draining well. Tee boxes were also very close, which hinted at a potential safety problem.

Jerry Pirkel was hired for the redesign, and his mission was to change not only the design, but a new visual appeal and identity.

The redesign required that the course be closed for 11 months. Greens were enlarged, four lakes were installed with waterfalls, mounds were added to fairways and a new irrigation system was installed.

Between October of 1994 and March of



The large front bunker at the 191-yard, par 3 sixth at Great Southwest was converted to white sand and mounds were added to the periphery. The back-to-front slope of the green makes the hole play more fairly.

1995, the course was well on its way to paying off the initial redesign cost.

—For a free copy of the ASGCA's Golf Course Development Planning Guide, write them at 221 N. LaSalle St., Suite 3500, Chicago, IL 60601.

GCSAA joins pesticide partnership program

■ The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) will participate in the federal government's new Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program. Under the program, the GCSAA will work with the U.S. EPA, the Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration to develop a strategy that further reduces the risks from using pesticides on golf courses.

"We are absolutely committed to using responsible management practices that

pose little—if any—environmental risk," says GCSAA president Gary Grigg. "Through this partnership, we'll be able to work with the leading federal authorities to find innovative ways to use pesticides effectively and safely, and to minimize any potential harm to people, wildlife and the environment."

EPA administrator Carol Browner adds that congratulations are due to "the companies and grower groups that are joining with us for their forward-thinking

approach to environmentally sound pesticide use practices."

The EPA's Anne Leslie, coordinator of the GCSAA's strategy, says that she is looking forward to working with superintendents.

The GCSAA's plan includes education, training, research and continued careful use of pesticides. Specifics will be announced during the Environmental General Session of the GCSAA Conference and Show next February in Orlando, Fla.