

## What Constitutes a Perfect Putting Green?

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What are the characteristics of a perfect putting green? Having had long experience, I venture to air my viewpoints on this important matter; not that they are exactly original,—far from it,—but they may bring out some points in the design and construction of greens that are to some extent being lost sight of.

First, a perfect putting green must, of course, provide interest and amusement for all. These are the essential qualities of a perfect golf course, of which the greens form so important a part. It must then be a perfect test of the player's skill, not only while on the green, but in testing his accuracy in playing the ball to it.

I can best explain the first point by saying there are three outstanding qualities in a good putter which, while being closely related to each other, are in fact quite different: (1) the ability to hit the ball straight; (2) the ability to hit the ball true; (3) touch.

As for the first quality, any green with a true surface will test it. The second and third qualities, to be properly tested, require the green not only to be true, but also keen or fast. On a slow green the ball is so gripped by the grass blades that if it be hit straight it will retain the line even though it has not been hit true. On the other hand, on a fast green any side spin imparted to the ball through untrue striking will, as soon as the ball has lost its initial momentum, begin to take effect and tend to turn it away from the line upon which it was running. Likewise it requires a fast green, when the putting stroke is of a more delicate nature, to test to the full the quality of touch. This is admirably expressed in a remark of a very fine putter: "I like to guide the ball into the hole, not to have to hit it there." Many a golfer without the necessary delicacy of touch, can obtain satisfactory results on slow greens, but on a keen green cannot hold his own in comparable manner.

Again, a perfect green has to prove a satisfactory test of the skill of the player and the degree of control he exercises over the ball in playing short approaches to the green. These should be of infinite variety. If I may say so, many of our greens are so constructed that, so far as proving a test of a player's ability to impart spin (particularly back or under spin) to the ball, they are negligible, since their surfaces are sufficiently soft or spongy to cause any ball that is dropped upon them from a sufficiently vertical angle to stop, whether spin has been imparted to it or not. I have even frequently heard it advanced as a theory that a green should have this quality of gripping the ball. Why? If we wish our courses to be good tests, surely it is the player, and only the player, who should stop the ball; nor should the ground give him any too much assistance in doing so. In the same way too many of our greens are banked up at the back and assist, in too great a degree, in stopping balls that have not had the necessary spin imparted to them. May I therefore suggest that the surfaces of our greens should not be spongy, or unduly assist the ball to stop; that while some greens may be banked up at the back, primarily when it is necessary to do so to bring the putting surface into view from the position a proper approach is being played from, this practice should not be so universal.

I would like to see more greens designed and constructed which would encourage the playing of the run-up shot, particularly the long run-up, which on many courses is not called for at all. Variety is the salt of life, and it is also an admirable and desirable quality in our golf courses, which at present tend to test the playing of the ball to the green exclusively by the air route, to the exclusion of the run-up and pitch-and-run shots. The ability to play these two shots, when necessary, should form part of the golfing armor of every golfer. The essential qualities in the design and construction of a green that call for a run-up shot (or expressed in another way, make the pitch shot too risky to be worth attempting) can be varied; but the green at least must have a fast surface, and should not be banked up at the back. As it is a run-up or pitch-and-run shot we are trying to encourage, the front or apron to the green can not be bunkered, nor can it be a type of ground which gives any great promise of success if pitched onto. It must therefore be of so undulating a nature that while a ball may be played to run over it with reasonable certainty of a satisfactory result, it will have a tendency to turn anything but a run-up away from the green, possibly into traps guarding its sides. A plateau green preferably on the small side, particularly in length, guarded on the sides in front as I suggest, and surrounded by some form of undesirable country for playing short chips from, could produce a hole where it would be found that pitches even with back spin, did not pay. The construction of such a green, if the green had to be artificially constructed, might prove expensive, but I suggest, if funds are available, the result would justify the outlay and help to retain in the game one of its most skillful shots which is seldom called for nowadays.

Apart then from the best conditions for forming turf, which I am not at present discussing, I suggest that the surface of a perfect putting green should be far from soft or spongy. Mr. Byers, in discussing the ribbed or slotted clubs, expressed the situation admirably when he said, "A player should not go to the professional shop to buy his shot." I suggest that neither should he expect the ground or its condition to assist him unduly in stopping the ball.

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### Cottonseed-Hull Greens

In the December (1921) number of THE BULLETIN there appeared a brief article describing the use of cottonseed hulls in the making of putting greens. The article was written around the experience of a golf course located in northern Mexico, and, so far as known at the time it was written, no other club had tried cottonseed hulls for the making of a putting surface. Several of the readers of THE BULLETIN became interested in the method, and a few attempts were made to duplicate the results obtained by the course in Mexico. The clubs that made the tests were located in the southeastern part of the United States, and all reported partial or complete failure. The principal difficulty seemed to be due to moisture—in other words, too much rain.

Relatively recently Charles W. Hobbs, president of the San Angelo Country Club, San Angelo, Texas, reported very satisfactory results from cottonseed-hull greens. In a letter to the Green Section, Mr. Hobbs makes the following statements: