

hazards, and due to the irregularities of their surfaces a player can not possibly predict where his ball will roll even if it is accurately played for a run-up shot. In such cases a player is forced to use the pitch shot. Much of the emphasis on the pitch shot in this country may possibly be due to the tendency in greenkeeping to strive for perfect putting greens even at the expense of neglecting the approaches. If more attention were paid to the improvement of soil conditions and turf on the approaches, with a view to providing the desired accuracy in the bounce and run of a well-placed shot on the approach, it is probable that more golfers would use this method of approaching and there would be fewer demands for soggy putting greens that will stop quickly any kind of shot from almost any distance.

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## Why Keep Putting Greens Soft?

By Robert T. Jones, Jr.

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It is claimed by those in close touch with greenkeeping practices that much of the difficulty in maintaining putting greens is due to the excessive use of water and that greenkeepers and green committees point out that they water heavily in self-defense because golfers want soft greens. I have been asked to say how I regard the practice of keeping putting surfaces soft, even soggy, looking at the question purely from the player's standpoint.

There can be little question that the great mass of golfers in the United States prefer their greens very soft. Such a condition makes the play much easier for all classes of players and is, in a great measure, responsible for the fact that tournament scoring is uniformly lower in the United States than on seaside links in the British Isles. The difference is attributable more to the excessive use of water on putting greens in the United States than to the much-talked-of seaside gales in the British Isles, which, after all, do not blow constantly.

Of our two great American preferences—the one for placing the green-bunkering very close to the putting surfaces, and the other for soggy greens which will hold any kind of a pitch, whether struck with backspin or not—I can not say which induced the other or which came first. The close guarding, in many instances, makes a soft green necessary if the hole is to be playable, and the easy pitching, on the other hand, makes it necessary to decrease the size of the target in order to supply any test.

I quarrel with both ends of this proposition, whichever is to blame. These together are the two reasons, I think, why our golf courses in the main lack the subtlety of British links, and why our golf does not demand the strategy or the intelligent planning which it should. In my opinion, a properly-designed hole should impose a test upon each shot which the player has to make. There should always be a definite advantage to be gained from an accurate and intelligent placing of the tee shot, or a reward offered for a long, well-directed carry over some obstacle. This advantage or reward can be only in the shape of an easier and more open road for the second shot, and when we soak the green with water we absolutely nullify the advantage which the design of the hole has held out.

I do not believe in forcing a run-up shot in preference to a pitch in every case. But, when one goes to the trouble of placing a bunker across the left side of the green in order to force the tee shot toward the right side of the fairway, why destroy its effect by soaking the green so that any sort of pitch over the bunker will hold? Our expert players are in the habit of playing long iron, spoon, and brassie shots bang up to the hole. As long as they can do this no architect can expect them to worry much about placing the tee shots.



The strategy of this 360-yard hole calls for a drive to the right of the fairway. A shot to the left of the fairway requires a difficult pitch-shot approach over the large sand trap. If such a green is kept soggy the purpose which its designer had in mind is largely defeated and the hole loses much of its interest

It seems to me that the ideal green would be sufficiently soft to hold only a properly-placed pitch—and by “hold” I do not mean “to stay within a very few feet.” To carry out the intention of the designer, conditions ought to be such that a definite penalty should be sustained by the player who has played himself out of position.

In this connection, I think one of our greatest needs is a fairway grass or treatment which will make the ground in front of our putting greens more reliable. If the greens themselves are maintained in a firmer condition, the need must arise on occasions to drop the ball short of the putting surface, allowing it to roll the remaining distance. I know very few courses where this is possible without great uncertainty.

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A golden-leaved maple, a bronze-leaved maple, or a white, gray, or copper birch planted here and there in a woodland border, are exceedingly beautiful.

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Plant at least a few trees on your course each year. Like everything else, trees get old, sickly, and die, and it is well to replace them before extensive damage is done.