

Design in Golf Architecture

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Many years ago I realized that active pastimes were pursued in ways which divided them into three distinct kinds: games, sports and competition.

As regards the first, I perceived that if a ball were the implement, either propelled, thrown or carried, then a ball game could be defined as a conflict between sides striving to establish command over it within a limited, demarked area.

If a ball game is here correctly explained, then in some particular skill of its maneuvering there should be an apprehension as to what is required in the designing of a golf hole.

We must hold in mind, however, that maneuvering the ball in a game is restricted to the limited area in which it is played, its size having been predetermined to permit the agility of the players, unless out-flanked, to cover it in meeting attack.

This is immediately apparent if we consider what singles at lawn tennis would be if played on a doubles court. With its area so widened, there would be little play at all. And as the tennis ball today is livelier than it was when the size of the court was laid out, it would seem advisable to narrow slightly its area so that the skill of maneuvering the ball might re-achieve its former status.

Why Boundary Lines

This brings up the question: What, before everything, do the boundary lines of game areas stand for?

The answer is simple. Game areas have length and width and therefore are two-dimensional planes. But as geometry taught us that neither a line nor a plane has thickness, it follows that, physically, the plane is minus the third dimension, height, or depth. This means that, although it is visual, it lacks actuality, unless the third dimension is present. Actually, the third dimension is present, for

the boundary lines are bases from which arise invisible perpendicular planes. Although seemingly absent, they are accounted for by the restrictions they impose upon play should the ball either over-run or land beyond them. That is, as space cannot be without time (in this case, time is the pace and direction of the ball) and the three-dimensional space-time volume of game areas is fixed, time is held a prisoner within it, which, when it escapes the bounds of its confinement, inflicts either a limitation upon play or an absolute loss to the side responsible for its dereliction. This method of balancing time with space is necessary so that there will be no stoppage to play. This, in memory, was ruled upon in baseball. In the not-remote past a batter could foul to his heart's content; today his first two fouls are counted as strikes.

Having determined the essential reason for the lines that bound game areas, let us proceed with lawn tennis as our model of a game.

Few players of it will deny that the most profitable return of a service is when the ball strikes a sideline. If the pace of the return is fast, then an onerous task of running is thrust upon the server to meet it. Should he do so successfully, he is likely to be too much off balance to overtake the receiver's return. Thus, in a game, presumably balanced activity to start with is in constant process of annihilation. This should be remembered, for in golf we are to find the very opposite to be true.

Yet it is in this skilful return of the service that we perceive where the hazards of a golf hole should be located. Striving to gain the greatest advantage, the return was undertaken at the risk of the ball landing beyond a sideline; that is, of being caught by the invisible third dimension with the loss of a point.

Since in golf it is the third dimension

that creates hazards, it follows that their locations should guard the most favorable positions from which the next stroke can be played. This refutes the idea that the flanking boundaries of games have any bearing upon the correct situation of hazards in golf.

The reason for this lies in the fact that golf is not a conflict for the control of a common ball. Its principle is that of an individual contest against the complexities of nature, no different from wild fowling, hunting, sailing and fly fishing, except that the quarry, the hole, is lifeless and stationary. Thus, its activity is that of a competitive sport, and not a game.

The contrast between them is disclosed when we know that, to a gamester, it is width of play within limits that pays, whereas the sportsman, to the contrary, endeavors to get within killing distance of his quarry in as short a time as possible. In terms of space this means the covering of a minimum of distance to it. And this remains his instinctive urge even though it be that he is thrown off it by the nature of the ground he must cover or in having first to get down wind of a live quarry before he can approach it. The cunning skill of his conduct depends upon how intelligently he transforms his all-but-irresistible attraction to come quickly to grips with it, altering his intention only as necessity demands.

Thus, in a sport we perceive balance, epitomized by a straight line, in constant process of formation.

As regards the sport of golf this statement is axiomatic. For, as the position of the quarry, the hole, which the golfer seeks to kill with a putt, is at rest, his start to its conquest, whether it be the first or the thousandth time that he addresses his ball upon any particular tee, psychologically includes an unconscious looking up to see where the pin is and then, unawares, an instinctive wish to play toward it in a straight line. But as the ball rises and falls in a curve, it is more exact to consider "straight line" to mean a curved line within a perpen-

dicular plane that passes through the hole.

As the choice of this line is the reflex action of instinct, it follows that, if it is not endangered or blocked, the golfer tends to become a glutton in the vulgar desire to satiate his greed for distance. And his greed is unpremeditated, an impulse that makes of time a runaway at the expense of space; whereas, in truth, it is space that should sit in the saddle, gripping the reins to give direction and restraint upon the steed of time through the bit of the traditional ball.

It is this lack of balance between the two today, however, that nullifies the necessity of stroking the ball with an intelligent objective in mind. Thus, skill, which infers the physical ability under the most arduous conditions to render judgment effective, disappears to become mere craftsmanship. And what is craftsmanship but a perfunctory capacity, with no innovative personal touch, to do things in the same way over and over again? Thus, given the width of a fairway to drive into, how otherwise can a tee shot prompted solely by instinct be dubbed.

Yet, long grass, the rough, still confines our fairways even to the extent of being considered a virtue. But as there is no human opponent to return the tee-shot and, therefore, no reason to place the ball close to it to gain an advantage, what does the golfer benefit if he risks its clutches?

Punishment

Thus, this mistaken imposition of a limitation that belongs singly to games confronts the golfer with the silly idea that his play is in some way bound up with morality. But as the lifeless quarry, the hole, makes no direct call upon the golfer's sympathy, his play is amoral, that is, it lies outside the sphere in which moral distinctions or judgments apply. Morality is indeed involved, but it lies properly in the inborn disposition of a sportsman never to take an unfair advantage of a live quarry. A golf hole is

alive to the extent that a breeze or wind constantly changes either its length or the type of stroke to be played. Therefore, in meeting this naive inclination, is it just and right that authority should standardize a ball that over-balances the changefulness of the atmosphere, or that a golf architect should condone punishment to strokes undertaken with the best of motives? In law this is denominated a *reductio ad absurdum*.

Doubtless the golfer will be shocked. He will grant, thankfully, that without the rough there would be fewer lost balls. But, without rough, he will want to know what happens to a tee shot that has been badly pulled or sliced. Again the answer is simple: they are cared for by that rational law of economics which comprehends that taxation to be generally applicable and reasonable must be levied at the source, and in golf the source is the hole. The usefulness of this law is clear if, for a slice or pull at a straight hole, either the rough, standing in place of multitudinous revenue collectors, is done away with altogether, or the fairway is cut as wide as conditions permit. Then, if the line that would have demarked the flanking rough of our narrow fairways is adopted as the side of a parallelogram, its base 25 yards in width and 175 yards from the tee and its extent 275 yards, and straight lines are then drawn from its near left-hand corner and from its far right-hand corner to the championship positions of the hole, it follows that if a bunker is dug where these two lines bisect the edge of the green, every ball lying within this parallelogramic area will be faced with an heroic stroke, would the player lay the ball dead to the hole. (Should the hole bend to the right, the lines are drawn from its far left-hand corner and its near right-hand corner, and oppositely when the hole bends to the left.) If the bunker is to command respect, it should be deep enough to frighten, not be just another effeminate white waste of sand from which too often the ball may be played out with a putter. Thus the economy of one bunker as a tax

collector, caring for the expensive and futile placement of many bunkers and the rough to catch wayward strokes!

From the tee, the golfer, seeing this bunker at the edge of the green or knowing of it, if blind, his eye will turn away from it to encounter hazards that force him to choose a definite line that either requires a great carry, the use of the ground as it may happen to pitch or a most circumspect direction to the advantage of his next stroke. Thus, the bunkers of such a hole interact upon one another to form a Whole, which is what the word "composition" connotes. It follows that any bunker that is loose from the composition is an example of bad art and should be stricken out. Such is the rough with its bunkers, for when a player's ball, pulled or sliced, is subjected to its mistaken discipline and the opponent's ball just stays out, manifestly it has become the play-thing of hard luck. But a ball caught by a bunker which a player assumed that he might carry or just slip by does not belong to the trickiness of luck. It must be denominated a misfortune.

Defending the Quarry

Thus, the golf-course architect who knows the business of designing a hole will not stand on the projected tee and from there decide where bunkers should be placed. He will stand where the most propitious locations will be for the hole, so that he may become intelligent in composing the hazards to defend it. For with the knowledge that the golfer's instinct is to play directly towards it, he so relates his bunkers to one another as to compel him to transform instinctive direction. And, according to the nature of the ground and this knowledge of what a golf course should demand in playing it, it can be said that the ways of accomplishing it are endless. This is but a brief outline as to what strategy comprehends.

It is for this reason that the first principle of all hazards is to attack the mind of the golfer, never to waylay the ball.

If, however, they are considered areas of punishment, the provoking of thought is stilled. Initiative is robbed by their orders to obey. This is not golf architecture, but the mere providing of a playground upon which the ball may be swiped and its despoliation of golf counted in strokes. Thus he who is responsible for hazards being so located is one without knowledge of the art of which he professes to be master.

It is the duty of the golf-course architect to consider the pleasure of the poor player, as well as of the gifted. As was pointed out, the intention of both is to do their best, but it is the expert who escapes this trifling effort of the penologist to chastise and the poor player who becomes its victim. This is especially stupid in that a more interesting, yet difficult, 18 holes can be designed without a single penal adjunct. Such was the condition of the Lakeside course, in Hollywood, Cal., when Bob Jones played it in 1929. He remarked that it reminded him of the Old Course at St. Andrews, Scotland, whereas, one played many championship courses of America the same way every day.

Furthermore, correct design includes the element of mystery. It follows that all beacon areas of sand in the faces of mounds near greens whose sole object is to make the estimating of distance possible (and what the distance of a stroke happens to be is part of a hole's defense) are an affront to the spirit of adventure which is golf's chief attraction. For surely, no engagement is worth-while when all can be known about it beforehand. Indeed, illusion, if it can be created, gives a hole distinction. Thus, at times, the justified use of blind bunkers. And it goes without saying that trees lined to hem in fairways are not only an insult to golf architecture, but the death warrant to the high art of natural landscape gardening, aside from the fact that, of all hazards, they are the most unfair.

Free Enterprise

It was for these various reasons that I was the first to draw a sharp distinction

between strategic architecture and that which I denominated penal and damned. Because the player is a sportsman, the first stands for individual free enterprise, impossible to be pursued unfairly, and the second is just another example of that authoritarian interference with nature comprehended in the word socialism, with its many offsprings and the particular controls of each. With the adherents of the latter, there is undoubtedly a feeling of inferiority; for any idea that can be affirmed only by constant policing or otherwise tampering with man's freedom is an admission that it is unnatural. Therefore, common sense should forewarn that eventually the spirit of man will rise to overflow the best-laid levies of logic, and this includes penal architecture. Because people are unconscious of this fact but nevertheless sensing that something is wrong would seem to explain why they are changing the meaning of good words to cover their inadequacy; for what does the word "democracy" mean today when the Soviets have adopted it as descriptive of their civilization? So it is that the phrase "strategic golf architecture" is being used to cover a multitude of sins. The first knows itself to be a hypocrite; the second seems not to know the way of accomplishing what it claims itself to be.

Perhaps, it is not right to so castigate the penologist, for to be restricted in designing holes to fairways of limited width is a great handicap for strategy to surmount. This is especially true in that freedom, demanded by a sport, loses all sense when subject to obvious restraint. Consequently, golf architecture, in an effort to police the thieving of space by the present ball, has turned inward upon itself in an effort to tell the golfer what is right and wrong, whereas it is imperative in any sport that the pursuer of it is the sole judge. Because the ball as an implement is dishonorable to a sportsman in making him take an advantage of a hole's sole live defense, the sport has verily lost its soul. And such is the unfortunate condition of golf as it is played today.