

PLACEMENT OF TEE MARKERS

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THERE ARE THREE important factors that should be considered when markers are placed on tees to indicate the area from which golfers must drive:

1. It is necessary to shift markers frequently from one part of the tee to another if the turf is to survive the rigors of constant use and play.

2. It is necessary to give consideration to wind and weather conditions if the course is to be kept in proper balance from an architectural standpoint.

3. It is necessary to maintain a fairly constant playing distance over the entire course if scores turned in by club members for handicap purposes are to reflect accurately their true playing ability.

The first factor needs no comment here.

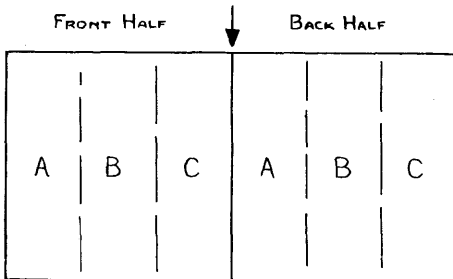
The second factor is less appreciated and therefore requires some enlargement. All golf holes are designed by architects with certain shots in mind. Such a shot might be a difficult carry over rough or sand or it might be a long and exacting iron or wood shot to the green. Any great variation in the playing conditions will naturally affect the play of the hole. For example, if the architect designed a hole around a long and exacting iron shot to the green under normal turf conditions and with the prevailing wind at the player's back, the hole might well turn into a player's nightmare if the tee markers are placed on the very back of the tee on days when the wind is blowing in the opposite direction. In other words, such a hole can be maintained in better balance from an architectural standpoint by moving markers forward on days when conditions are adverse, and back on days when conditions are extremely favorable.

The third factor is the least known of all. The USGA Golf Handicap Systems for

both men and women are based on a method of rating courses according to their playing difficulty. Each hole is given a rating in fractions of a stroke that is supposed to equal the average score an average scratch golfer will make for every ten times he plays the hole without making any poor shots or any exceptionally good ones. Ratings, in the majority of cases, are different from the Par for the holes. This can be explained easily by pointing out that a Par 4 hole for men can vary as much as 195 yards (190 for women), and it is not hard to see that a 251-yard hole plays easier than one of 445 yards. Each hole rating is made from that part of the tee most commonly used by club members during times of maximum play. This would be neither the extreme back part of the tee nor the extreme front but probably would be somewhere near the middle. Therefore, the placing of the markers on the forward part of the tee would, under normal conditions, make the hole play easier, while placing them back of center would make the hole more difficult. If the markers on all tees are placed on the backs of tees, as they sometimes are for week-end play, the course as a whole will be more difficult to score on than the rating assigned to it for handicap purposes, while with all markers forward, as they are likely to be in the middle of the week, the course will play easier and scores will be lower. If all club members could play during the week as well as on weekends, the placing of all markers forward or back would have little effect in the relationships between their handicaps. But, unfortunately, some players are restricted by business or other pursuits to week-end play, and if all their scores are made when the markers are back, their handicaps will be somewhat

higher than those of players of equal ability who are able to play on week days. This is a handicap inequality that no handicap system can correct. The answer lies in a more intelligent and a more average placement of tee markers throughout all seven days of the week.

In order to explain more easily the methods by which the requirements of the above three factors can be met all at the same time, reference is made to the following illustration:



This illustration is designed to represent an average tee on which the official rating of the hole has been made from the exact center of the tee, at the point shown by the black arrow. For purposes of later explanations, both front and back halves of the tee have been further divided into three subdivisions, A, B and C.

Recommended Procedure

The recommended procedure will permit more orderly rotation in the placing of tee markers and at the same time will meet the requirements of all three factors.

1. In order to maintain a more uniform playing distance for the entire course at all times, the tee markers on nine of the holes should be placed on the back half of each tee, while the markers on the other nine holes should be placed on the front half. When a shift is scheduled or necessary, the markers that have been back can be moved to the front, while those that have been front can be moved to the back. This method of having half the markers front while the other half are back should be followed religiously seven days a week throughout the entire season (the only exception might be during a championship or special tournament).

There are two ways of accomplishing this: (a) by starting with the markers on the odd holes (first, third, fifth, etc.) on the back half of those tees and with the markers on the even holes (second, fourth, sixth, etc.) on the front half, or (b) by starting with the markers on the first nine holes back, and those on the second nine holes front. Either way accomplishes the desired results, but (a) is preferred as it gives both nines more constant playing distances.

2. Under normal playing conditions, the markers on both front and back halves should be placed somewhere within subdivisions B. This will maintain a good average playing distance for the course. However, if normal playing conditions extend over a long period of time, undue wear and tear can be suffered by the turf in subdivisions B, so two alternative plans are suggested: namely, the front markers can be moved to subdivision C and the back markers moved to subdivision A or the front markers can be moved to subdivision A and the back markers to subdivision C. Both alternative plans maintain the same average playing distance for the course.

3. When unusual or abnormal playing conditions exist, the following modifications are suggested. When an extended hot and dry spell makes the course hard and fast, subdivision C should be used instead of subdivision B on both front and back halves. When the course becomes soft and slow because of continued rain or other adverse weather, both front and back markers should be moved forward from subdivision B to subdivision A. Use of this plan will help maintain the course at the same relative playing difficulty anticipated by the official Course Rating, and as a result members' handicaps will be affected but little by such seasonal changes.

4. Both the architectural design of the course and its official rating for handicap purposes are based on conditions that exist on most of the days during the playing season or year. One of the principal points considered under both designing and rating is the strength and direction of

the prevailing wind. Green committees and course superintendents can be of considerable assistance in maintaining the desired architectural balance and playing difficulty if they will adjust the procedure recommended above to meet out-of-the-ordinary conditions. For example, take the case of a hole where the prevailing wind is at the player's back, a following wind, so to speak, and the markers are scheduled to be placed on subdivision B of the back half of the tee. Dawn breaks to find the wind coming in from exactly the opposite direction, so that players that day will be hitting against the wind rather than with it. If it is a mild breeze, not too strong, placing the markers on the very front side of subdivision B might make the hole play more nearly normal. But if the wind is strong, placing the markers in subdivision A would meet the situation better. This procedure would be reversed, of course, and the movement of the markers would be backward on holes where the wind of the day is a following one when normally it blows from green to tee.

On courses having two sets of men's tees, the plan of placing the markers on half the front tees and half the back tees when possible will help maintain a more even balance in the playing qualities of the entire course. If there is considerable difference in distance between the front and back tees, it would be advisable to obtain a separate course rating for each set of tees so that scores turned in for handicap purposes can be properly evaluated.

Women's tees on most courses are on the small side, so the rotation of markers as recommended above is not so essential. However, the alternate front and back procedure on the odd and even holes will help the ladies obtain and maintain greater fairness in their handicapping.

It might be well at this point to remind all green committees and course superintendents of Definition 32 in the Rules of Golf which explains just where a player is permitted to tee his ball. It reads:

"The 'teeing ground' is the starting place for the hole to be played. The front is indicated by two marks, and the tee-

DO YOU KNOW YOUR GOLF?

(Answers to questions on page 18)

1. (b) Johnny McDermott.
2. No. It was usual to carry more woods than irons throughout the feather ball period (which ended about 1848) and through much of the succeeding era of the gutta percha ball.
3. (c) 64 by Lee Mackey, Jr., in 1950 at Merion, near Philadelphia, in the first round.
4. False. The amateur rules prohibit acceptance of expenses for exhibitions, as well as for tournaments generally.
5. (d) 1924.
6. (a) Inside edge, next to the course. See Definition 21.
7. No. What is commonly called fairway is part of "through the green"; see Definition 34.
8. No. A ball lifted in a hazard must be dropped and come to rest in that hazard unless otherwise provided for in the Rules; see Rule 22-3.
9. (b). See Definition 27.

ing ground is the rectangular space two club-lengths in depth directly behind the line indicated by the two marks."

Inasmuch as the length of the average driver is approximately four feet, it can be seen that tee markers never should be placed closer to the back edge of the tee than about eight feet. Actually, in case a player desires to tee his ball exactly two club-lengths in back of the markers, he should be given an additional five or six feet of swinging room within which there is no tall grass, bush, tree or other interference.

The primary interest of a green committee and a golf course superintendent is to keep the members happy. They do this by maintaining the course in as nearly perfect condition as possible. They can add further to the playing pleasures of the members by placing tee markers in such a manner that the course plays approximately the same way the architect intended it to play, not only on some days but on every day throughout the season.