

# PUTTING THE GOLF BEFORE THE CART

by

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USGA Executive Director

"CADDIE WILLIE" plied his trade at the Bruntsfield links in Edinburgh, Scotland, in the early 1800s. He carried his wardrobe on his back, wearing several suits of clothing at a time, with a golfer's old red coat outermost. He lived in a garret, never had a fire, subsisted entirely on cold milk and bread, paid his rent regularly, was very honest, and served the golfers well.

There was a caddie.

If the ghost of "Caddie Willie" could look in upon the doings on some American golf courses today, he might wonder whether it was he or golf who had expired.

He must at least be twisting a bit in his grave if he is aware of the modern development of striking a ball with a golf club, climbing into a little motorized cart or buggy, riding a couple of hundred comfortable yards, disembarking and playing another stroke, then climbing back into the conveyance for another ride.

If automotive golf were carried to its logical conclusion, we'd all wind up sitting on the clubhouse porch and firing all our shots out of a rifle—or so says J. Wood Platt, a leading Philadelphia amateur and official. Automotive golf might in turn be succeeded by pushbutton golf.

The subject of mechanized transportation for playing golf has evoked deep soul-searching by club boards throughout the land. It is a subject which must be dealt with, regardless of one's personal preferences.

A primary question is whether golf is golf when you don't navigate under your own steam. Most golfers we have sounded out informally feel that mechanical transportation should not be permitted except when a doctor certifies it is advisable for an individual.

A member of the USGA staff expressed his personal opinion as follows:

"I believe that golf is a great sport, and part of the game involves walking. If players physically capable of walking nine and 18 holes find it too tiresome, they shouldn't change the game; they should change their sport."

## No Carts in USGA Events

The USGA does not permit the use of automotive transport in its competitions. The official position of the USGA is given in the following Rules of Golf decision:

USGA 54-32

Rule 36-7

*Q.1: Do the Rules of Golf prohibit a player from using automotive transportation?*

A.1: No. It is, however, contrary to the custom of the game.

*Q.2: If a Committee wishes to prohibit the use of automotive transportation, how may it be done?*

A.2: The Committee must adopt a regulation and announce it in advance. The USGA does this for USGA competitions.

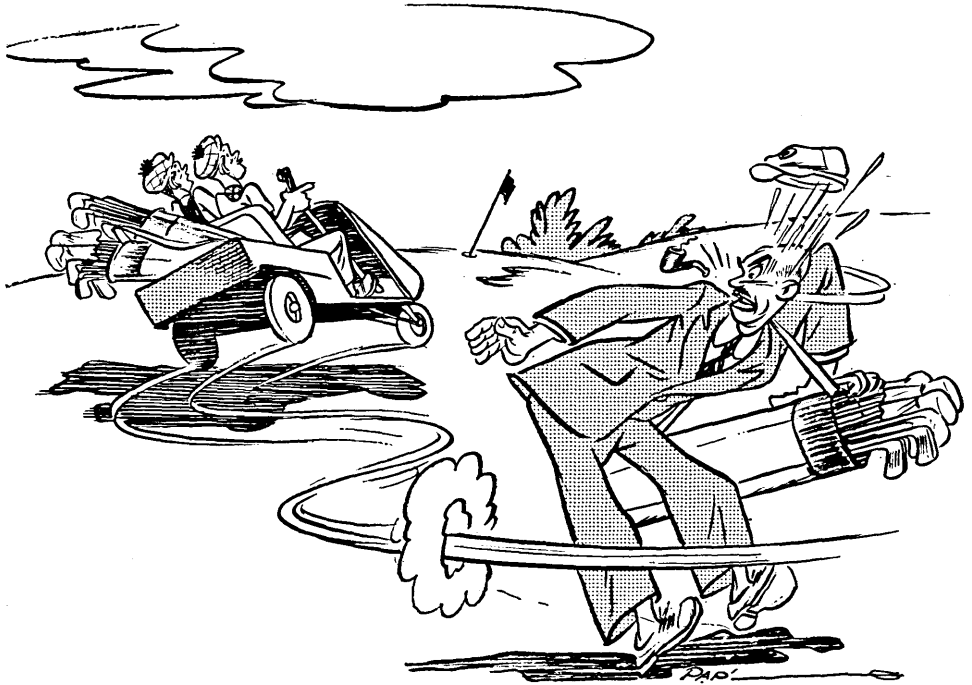
*Q.3: If the Committee has not adopted a regulation and if a player uses automotive transportation, does his opponent have any right of protest under the Rules of Golf?*

A.3: No.

A point of view which deserves sincere attention was expressed by Thomas M. Quinn, of Long Island City, N. Y., in the following message to the periodical "Golf World":

"I have been a devotee of golf for 30 years. In recent years I have been suffering from a heart condition, and despite a fairly good recovery I have been ordered by my physician to limit my game to nine holes. This, with the medicine prescribed, is a bitter pill.

## Will It Come To This?



A futuristic view of a new golf problem, as seen by "Pap", well known sports cartoonist for the Associated Press, who drew this expressly for the *USGA Journal and Turf Management*.

"However, last summer on a visit to Montauk Point, Long Island, a new ray of hope dawned. I noticed they used electric carts. I immediately hired one at \$6 a round. This is a fairly hilly course and for the first time in two years I experienced the pleasure of playing 18 holes.

### **Cart Is Barred**

"This made me very enthusiastic as to the potentialities of the use of carts on my own course. The pro at Montauk cited the case of a man 88 years of age who, through the use of the cart, makes the Montauk course five times a week. I purchased one forthwith. My club barred it on the ground it would harm the course.

### **How Carts Affect Courses: Views of Turf Scientists**

What is the effect of motorized transportation on golf course turf?

The USGA has a Green Section with a staff of six turfgrass scientists—agrono-

"The after-effect of a heart attack is perhaps worse than the attack itself. You are continually living with mental reservations of doing things that are out of your sphere of limitation. Your entire system feels as though it is in a vise. The only way to overcome this fear is by doing things in a most deliberate manner. In my case, after making up the usual foursome I lived in fear that I would be unable to complete the course.

"It is only a question of time when all clubs will see this question in the true light. When boards of directors react favorably, many members who are inactive due to heart conditions will be given a great lift in the morale department."

mists highly experienced in problems of golf course maintenance, both theoretical and practical. They are located in different sections of the country, and deal with wide

varieties of grasses, climates, soils and related factors on hundreds of courses.

Here are their views:

**CHARLES G. WILSON, WESTERN DIRECTOR OF USGA GREEN SECTION, DAVIS, CAL.:**

Golfers' increased use of automotive transportation, either gasoline or electric-powered carts, indicates that riding in preference to walking is not just a passing fancy. Contrary to many manufacturers' opinions, their use has and will continue to cause damage to golf course turf.

Under wet, soggy conditions resulting from either rain or irrigation, ruts or deep wheel tracks may be formed to interfere with the basic concept of playing the ball as it lies. Under so-called dry or ideal use conditions, many soils are more subject to compaction than when wet or saturated as far as visual damage is concerned.

Thus, use at any time taxes the ability of the maintenance crew, and increases the budget for additional fertilizer, aeration, more wear-resistant grasses and, in many instances, construction of asphalt pathways from green to tee and tee to start of the fairway.

In the southern half of the Western Region, where bermuda is the basic grass for fairways and tees, damage is of lesser magnitude than in the north where bluegrasses, fescues and bentgrasses predominate.

**ALEXANDER M. RADKO, NORTHEASTERN DIRECTOR OF USGA GREEN SECTION, NEW BRUNSWICK, N. J.:**

The heavy and continued use of automotive transportation on golf courses in the Northeast may mean the difference between good and poor playing turf.

Cool-season grasses, such as the bluegrasses, fescues and bentgrasses, which predominate in the Northeast, are in their "danger period" during the hot months of July and August, when electric car-owners would use their cars most.

At some time during that period unwatered cool-season turfgrasses are at the wilting stage; if they are in a state of wilt, the use of many electric cars may mean the difference between turf and no turf.

On watered fairways or just after heavy rainfall, wheel marks and soil compaction will be other factors to consider. Undoubtedly, too, the compaction that would result from the heavy use of automotive transportation on wet soils will result in the loss of some of the permanent grasses.

Soil compaction has been one of our more serious problems on turf areas previous to the innovation of electric cars. What the heavy use of these vehicles will do, only time would tell.

We have all observed the damage to turfgrasses as a result of the use of the small bag-toting caddie carts, especially on areas where players are channeled around greens and tees. Player education is a difficult program to get across to a membership of 300 to 400 golfers. There is no reason to believe that electric car-users will be any easier to educate.

At one course last summer some "legalized vandalism" was observed. The owner played his shot from a trap, hopped into the car, drove through the trap, and went up across the green. Unfortunately, the sand was not soft enough to bury the "beast".

The only use we now see for these cars is by persons who, because of reasons of health (age or physical infirmity), cannot now get around a golf course. We would, however, leave to the superintendent and his green committee the decision as to whether cars should be allowed on the course on any given day.

Of course, there are many other factors to consider—not least among which is the difficult question of rules and regulations governing play among users vs. non-users. In any case we feel that the prime consideration should be the protection of the tremendous country club investment—the golf course and its greenway.

**CHARLES K. HALLOWELL, MID-ATLANTIC DIRECTOR OF USGA GREEN SECTION, BELTSVILLE, MD.:**

The operation of electric carts over fairways is likely to increase soil compaction.

In studies at The Pennsylvania State University, Dr. R. B. Alderfer found evidence indicating that compaction can de-

velop rather rapidly. On a soil subjected to occasional trampling, 11% runoff was measured. After soil had been allowed to dry for 24 hours, it was given a fair amount of compaction by trampling. Runoff again was determined and water loss had increased from 11% to 55%.

A good sandy soil is not insurance against compaction. Employing two soils—one a clay loam and the other a sandy loam—Dr. Alderfer made determinations of non-capillary porosity, runoff and infiltration capacity. There was no appreciable difference between the two soil types—a fact that has been verified many times.

More frequent use of mechanical aerifying equipment to overcome the compacting effect on the soil is the superintendent's solution to the use of electric carts.

B. P. ROBINSON, SOUTHEASTERN DIRECTOR OF USGA GREEN SECTION, TIFTON, GA.:

Only a few clubs apparently have enough carts where there is enough traffic for one to evaluate the damage.

Damage to bermuda and ryegrass turf from automotive transportation has been largely due to continuous traffic on an area and operation on wet turf.

## What Clubs Can Do About Motorized Carts

By DR. MARVIN H. FERGUSON

*Southwestern Director and National Research Coordinator,  
USGA Green Section, College Station, Texas*

Golf course superintendents have cause to be concerned about the damage which motorized carts may inflict. Carts were first used by older golfers and physically handicapped persons who had difficulty in walking. Now they are used by many golfers regardless of physical fitness or ability. Types range from "one-seater" gasoline-powered scooters to small automobiles equipped to carry six passengers.

Nearly everyone agrees that they are capable of doing a great deal of damage to the turf. There is no evidence, however, which would lead one to believe that the use of carts will be diminished, regardless of opposition.

Therefore, the superintendent who tries to keep up with new developments and

Turf producers are faced with a problem which must be solved by education of members, application of knowledge now on hand, and by additional study.

WILLIAM H. BENGUEYFIELD, AGRONOMIST, USGA GREEN SECTION, BELTSVILLE, MD.:

Golf is played on grass. Hard and fast rules cannot be adopted as to when electric carts may or may not damage turf. There are too many variables—weather conditions, soil types, grass types, soil moisture, and the past and the present seasons must be considered. For good turf it is best that such carts be not used at all.

Limited numbers, properly regulated, would cause no concern. Wide acceptance of the carts would be ruinous to the course. Once fairway turf is gone, due to disease, carts, insects or weeds, the use of electric carts would be out of the question for a year or more. Can you visualize a fairway after crabgrass has taken it over during the summer and electric carts during a wet fall?

Proper and considerate use of carts may make them acceptable under certain conditions. The more considerate of the course each operator is, the more carts each golf course could handle without undue damage.

prepare for changes in the demands upon his turf must seek ways to keep good turf despite this new development. Several approaches to the problem seem to offer some promise. Some of these approaches are not altogether under the control of the superintendent. Close cooperation between club members and the superintendent is essential if an answer to damage by buggies is to be found.

### Regulation of Carts

Some clubs have banned certain types of vehicles which have objectionable features, such as narrow tread tires, single-wheel drives, or noisy engines.

The regulations which concern the superintendent primarily are those which pertain to the condition of the course.

When the grounds are wet, golf buggies will cause serious damage. The superintendent is the person most likely to be able to judge whether the condition of the course permits their use.

Because of the various plans of cart ownership and operation, however, some superintendents find that they are subject to much criticism when they make a "close decision." The person who stands to gain financially from the use of carts is quite likely to take a lenient attitude in the matter of wet grounds.



**DR. MARVIN H. FERGUSON**

It appears that one satisfactory plan of operation is to have the club own or lease all carts, hire someone to take care of their maintenance, and make it a function of the Board of Directors or the Green Committee to make the decisions as to when the course is in condition to accommodate wheeled traffic. Decisions of the Committee should be based on advice of the superintendent. If this plan is followed, the club profits when carts are used, but it also sustains the damage when they are used destructively.

#### *Driver Education*

Carts fitted with reasonably large tires and operated with reasonable care do no more damage than maintenance equipment. Maintenance equipment is used over the whole golf course, however, whereas operators of carts tend to steer in the same paths time after time.

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### **TYPICAL REGULATIONS FOR MOTORIZED CARTS**

When a golf course permits use of motorized carts, many new problems arise. Regulations are necessary to cover such matters as the right of a cart-user to play through slower groups, insurance, under what conditions of turf the carts may be used, etc.

The following rules adopted by the Siwanoy Country Club, Bronxville, N. Y., give an insight into some of the questions:

1. Only electric battery-driven cars will be permitted.
2. Size of machine shall be limited to accommodate not more than two people.
3. No horns, whistles, lights or noise-makers of any kind shall be permitted as attachments to carts.
4. No cart may be used for play without a caddie accompanying players.
5. In the event of rain or any acts of the elements, the Starter must check with the Golf Course Superintendent and/or the Chairman of the Green Committee, and that decision shall be final for that day.
6. Chairman of the Green Committee shall suspend the privileges of any owner of a cart for not less than 10 days for each infraction of rules.
7. Use of a cart shall not under any circumstances be construed as giving a player or players any special rights or privileges on the golf course.
8. In club tournaments based on match play, the owner of a cart shall be permitted the use thereof only if it meets with the approval of his opponent.
9. Carts shall not cut across fairways or drive on aprons surrounding the greens.
10. No carts should exceed 1,000 pounds, and tires shall be pneumatic.

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Driver education is an approach that appears to have merit. Manufacturers of carts would seem to have an obligation to promote careful operation and to eliminate features which would be harmful to golf courses.

Signs may be erected to keep carts off tees and the approaches to greens and to direct traffic away from worn areas. Most members will observe these signs. The unthinking person can do more damage than the willful violator of rules.

Pictures of serious damage may be posted on the bulletin board. Club members resent flagrant disregard for the golf course and they can exert a great deal of pressure on the offender.

### Condition the Course

There are numerous ways in which cart damage can be minimized by preventive maintenance.

Cultivation to relieve compaction will need more attention.

A dense, tight turf resists wear better than an open turf. This may imply a change in the species of fairway grass. Certainly, a more adequate fertilizer program will be helpful.

Watering of fairways should be thorough and infrequent. This is true whether carts are used or not, but it may be easier to show club members that wet grounds are more likely to suffer from traffic damage than it is to show them that too much water causes shallow roots.

Insofar as is possible, features that channel traffic should be eliminated.

Low spots that tend to stay wet for long periods should be drained or raised.

Where possible, steep grades that cause slipping or wheel spinning should be eased.

Pave small areas where traffic is concentrated (ends of bridges, etc.) and where turf cannot be kept.

It is believed that any club should be prepared to accept an increased maintenance budget before it decides to permit the use of motorized carts.

The far-sighted superintendent should take stock of his golf course to determine what changes will need to be made to accommodate an increased use of carts. He should present his committee with an estimate of the costs of such changes and the reasons for making them.

It is believed that golf course superintendents have the "know-how" and the resourcefulness to keep good turf in spite of this new difficulty, provided their clubs support them in the matters of regulation, education and an adequate budget for conditioning the course.

**You can't help a little child up the hill without getting nearer the top yourself.**

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