



The cart path, leading from the tee, immediately runs across the fairway at approximately right angles.

Golf Carts Traffic Control and Twelve Months of Grass

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Power golf carts are relatively new to golf. In a very short time their use has changed from the "medical case" to one of convenience. Many arguments are presented that golf is a game of exercise—you should casually walk up to your ball, studying the terrain, possible line of flight, distance, and maybe even enjoy the scenery between shots. However, many golfers today could not comfortably play without the use of a cart. In spite of the pros and cons, golf carts are very much a part of the maintenance problem. Who has ever seen grass grow on a freeway?

The Rancho Santa Fe Golf Club is located in the center of a residential area thus making it practical to use the golf cart as a second automobile for transportation to the course. As a consequence, we have approximately 70

privately-owned carts and 40 club-owned carts. Many of our residents are retired, or if not retired, have the time to play a lot of golf. Many of the privately-owned carts are used by the husband Monday, Wednesday and Friday, his wife Tuesday and Thursday, and perhaps by both of them on the weekend.

It's a great life, but it presents problems in golf course maintenance. How do you eliminate mud holes at every entrance and exit? How do you disperse carts so that paths are not worn in the fairways? How do you get cooperation from your members to save the course as much as possible? You don't solve all the problems, but it is possible to improve the situation.

At Rancho Santa Fe it was definitely decided not to have continuous paths around the course.

It would detract from our country atmosphere and slow down play if the cart was left on the path while the players walked to their ball.

ON THE TEE

Several years ago an article appeared in one of the golf magazines suggesting that, rather than have cart paths straight out from the tees, it would be better to have them turn at a sharp angle and run across the fairway in front of the tee. It was thought that a person naturally stays on a path, that he would suddenly realize he was going the wrong way and turn off towards the green.

The different reaction times of various persons would cause them to make their exits at different places which would disperse the wear at the exit point of the path as well as create different patterns of travel over the fairway. This system could be successful at a resort type course that is not played by the same golfers all the time.

After careful study, but with the above design in mind, it was decided to have small, easily moved, portable signs with an arrow

placed on the path to force an exit at that point. At the start of the path, signs were placed to "Exit at Arrow." The sign on the path is moved daily by the may who changes the tee markers. If the path is, say, 70 yards long you can use 10 yards for an exit, which means an exit is used once a week and has six days to recover.

While you never get 100% compliance, we feel that perhaps eight out of 10 golfers are most anxious to cooperate. By having the path run across the fairway at right angles, traffic is also distributed on the fairway itself.

AT THE GREEN

The paths at the green present a different problem. It is vitally necessary to have them because all traffic finally concentrates there. Our general plan is to have a paved path from the green to the next tee. It is obvious that the entrance problem is different for the green paths. You cannot have a path across the fairway in front of a green, nor can you use the same entrance system as the exit system on the tee paths.

To solve the problem, we have constructed

The arrow "Exit" sign is moved daily on each path. Perhaps 8 out of 10 golfers cooperate in distributing the wear.



paths in the rough, parallel to the fairway, and about 70 yards in front of the green. These same paths continue to the next tee. Small portable signs saying, "Enter Here" are placed on these paths and moved each day. This solves the problem of giving the grass a chance to grow at the path entrance, but it does concentrate traffic from the fairway. However, by varying the entrance daily, it seems to save the fairway somewhat, and we do not have any serious problem with cart wear.

PATH CONSTRUCTION

The construction of cart paths varies with the availability of local materials and soil conditions. Rancho Santa Fe has a heavy clay soil which requires a six-inch excavation, filling with four inches of decomposed granite, and then paving with two inches of asphalt. Asphalt is not an ideal material because it deteriorates with water, and you do have water on a golf course.

There is considerable maintenance in patching spots that break off, etc. It is difficult to find a suitable material, except concrete, but the cost of concrete is prohibitive.

If a well-groomed look is desired, it is best to use two-inch headers on the borders of the path. This also helps the edges from chipping off. Since this adds considerably to the cost, we did not use them at Rancho Santa Fe. After the path has been completed and the grass established along the edges, it presents a fairly neat appearance without headers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Herbert B. Pratt has been Green Chairman and Board Member at Rancho Santa Fe Golf Club, Rancho Santa Fe, California, since 1964. At a club with over 100 electric carts in constant use, 12 months of the year, he has had to deal with traffic and grass. A graduate of the University of Southern California, Mr. Pratt has been an active golfer for the past 15 years.

Most of our paths are five feet in width. This should be considered minimum. If the budget is adequate, we would suggest a width of six feet. A golf cart can use a path four feet wide, but it takes effort to stay on it and carts riding the edge cause the edges to chip off. If necessary, it is recommended to reduce the number of paths and make them six feet wide. There are locations on the course where it becomes essential to use the paths to move maintenance equipment as well. In these locations, the width should be a minimum of 10 feet.

It is difficult to work out the exits and entrances for paths on par-3 holes. At Rancho Santa Fe we have solved the problem with continuous paths from tees to green on all par-3 holes.

PATH MAINTENANCE

After installation of paths, it is important to have a definite program for their maintenance. If they are of asphalt, they should be resealed perhaps every two years, and any holes or cracks should be filled. Water under an asphalt path causes it to break up, particularly when the soil is heavy and drains poorly.

While all the problems have not been solved, and probably never will be, we are quite happy with the general plan to handle traffic at Rancho Santa Fe. Cart traffic is incompatible with the growing of grass, but it is our hope that our experience here will prove helpful to those who still have the problem to solve.

