



*P.J. Boatwright, Jr. and Frank Tatum of the USGA Executive Committee and Superintendent Roger Larson check the collar cut on the No. 4 green at Pebble Beach.*

## *Preparing Your Course for Tournament Play*

by JOSEPH C. DEY, JR., Commissioner Tournament Players Division of the PGA

Let's suppose you're the golf course superintendent or the Green Committee Chairman of a club which has contracted to hold the Open Championship a few years hence. What are you going to do about it?

Some cowardly souls, after fighting back the tears, may think about resigning on the spot. Others may start from the mental position that they'll show those touring professionals—they'll make the course so severe and so tricky that those pros won't know where they are. Still others may complacently say they'll keep the course just as the members play it—after all, golf should be a pleasure, not a penance; besides, low scores will help create interest and attract more spectators as the tournament progresses.

But all these theories and questions have been thought out and settled long ago. There are, in fact, some solid principles to guide you. Whether the prospective Open Championship is the United States Open or the Nassau County Open, the basic idea is the same—you are going to help determine a champion golfer. You are going to provide a testing ground that will reward skill. The other side of that coin is that

the less skilled will have a more difficult time, and are likely to be penalized for their deficiencies. You are going to set up a testing ground that will evoke the best there is in the players.

Now this does not mean that your course is going to be made over. No competent golfing authority is going to schedule a true championship—of whatever class—at a course which needs extensive remodeling to be a proper test. That certainly is the point of view of the organizations which deal with the major championship events in this country, the USGA, and the PGA Tournament Players Division, and the PGA itself.

So we start by taking the course as the architect designed it. Perhaps it needs tightening—usually it is set up for every-day play and it may not be a true championship test. Usually that can be rectified and some tightening done simply by the judicious use of rough.

At first your members will tend to resent almost any alteration from the normal—and especially if more and heavier rough entails more and slower searching for the ball. Eventually, though, most members will come to

respect and to enjoy an enhanced challenge. In the months and even years of preparation for a major championship such as the United States Open, they will have growing appreciation of fine course conditioning. At the end of the Championship the early scoffers will be the proudest members, for when the Championship is all over, the course is likely to be in the best condition of its history.

This will come as a surprise to some who believe the old wives' tale about how tournaments tear up courses. But listen to the testimony of Ted Rupel. He was the golf course superintendent at Cherry Hills in Denver when the 1960 Open was played there. He wrote the following in the publication of the superintendents' association called "The Golf Course Reporter":

"As for the condition of the grass, nothing could be better for the actual playing area. It must be considered that there are only 150 players in the tournament, and that they hit the ball so few times that the course gets a rest. The biggest factor in the recovery of the grass was that the use of golf carts was suspended ten days before tournament time, and that was very favorable to the grass from a growing standpoint."

As I have said, we start by taking the course as the architect designed it. Just a word about this. Most American courses belong to one of two principal schools of architecture—the school which espouses position play for *every* shot—that is, there is a prime position for each shot, and any straying from it is likely to be penalized. In other words, you play from A to B to C, and the area for each shot is restricted to some extent. That is the theory behind the design of the vast preponderance of courses in our country.

The other school of course architecture is a small one. It theorizes that, when all is said and done, the only thing that counts is the ultimate objective—the green and the hole itself. This school gives you considerable freedom on the way to the green, but once you arrive in that area you find the green and the hole protected to the death. A leading exponent of this philosophy was an amateur golfer and architect of many years ago, Max Behr, who was runner-up in the United States Amateur Championship of 1908. He compared golf to certain kinds of hunting, with the hole as the quarry, and he believed in defending the hole almost with his life.

There are some evidences of this philosophy when the Masters Tournament is played at Augusta National. Bob Jones and Dr. Alister MacKenzie collaborated in designing Augusta

National so that there would be ample room off the tee for the average player, for Bob's basic belief was that "The first purpose of any golf course should be to give pleasure, and that to the greatest possible number of players, without respect to their capabilities. As far as possible, there should be presented to each golfer an interesting problem which will test him without being so impossibly difficult that he will have little chance of success. There must be something to do, but that something must always be within the realm of reasonable accomplishment."

So while the delightful Augusta National course may seem rather loose and liberal off the tee, it changes character and becomes severe on and around the putting green.

Now let's assume that the Championship you're going to entertain is a major championship. That means the organization which conducts it has some definite standards for setting up the course. The major authorities are pretty much agreed on the objectives to be reached—that is, the USGA, the PGA and the PGA Tournament Players Division, no matter the name of the tournament. The principles apply to all tournaments, though so-called minor events usually cannot be given the same amount of loving care. The major organizations seek to have some continuity in conditioning from tournament to tournament, from year to year, so that deserving winners will be determined and fair play served.

Early in the game of preparing for a major tournament, the sponsoring organization, such as the USGA, gets together with you on what tees to use, how the fairways are to be outlined, and how to treat the area around the putting greens. This has to be done in detail. You can't just say that fairways should be 40 yards wide, and let it go at that. You have to study each hole individually, each shot individually, and come to a decision on exactly where each shot should be aimed—where the grass will be fairway and where rough. You don't want to favor one kind of player over another—you don't want to set up an advantage for, let's say, the player who chronically hooks the ball over the man who can control a fade. You want to try to require all players to use every club in the bag.

To give you a case in point, in the last year of preparation for the 1964 U.S. Open at Congressional in Washington, the USGA representatives spent one full day in the preceding fall in determining the lines and width of fairways, or approaches to putting greens, and how to treat the areas around the greens. This was an 8-hour day in consultation with club officials and the golf course architect who was helping Congressional in some remodeling.

Then, the next spring, after the grass started growing again, sometime in April, another full day was spent by the same people—club, architect and USGA—in reviewing and refining what had been done in the fall. This, then, relates to just one aspect of preparing the course—its design, its layout.

The professional Tour tends to defy this sort of treatment, although such treatment is sought for the tournaments comprising the Tour. But the very nature of the Tour prevents achieving consistency and uniformity. The Tour starts in *January and runs practically all year*. Tournaments are played over many different kinds of terrain, on various kinds of turf, in various climates, in all sorts of weather. The player on the Tour must truly be a man for all seasons. Last January at Tucson the temperature was 20 degrees in the morning, and the scheduled start had to be delayed 1½ hours. In such circumstances it is not possible to obtain perfection of either design or of grooming, and as you know, design and grooming interact upon each other. The following week-end if you watched telecasts of the *Bing Crosby Tournament at Pebble Beach*, you saw players lift balls in the fairways and *place* them within one club-length of where they lay—very preferred lies. This is not pure golf as Old Tom Morris knew it. It does violence to a basic concept of the Rules of Golf, to play the ball as it lies. But Pebble Beach is customarily very wet in winter. This winter it has had a great amount of rain. Thus, when players, caddies and scorers—perhaps some marshals and press representatives—walk on the fairways, their footprints are likely to be quite deep in spots, heel prints particularly. To try to dig balls out of *depressions one to two inches deep in the fairway* is not golf. So in such a condition a Local Rule is adopted to provide relief, as suggested in the Appendix to the Rules of Golf booklet.

This very diversity and complexity of course preparation and course conditions week after week throughout most of the year is one reason why the help of an agency such as the USGA Green Section is needed. Our tournament contracts call for the tournament sponsors to obtain competent outside agronomic advice such as the Green Section provides. Now *some golf course superintendents don't relish consultation with outside agronomists*. This is not a wholly unnatural reaction; the superintendent knows his course better than anyone else. It's his baby. But the best fathers in golf course maintenance as in life are those who are always open to new and better ways of raising their children. The Green Section agronomists deal with scores—even hundreds—of superintendents. The Green Section men do not

profess to be super-superintendents. They are scientists trained in course maintenance matters who are able to communicate to you when you're getting ready for that championship, not only their knowledge but the practical experiences of hundreds of other superintendents. The wise superintendent welcomes *backstopping of such professional calibre, especially when it is impartial, with no axe to grind or nothing to sell*.

So now let's turn to the matter of producing championship turf. Of course, it is not *within my competence to discuss how* to do this. I can only tell of some of the *results* desired. Let's look at the hoped for results in broad general terms:

### **FIRST, THE TEEING GROUND**

The grass on tees should be short—ideally, about one-half inch, for both bermuda and non-bermudagrass. Remember that iron shots are going to be played on most of the short holes, at least, and the player doesn't want any grass between the club and the ball, insofar as that is possible.

Obviously, the tees should be firm and level. I recall a U.S. Open in which the superintendent of the course mistakenly dressed his tees with too much sand rather shortly before the tournament, and the footing on some of them was quite bad. Ben Hogan slipped on one while driving. His ball wound up in the worst rough on the course.

### **SECOND, FAIRWAYS**

The importance of close-cropped fairway turf cannot be overemphasized. The possibility of fluffy lies is to be avoided like the plague. Players detest them, with good reason. The fairways have to be brought along to a point where players can show their true skill. This means, among other things, a proper watering program, and adherence to it.

### **THIRD, THE PUTTING GREENS**

Firm, keen greens, on the dry side, provide the best test, for both approach shots and putts. You want the approach shot to stay on the green only because of the skill with which the player has struck it—not because the greens are soft. The great tendency is to overwater in order to keep them green. This is usually bad for the long-term health of the turf. Soft greens—"puddings," as one British player calls them—do not reward the skillful player over the inferior. A sound program of using as little water as possible can generally help produce *championship greens*. As Fred Grau once said, you play golf on turf, not on color.

### **FOURTH, THE ROUGH**

In general, the rough should require a good

recovery shot. Its presence should reward the player who is skillful enough to stay out of it and should exact some toll in recovery from the player who plays into it.

I'm going to quote the specifications for grass cutting which we send to all of our tournament sponsors in our joint efforts to provide good tests. They are based on specifications used by the USGA and developed over the years from a foundation laid by a great man of golf, Richard S. Tufts, of Pinehurst, who did more than anyone I know to establish sound, sensible standards for preparing courses for championships. The figures in these specifications should be regarded as variable. For example, although we talk about height of cut, we all know that density of the turf is really more important—but there is no common measure of density. So here are the guidelines for height and width of cut, for both non-bermuda and bermudagrass turf:

	Height Non-Bermuda	Bermuda	Width
<i>Tees:</i>	Not over 1/2-inch	Not over 1/2-inch	
<i>Fairway Areas:</i>			
Fairway	1/2 to 3/4-inch	1/2-inch	30 to 40 yds.
Collar off Fairway	2 inches	1-1/2-inches	4 to 6 feet
Rough — Primary	4 to 5 inches	2-1/2-inches	—
<i>Putting Green Areas:</i>			
Putting Green	3/16-inch	3/16-inch	—
Collar off green	1/2 to 3/4-inch	1/2-inch	30 to 36 inches
Light rough off collar	2 inches	1-1/2-inches	2 to 6 feet
Rough — primary	4 to 5 inches	2-1/2-inches	—

Now what about bunkers? Here is an area where rigid adherence to a timetable is important. All too often sand is dumped into bunkers just before the tournament in a crash effort to round out the program of preparation. The result is needlessly unfair lies. Any fresh sand should be put in bunkers fully three months in advance, so that it may become well settled. If there is inadequate rain to pack it, water it artificially.

Suitable sand includes what is known as plasterer's sand, mason's sand, or brick sand. Sand which will pass through a 1/8-inch sieve opening and which has had silt and very fine sand particles removed by washing will resist packing. Sand particles which are round in shape tend to shift under a player's feet, whereas sand with angular particles is more stable. Sand in the face of bunkers must be shallow enough and firm enough to prevent a ball from becoming lost in it.

Players should not be able to putt out of greenside bunkers. To prevent this, the lip should be about three or four inches high on the bunker margin facing greens. There should be no lip on sides or the rear of bunkers,

otherwise balls may become unplayable under such lips.

Obviously, bunkers should not contain stones. Rakes should not leave huge furrows. Oakmont, near Pittsburgh, used to have colossally large and deep furrows. In preparation for the 1953 Open there, the USGA chose to have smaller furrows. Some Oakmont officials wanted the old ones, and a contention developed, which was eventually compromised. It gave rise to some verses about Oakmont's grandfather furrows:

*O, the dune hills in the sand along the sea  
Where the waves dash high with mighty,  
noisome claps  
Are as smooth as glossy silk, or homogenized milk,  
Compared with Oakmont's furrowed traps.  
For a gentlemanly bunker, give me those  
That will never show on topographic maps,*

*Where the soil's politely raked, neither  
carved, nor sculpted, nor faked,  
But deliver me from Oakmont's furrowed  
traps.*

*Now I've seen them all—from awesome  
Pebble Beach  
To Pine Valley's woods (than which there  
are no punker);  
But the most remote from heaven is when  
your ball lies in Row Seven  
Of a plowed and disced and harrowed  
Oakmont Bunker.*

Practice areas are important to tournament players. They should be maintained similarly to comparable areas on the course. Practice tees should be mowed at the same height as fairways. Practice putting greens should be cut and kept in the same manner as the greens on the course, and cups should be changed daily. There should be an area where players may chip to the practice green.

The target for which the player aims is the flagstick, and it is surprising how inadequate some flagsticks and flags are. Standardization is important to the player who must play a

different course every week. Following are good specifications for the flagstick:

- Material:** Fiberglass
- Height:** Eight feet
- Diameter:** Not more than three-quarters inch from a point three inches above the ground to the bottom of the hole.
- Color:** Solid cream or white. (Stripes make it hard to see, from a distance, where the flagstick enters the ground.)
- Color of flag:** Yellow, preferably solid. (This makes the best target against the green background of a golf course.)

In preparing for a tournament, attention must be given to matters involving the Rules of Golf. The course superintendent can perform a great service here in so preparing his course that little or no ground under repair will exist, and so that few if any special rules will be needed.

Inattention to the Rules has hurt many a tournament. The authority sponsoring the tournament should do a meticulous job here in cooperation with the course superintendent.

We could spend all day discussing this subject alone, so let's just consider some of the main points:

**Teeing grounds:** The number of the hole

should be on a sign at every tee. There have been sad cases of players playing off wrong tees just because the committee had not insured numbering of the tees. And what do you do if a tee marker is moved, or stolen, especially in the middle of a stroke play round? A handsome marker was stolen during the last Ryder Cup match in St. Louis. After some bad experiences a couple of years ago, we adopted the following procedure:

When the tee markers are put in place for the day, a short white line is painted with a spray gun on the ground immediately in front of each marker. The number of the round is then painted on the ground near it. Thus, if a marker is moved or stolen, following players and the committee can know where the day's location is.

**Out of bounds:** It is essential to have a precise line which can be determined at the ground—the ball usually lies on the ground. Large white stakes, well embedded, are suitable, provided bushes and trees do not prevent sighting between any two stakes. A continuous white line painted on the ground is the best means of marking a boundary. Out of bounds should be marked as far back from playing areas as possible—in other words, don't crowd the course and force a player out of bounds. If possible, try to avoid having any out of bounds. Paint marks on tree trunks do not provide a satisfactory definition of a boundary, because the line is determined at the ground, and

*USGA representatives at Pebble Beach in preparation for the 1972 U.S. Open.*





*Greenside bunkers should have a lip, about three or four inches high on the side facing the green.*

exposed tree roots and trunks are imprecise.

**Water hazards:** Small stakes or painted lines are used to define the margins of water hazards. Small stakes have the disadvantage of being attractive to small boys for use as boats to float down the stream. Painted lines are greatly to be preferred. Yellow paint or stakes are used for regular water hazards; red is used to define lateral water hazards. The sponsoring organization should supervise the defining of water hazards just as it should supervise all preparations relating to the Rules of Golf.

**Ground under repair** is usually defined by white lines—but we hope you will never need them.

**Obstructions**—artificial things—are amply covered in the Rules of Golf, but some tournaments must have a number of temporary immovable obstructions, such as concession stands, scoreboards, tents, and the like. Although such things should be placed where they are unlikely to interfere with play, it still is advisable to have a Local Rule allowing relief for the line of play—the USGA can provide the text of such a Local Rule.

**Cart paths** present a continuing problem, especially as the edges tend to break down readily. If relief is to be given from hard-surfaced cart paths, the edges must be clearly defined.

So much for the Rules aspect of course preparation.

Now, let's say that your course is ready for the start of the Championship, and as the first day of play arrives there is a tremendously important job to be done—the selection of

locations for tee markers and for holes in the putting greens. Obviously, the two elements are closely related, especially on par-3 holes. In setting tee markers, consideration obviously has to be given to factors such as the line of play—the presence or the absence of wind—whether the course is slow or running fast—how long the individual holes are to play—and so forth. Once upon a time it was thought that courses should be progressively lengthened as a tournament progressed, until at the end, the course played at its maximum distance. That is a long outmoded theory. The first round of a competition is just as important as the last—indeed, the first shot is just as important as the last—they all count in the score—and so the test should be a balanced one from day to day. This is an important function in setting tee markers.

One of the most intriguing topics is locating the holes in the putting greens. You'd be surprised at how many golfers have never seen a hole cut. They haven't a clue as to what happens in the mere act of changing cups, much less as to how hole locations are selected.

Jack Tuthill, the Tournament Director of the PGA Tournament Players Division, tells an amusing story about an experience he had. A tournament was being played at a course with flat, almost rectangular greens, with little character. A small crowd of spectators was standing around one of the greens when he and the hole-cutter came onto the green. Jack could tell that the spectators were waiting to see where the hole was to be cut. The green was almost square. Jack had a screw-driver in his hand. As he walked out toward the middle of the green, he tossed the screw-driver backwards over his shoulder and it stuck into the ground. Jack told the hole-cutter to do his stuff at that spot. And he heard one spectator say to another: "Is *THAT* the way they pick the holes?"

It is highly desirable to select the hole locations on the day of play. If they are picked or cut the day before, weather conditions may change overnight to the extent that the original selections may not be suitable. Moreover, strange things can be done by vandals overnight. The officials charged with hole selection should go around with the greenkeeper who does the hole-cutting. Any less attention may produce strange results. In one of the John G. Anderson Memorial Tournaments at Winged Foot, the night before the qualifying round the committee chairman gave the course superintendent a list of locations to be used the next morning such as: First hole—six from the left, five from the back. The word was passed to a hole-cutter who didn't understand golf. The result was that the measurements were made in feet, not yards. It was a strange qualifying round.

Well, here is how to pick hole locations, according to a recent USGA decision: Many factors affect selection of hole locations. The first and most important is good judgment in deciding what will give fair results. *Do not be tricky* in locating holes.

Following are specific points:

- Study the design of the hole as the architect intended it to be played. Know the length of the shot to the green and how it may be affected by the probable conditions for the day—that is, wind and other weather elements, condition of the turf from which the shot will be played, and holding quality of the green.

- There must be enough putting green surface between the hole and the front and the sides of the green to accommodate the required shot. For example, for a long iron or wood shot to the green, the hole should be located deeper in the green and farther from its sides than may be the case for a short pitch shot.

In any case, the USGA recommends that the hole be located at least five paces from any edge of the green. If a bunker is close to the edge, or if the ground slopes away from the edge, the distance may well be greater, especially if the shot is more than a pitch. Consideration should be given to fair opportunity for recovery after a reasonably good shot that just misses the green.

- An area two to three feet in radius around the hole should be in good condition without any steep slopes or, if possible, any changes in the degree of slope. In other words, the green in the holing-out area should be as nearly level as possible and of uniform grade, but it need not be exactly level. In no case should holes be located in tricky places, or on sharp slopes where a ball can gather speed. A player above the hole should be able to putt with a reasonable degree of boldness, and not purely defensively.

- Consider the condition of nearby turf, especially taking care to avoid old hole plugs which have not completely healed.

- Holes should be cut as nearly on the vertical as possible, not plumb with the contour of the green.

- There should be a balanced selection of hole locations for the entire course with respect to left, right, central, front and back positions. For example, beware too many left positions with resulting premium on drawn or hooked shots.

- For a competition played over several days, the course should be kept in balance daily as to degree of difficulty. In a stroke competition, the first hole of the first round is as important as the last hole of the last round, and so the course should not be set up appreciably

more difficult for any round—balanced treatment is the aim. An old concept of making the course progressively harder round after round is fallacious.

One form of balanced daily treatment is to select six quite difficult hole locations, six which are somewhat less difficult, and six which are of moderate difficulty.

- In early rounds, anticipate players' traffic patterns and avoid locating many holes whence walking across the green by many players could spoil good hole locations for later rounds.

- In match play, a hole location may, if necessary, be changed during a round provided the opponents in each match play the same location. In stroke play, Rule 36-4a requires that all competitors in a single round play with each hole cut in the same position. When 36 holes stroke play are played in one day, it is not customary for hole locations to be changed between rounds, but there is no Rule to prohibit. If they are changed, all competitors should be informed.

- The greenkeeper who cuts the holes should make sure that the Rules of Golf are observed, especially the requirements that the hole-liner not exceed 4¼ inches in outer diameter and that it be sunk at least one inch below the putting green surface (Definition 15).

- During practice days before a competition, it is advisable to locate holes in areas not likely to be used during play, preferably at the fronts and the backs of greens, bearing in mind the areas which will be impaired by foot traffic patterns.

Let me say just two things more:

First, the condition of the course is the most important element in a tournament, in the view of the players. A well-prepared course gives them the best opportunity to display their skill. It tends to reward good play, and thus helps to produce a good winner fairly. It is an excellent thing for the club, even long after the tournament has ended.

Second, be ready for the unexpected, for something unexpected is always sure to happen. I'm reminded of the minister who went to visit an elderly patient in a hospital. The old gentleman wasn't speaking—he was pretty sick—until, all of a sudden, he strained forward and tried to speak, but couldn't. The minister gave him a small pad of paper and a pencil, and the dear old soul wrote briefly on it—and then suddenly expired. The minister stuffed the pad back in his pocket, called a nurse and a doctor, and the needful things were done. A couple of hours later, the minister recalled that he had the old gentleman's note in his pocket. He took it out, and this is what it said: "You're standing on my oxygen tube."