

If It's Tuesday, This Must Be Ladies' Day

by JUDY BELL

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BACK IN THE EARLY 1900s, Victor Herbert wrote a song, "Every Day is Ladies' Day with Me." I think he had something different in mind from the topic, "If It's Tuesday, This Must Be Ladies' Day." I have golf in mind. He had romance.

I'd like to talk about women's golf in general with the focus mostly on areas involving every golf course superintendent: course preparation for Tuesday's play, as well as the play of women's championships. From my years with the USGA, I've been heavily involved in such preparation for our national championships, whether it was the Women's Open, or Girls' Junior, or our latest championship, the Women's Mid-Amateur.

Course preparation is as important for women's club events or women's regional competitions as it is for us at the national level, or for that matter for LPGA tournaments. It is easy to assume that what is sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose; that is, there's no difference between preparation for a men's or for a women's event. Wrong!

Let's have a look at the average woman who plays on Tuesday. Call her Mrs. A. She has a handicap of from 28 to 31 strokes. She hits her drive about 130 yards. Now her counterpart, Mr. B, has a handicap of 18 and drives the ball 200 yards, including roll. Two of Mrs. A's shots cover about 240 yards, while Mr. B will average 370 yards after two shots.

Next, a look at how Mrs. A plans to get around the course and what part of the game gives her the most difficulty. The obstacles defined for rating a golf course will give us some insight.

Water Hazards — To be honest, there is no number within our handicap system that reflects the effect of crossing water for the average woman player. At the same time, Mr. B has more problems with water along the side. The better the golfer, the more trouble the lateral hazard gives, and the less crossing a hazard gives.

Fairway — Most landing areas for the really good man player are tight, while

Mr. B generally has the widest landing area. Lots of times, because she is driving from forward tees, Mrs. A must play into the tightest landing area, sometimes only 20 yards wide, with bunkers on both sides. Now Mrs. A has a problem. Nevertheless, the woman player with a scratch handicap will usually play over the trouble.

Topography — Studies indicate women can handle topography better than men. The great minds can't figure out why. The members of the Women's Handicap Procedure Committee suggest this theory — "Have you ever teed off from ladies' tees? Women have learned to adjust."

Out of Bounds — Out of bounds is really less an obstacle for Mrs. A than for Mr. B, because Mrs. A doesn't hit it far enough to get into that kind of trouble.

Bunkers — They're less of an obstacle because, again, Mrs. A hits such a short ball. You must remember, Mrs. A can't reach most par 4s in two, so she is chipping or pitching to the green.

Green Target — Par 3s are killers for Mrs. A. Most of the others aren't, because she is coming in from such a short range. A 100-yard par 3 with water is one of the hardest holes on the course for Mrs. A. For the last few years on the day after the United States Women's Amateur, a group of women with various handicaps have played the course just as it was set up for the championship. The purpose of this exercise is to help the USGA Women's Handicap Procedure Committee know more about what is going on. Dean Knuth, USGA Director of Handicapping, interviewed each player after her round at the Rhode Island Country Club last summer. Flo Tiles was closest to the hole on the 130-yard 17th. Asked what club she used, she said, "I hit an easy driver."

Green Surface — Mrs. A can't handle quick surfaces. Firm surfaces affect the scratch player more, because Mrs. A is going to run the shot in anyway. The superintendent is in for it if the greens are fast and steeply contoured.



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Rough and Recoverability — Big problems! Severe rough around the greens really kills Mrs. A's score. She is going to waste enough shots getting to the green. Chipping out of the rough in the landing area doesn't bother her as much as tall stuff around the green.

Distance — This is the biggest obstacle for Mrs. A to overcome. Mr. B and his friends more often than not play from different tees, and that is exactly what needs to be done for the ladies. I'm 100 percent for two sets of tees for the everyday woman golfer. Rating teams are now rating from two sets of tees (forward and middle). The rating from the middle tee is useless for 98 percent of the women players. We are on the right track but the wrong tees!

Some golfers have more fun playing a course of 4,900 yards — I'm all for it. Flexibility is the key. We set up golf courses for championships based on the players' level of skill, so why won't that work for the everyday player? Think about it.

Architects and golf course superintendents can't impose their views on women golfers, but once the women make it clear a shorter course is desirable, I believe a new set of tees will appear in the design stage, and not as a make-shift afterthought. I'm not suggesting



(Top) The green looks good, but the rough's a little high and the hole location is a bit tight.

(Above) "Ladies' Day." It looks like "Them vs. Us."

separate tees when it isn't practical, but I am suggesting two sets of tee markers positioned around 4,900 and 5,700 yards for the ladies who play on Tuesday. Think of it. If women should play a course set up to 80 percent the size of the test for men, a 6,000-yard course for women is equivalent to 7,500 yards for men.

WHAT can you do to help Mrs. A have more fun playing golf?

Hole Locations — Nothing extreme, not too tight, either forward or rear. A nice flat surface around the cup is important. Can Mrs. A get to the hole with the length shot she has to play?

Landing Areas — As much width as possible.

Height of Rough — One inch to two inches at most. Actually, Mr. B would like that, too.

Tees — Who knows what the future might bring, even beagle tees. But for now we need at least four sets of tees on most holes to cover all golfers. And these should be level tees large enough to place both feet firmly between the markers!



There are some misconceptions among the ladies who play on Tuesday about you, the golf course superintendent. First, they think you bring out all the equipment you can get your hands on as soon as they arrive at the course. Second, they think that the first directive you learn in school is "to dig on Tuesday." The moral of these misconceptions — no digging, no surprises, and forget special projects on Tuesday.

What about women's championship play? Women's golf and its champions have changed a great deal through the years — in their dress, their levels of skill, and their numbers. The Women's Open course generally rates and plays three strokes harder. Ours is 78 and the men's is 75. In fairways hit, women average 67 percent and men 57 percent. Women are 60 percent for greens hit, men 55 percent. Women average 32.3 putts per round, and men average 30. And women's average putts are more than twice as long as men's. The cost of playing out of the rough was the same last year at The Olympic Club (U.S. Open) as at Plainfield Country Club (Women's Open). I can vouch that Olympic had six inches of rough in places and the Plainfield rough was two-and-a-half to three inches.

Yes, we are interested in the same playing factors being part of the examination, but the emphasis is different

for women. These factors are length, accuracy, touch, and ability to play a variety of shots. Some of the conditions we keep an eye on to make sure our test is fair are: height of rough, quickness and firmness of the putting surfaces, firmness and height of grass in other closely mown areas.

Length — It would be very easy to set up a golf course too big for women. A very long course wouldn't be fair, and would place too much emphasis on length. Tom Burton, superintendent from Sea Island, Georgia, where we will play the U.S. Senior Women's Championship, in September, will develop four new forward tees for this championship. He told me 35 percent of the golfers at Sea Island Club are women. Variety in length tests a player's ability to play a variety of shots. Ideally, we would ask a player to range from a 4-wood to a 9-iron on the par 4s at most women's championships.

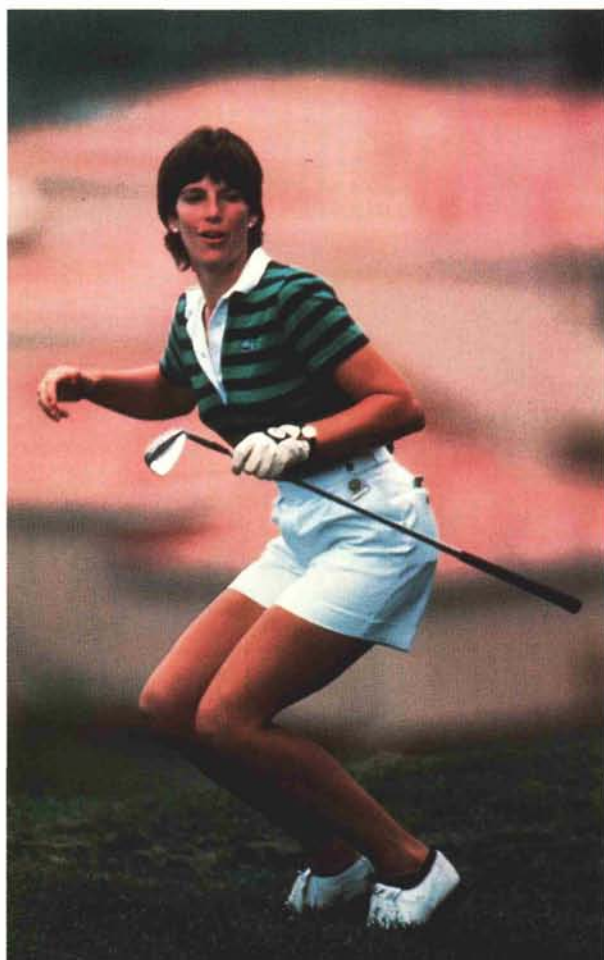
Accuracy — Just ask Merrill Frank, from Five Farms (Baltimore Country Club), site of this year's Women's Open. The width of fairways ranges from 39 yards to 25 yards. Generally, the shorter the hole, the more accurate we require the player to be.

Touch — This is a very important factor on the greens and around them. We are asking Merrill for a Stimpmeter reading of nine to nine-and-a-half feet, and I've got my fingers crossed on that

speed at Five Farms. Bob Randquist, at Southern Hills, taught me something last October during the first Women's Mid-Amateur Championship. From the superintendent's standpoint, it is easier to slow things down just before the championship than to speed them up at the last minute. Hard, firm greens are something the best women players in the world can't handle. It takes the skill out of the game for women.

Height of Rough — In general, we ask for an intermediate cut of one-and-a-half inches, with the primary rough at two-and-a-half inches. Because of the narrow fairways at Indianwood Golf and Country Club in Michigan, in 1989, we are asking for two-inch primary rough.

The USGA influences the setup preparation of all the USGA national championships, but it is the golf superintendent who makes it all happen on the national and local scenes. You greatly influence the enjoyment of the game on every level at your course, and no one knows the territory better than you. I personally think we couldn't be in better hands. You are professionals who work hard at what you do and from what I observe, yours is a continuing educational program. Just keep in mind that now one out of every four golfers is a woman. So in reality, you may soon be coming closer to Victor Herbert's song.



*(Opposite page)
Tuesday — a day for
serious digging.*

*(Above) Tuesday —
geyser day.*

(Far left) Ladies' golf.

*(Left) Prettier today
(Juli Inkster).*