



A spring assembly provides resiliency, allowing the rope to be manipulated without displacing posts.

TAMING UNRULY ROPES

A practical system that keeps both ropes and traffic in check.

by **JIM SKORULSKI**

I HAVE YET to meet a golf course superintendent or golfer who likes to see ropes, stakes, and signs on the golf course, and yet these continue to be integral tools for traffic control. Ropes and stakes can detract from the golf course's natural beauty and interfere with maintenance operations and play. The ropes and stakes also require constant attention and can be dangerous! Properly placed cart paths and curbing, and the use of painted lines or marker posts can reduce the need for ropes in controlling traffic. However, it is likely that ropes and stakes will continue to be used as long as there are golfers.

Paul Pritchard, golf course superintendent, found himself growing more and more dissatisfied with the appearance and effectiveness of the ropes and staking used at Wiltwyck Country Club, in Kingston, New York. The

typical concerns with the ropes and stakes provided incentive for Mr. Pritchard and members of his staff to create a new roping system that is easier to maintain and more user friendly for the golfer.

The roping system they devised uses treated 4" x 4" wooden posts and a spring assembly that serves to maintain rope tension. The system is relatively simple and inexpensive to construct and has been well received by golfers and staff alike.

Post and Sleeve Assembly

The posts are created from pressure-treated wood cut to 18" lengths. The top of the post is shaped with a table saw at a 45° angle. A 1" hole is then drilled through the upper portion of the post, followed by a ¼" slit cut with a band saw. The slit is made to intersect with the upper side of the hole and

allows the rope to be easily removed or inserted into the post. Two 3" deck screws are inserted above the drill hole for added strength. A ¾" diameter hole, approximately 4" deep, is drilled into the bottom of the post to allow for the insertion of 13" x ¾" steel rebar that will anchor the post in a sleeve set in the ground. The completed post is dipped into a water-sealer product to protect it from the elements.

The sleeve is made from a 1" diameter pipe with a ¾" inner diameter, cut to a 9" length. Sleeves used to anchor end posts can be equipped with fins to provide greater stability. Old fairway slicing blades, welded directly to the sleeve, serve well for this purpose.

Spring Assembly

A ¾" diameter, 8" long, moderate-tension spring and a 7/16" flat washer are used for the assembly. Two ⅝" holes

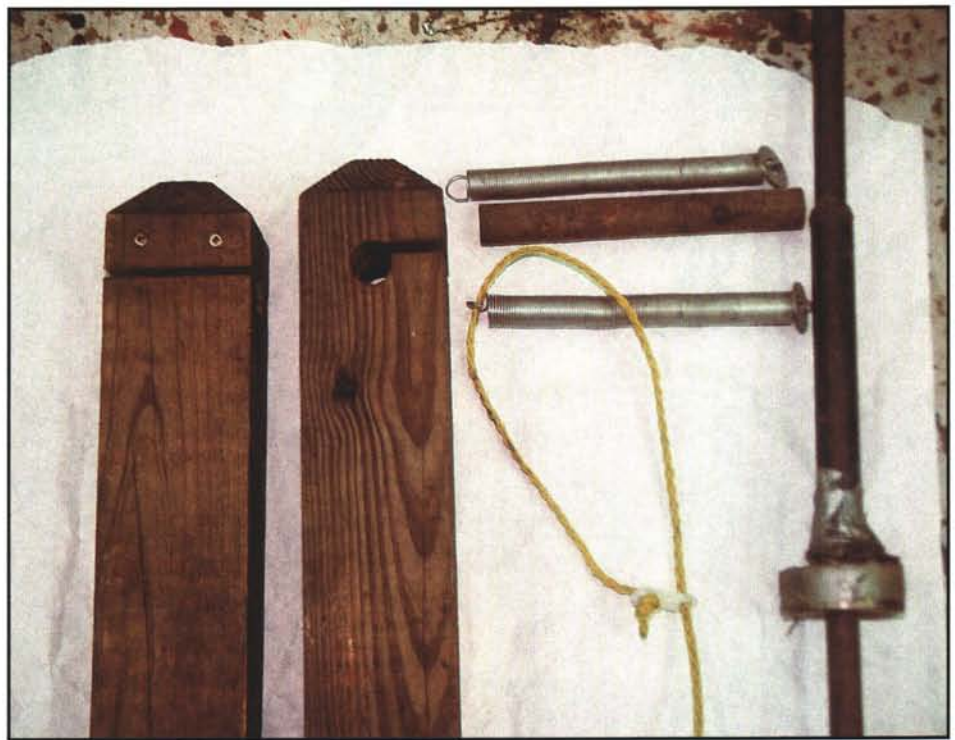
are drilled through the washer. The end of the spring is inserted through the drill holes and the attachment secured with solder. The washer holds the spring in place against the end posts.

Rope Tension Device/Driver Tool

The rope tension guide is simply a $\frac{3}{8}$ " $\times$ 2" $\times$ $\frac{3}{4}$ " piece of plastic with two $\frac{1}{4}$ " holes drilled $1\frac{1}{2}$ " apart. The tabs are fabricated from plastic packing material found in the maintenance shop. A driver tool is a necessity for setting the 1" metal sleeves level and at a uniform depth in the rocky soils found on the site. It consists of a 40" $\times$ $\frac{3}{4}$ " piece of solid metal bar, a $2\frac{1}{2}$ " $\times$ 1" thick round metal stock with a $\frac{3}{4}$ " inner diameter, and a 6-8" long 1" pipe with $\frac{3}{4}$ " inner diameter. Slide the round metal stock over the $\frac{3}{4}$ " solid bar and weld in place 9" from the bottom of the bar. The 1" pipe is positioned on the $\frac{3}{4}$ " solid bar above the metal stock to reinforce the driver.

Putting It All Together

The wooden posts are interchangeable. First, determine where the posts will be located and install the sleeves. Place the wooden posts into the sleeves. Place spring/washer assembly through the 1" hole in the end posts. Insert the rope through the spring and loop through the rope tension device. The rope can then be inserted into



The components of the rope system include (from left to right) wooden posts, spring assembly, metal sleeve, rope tension device, and driver tool.

the remaining posts and the tension adjusted accordingly. The springs allow the rope to stretch considerably before the posts are displaced or the rope breaks. This allows golfers to step on the ropes without disrupting the stakes. The posts and rope are collected in the

fall, and the posts are cleaned and dipped in a water-sealer product. The sleeves are left in the ground and marked with a $\frac{3}{4}$ " piece of garden hose so that they can be easily located in spring.

This roping system will help tame the unruly ropes, improving their appearance and reducing interference with play and maintenance. Give it a try if you still depend on rope for traffic control. What do you have to lose but never-ending frustration and a bitter distaste for rope?

JIM SKORULSKI is a Green Section agronomist who visits golf courses in northern New York and New England.



A view of the spring as it is attached to the end post, making the rope more resilient.

MATERIALS LIST

Post and Sleeve

- 4" $\times$ 4" $\times$ 18" treated wood post
- $\frac{3}{4}$ " $\times$ 13" steel rebar
- 1" $\times$ 9" pipe with $\frac{3}{4}$ " inner diameter

Spring Assembly

- $\frac{3}{4}$ " $\times$ 8" moderate-tension spring
- $\frac{7}{16}$ " flat washer

Driver Tool

- 40" $\times$ $\frac{3}{4}$ " steel bar
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter $\times$ 1" thick round metal stock with $\frac{3}{4}$ " inner diameter