

Green-Keeping Problems of Course Planning

There is a phase of golf-course planning which is so frequently overlooked that it may not be inappropriate to make it the subject of a brief article. We refer to the imperative necessity of keeping maintenance problems in mind in connection with the layout or plan of a course.

Too frequently we find a course on which a practically impossible problem in green-keeping is presented at some hole or green, which might have been obviated by giving more consideration to the subject when the course was laid out. We have in mind one course on which there are a number of draws or flat-bottomed ravines running east and west with ridges between them. The soil is extremely light and, as might be expected, years and years of washing rains have impoverished the ridges and enriched the draws. These draws are wide enough to make ideal fairways, and the ridges on the sides, with their very uneven lines, would provide beautiful rough and just the proper hazards to penalize an off-line shot. The draws instead of running in exactly straight lines east and west, twist and turn more or less, so that if fairways were placed in the draws they would call for placed shots and have just the irregularity of outline required to make desirable fairways. Instead of utilizing these draws for his holes and fairways, the architect deliberately ran his holes north and south *across the draws and ridges*, thus filling the course with blind shots, injecting the impoverished sand-ridges in the fairways, and forcing the location of greens and approaches on ridges. Instead of planning a course which could be constructed and maintained at a minimum cost, the architect created an impossible condition which can never be satisfactorily solved and which can only be put into tolerable condition by shocking outlays for construction and maintenance. Instead of providing fairways that would require little or no fertilization, he has provided some that will always be half good and half bad, and the bad half will always require exacting and expensive care.

We do not pretend to suggest that a better course architecturally could have been laid out along instead of across the draws; perhaps on paper and in theory it would not have been so good; but it is clear that had any practical green-keeper been consulted he would have immediately pointed out the impossibility of constructing and maintaining the course as laid out. There may have been some reasons for the layout, but none can be suggested that appeal to us as convincing. Perhaps the land had been bought and the architect was limited to that piece and could go no farther. If so, the man who bought the land without consulting both an architect and a green-keeper made the mistake. The cost of a little additional land would have been saved annually in expense of upkeep. A fee paid to a high-class green-keeper would have saved thousands and thousands of dollars.

How often we find greens placed in some smothering, ill-drained, ill-ventilated place in naturally toxic soil where the Lord himself would not attempt to grow grass! Such a green may be most attractive from the architect's and players' views; but how they both curse the green-keeper for his inability to grow grass! How the architect roars when the beautiful lines and features of the child of his brain are splashed with fungi

and blights! How unforgiving the player is when his putts slither off a greasy, slimy green! The poor greenkeeper, who has no voice in the layout, must live for years with an impossible condition; and good money must be spent year after year to keep in indifferent shape greens that might have been perfect if better located.

Boiled down, the point of this article is that the green-keeper, who must live with the course for years, should be consulted in its layout; and the architect should compromise his ideals for the practical; and, first and above all, neither the architect nor the green-keeper should be so strictly and rigidly limited as to available land as to compel them to do things they both know will be a source of dissatisfaction and expense for years.

Another point is, that money spent in advance in consulting one or more good green-keepers is quite as well spent as that paid to the architect. The better architects endeavor to be practical, but we know of none who would object to the helpful suggestions of a practical green-keeper or who would not modify plans to obviate a proper criticism.

What to do when such mistakes are made is another question; and it is believed, in most cases, that the cheapest and best way out will be to abandon the thing that is impracticable from a green-keeping point and start over, having the architect and green-keeper work out some compromise that will fairly well satisfy both. For instance, in the case of the course first mentioned, it would be clearly cheaper to abandon the course, call in the architect, and turn it around and place it where it can be maintained at a reasonable expense. It takes more courage to correct a mistake than to suffer with it for years; but nine times out of ten, immediate and courageous correction is the cheapest means.

District Green Sections

The Green Committee of the U. S. Golf Association feels that no more important step can be taken in furtherance of its purposes than the organization of district green sections in every center or city having three or more courses. No particular form of organization is required, but it is suggested that every club should be represented by the chairman of its greens, and such representatives should comprise the section. The actual management and conduct of the section should be taken charge of by a small committee, which may be known as the green committee of the district, and of course there should be a chairman and a secretary.

The district green committee through its officers should see to it that every club in the district is affiliated and that each one becomes a member of the Green Section of the U. S. Golf Association. Whenever any information of benefit to the clubs comes to the attention of any one it should be brought to the attention of the officers and communicated to the members. A meeting should be held say once a month on one of the courses in the district and it should be made the *duty* of every green-keeper to attend. It goes without saying that each club should be represented at every meeting by the chairman of its greens, by its green-keeper, and by such members of the green committee as find it possible to attend. The important consideration is to get together once a month. A green-keeper can serve his club and himself in no better way than by attending these meetings.