

Inexpensive Golf

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My friend Judge Francis M. Hamilton, of the Court of Appeals of the Cincinnati Circuit, who is a good judge (at times) but a sad golfer, in response to my inquiry about the cost of maintenance of the course at his home in Lebanon, Ohio, said, "Expensive maintenance of a golf course we find to be largely a matter of taste and management. We find we could spend larger sums of money, but the net result would add nothing to our pleasure in the use of the course."

This read so much like one of his decisions that it seemed desirable to find out if there was any truth in it. A similar inquiry addressed to friends at Hillsdale, Michigan, brought a comparable response. So I am able to exhibit the maintenance figures on two nine-hole courses that are kept up at low cost on a basis that satisfies the members.

The satisfaction of the members is the real test and it is pleasing to find two clubs where the members are not disturbed because the cost is low or some one else is spending more money. It gets back to the old proverb, "Better a dinner of herbs than a lot of bull."

In 1920 it cost \$1,384 to maintain the Hillsdale course. In 1921 the cost was a little less than \$1,800. The Lebanon course was kept up for \$1,375 in 1921, and the average cost is reported to be between \$1,200 and \$1,400 a year, depending on rainfall and other conditions.

At Hillsdale one man, who furnishes a horse also, is employed the year through for \$100 a month. One hundred eighty-four dollars covers extra labor.

At Lebanon the cost is summarized thus:

| | |
|----------------------------------|---------|
| Mowing fairways | \$ 525 |
| Mowing greens and weeding | 300 |
| Seed | 150 |
| Machinery replacements | 100 |
| Extra labor and incidentals..... | 300 |
| | \$1,375 |

If the members are satisfied and pleased, why is not this good maintenance?

At Lebanon there is no way of getting water to the greens; and to keep them in condition, redtop, bluegrass, and white clover seeds are sown frequently. The bluegrass stands the dry summer weather and the combination keeps the greens looking fairly well most of the time.

Those who think they cannot putt except on bent-grass greens may well listen to Judge Hamilton, who says that while the greens are slower by reason of the coarser grass, they are accurate and the players soon get accustomed to them.

It is estimated that it will cost \$450 to get water to the greens at Lebanon, but the advisability of the expenditure is doubted as it is argued that the frequent application of water to the relatively coarse grasses on these greens will only result in making them coarser.

At Hillsdale greens are watered by means of a gasoline engine and

pump mounted on wheels, the water being taken from four wells which were sunk for the purpose. The engine and pump outfit cost \$123.13, and the wells cost \$301.13, from which it can be seen that the estimate of \$450 for a water system at Lebanon was not far off.

Inverness is just completing a new piping system at a cost of about \$12,500, indicating that there is a rather wide range of investment for irrigation.

The story of the organization and construction of these two courses is very interesting and tends to prove Judge Hamilton's point that a golf course can be made and maintained at a very small cost and that enormous expenditures for golf courses are due to nothing more or less than extravagance and fastidiousness. The people of any town of from two thousand people up can have a satisfactory golf course if they will go at it sensibly.

The land at Lebanon, the gift of Mr. W. E. Harman, of New York, afforded a splendid area for the golf course, with natural instead of artificial hazards. The course was built with the proceeds of ten dollars a year dues from twenty-five members and \$500 of borrowed money. The purchase of a horse-drawn fairway mower, a hand-mower, and a roller used up the \$500. So it can be seen that the construction showed few attractions for the so-called "expert" and called for nothing but a little common sense.

Two hundred and fifty dollars in dues covered the first and second years' expenses on six holes. In the third year the nine hole course was finished by plowing, removing stones, surfacing, building greens and the like at a cost of something like \$400.

There is now a membership of ninety, and the dues are still \$10. Any deficits are made up by a few contributions of about \$50 each.

What expert would have advised sowing bluegrass in strips eight to ten feet apart, figuring on the natural spread of the grass, as was done at Lebanon?

At Hillsdale the land cost \$3,000, but the course was laid out, built, and maintained for the first year, including a locker house, for \$1,170. Much of the work of removing stones and building the course and house was done by the members who organized several "bees" for the purpose. Mr. Webster, who wrote a dictionary, defines a *bee* as a neighborly gathering to work for some one or for some joint concern.

There is quite a little difference between the club spirit that will get members out to remove stones and the sort that will neglect divots.

Hillsdale, from the green-committee point of view, has the misfortune to have a really serviceable and attractive club house that was put up in the last year or so, and instead of getting on with dues of \$10 or so, as at Lebanon, they have to pay \$15 or \$40, depending on the class of membership. As might be expected, fully two-thirds of the club's revenue goes into the club house instead of on the golf course; but, however the property of the club house may be considered, Hillsdale has a golf course that is giving pleasure and satisfaction to the members at a maintenance cost of less than \$1,800 a year.

It is not claimed for these courses that they compare favorably with the expensively maintained courses, but the figures show that costly maintenance is not essential to real satisfaction and enjoyment of the game.