

Advice to Players

The author of "The Golfer's Rain Jacket" is evidently a golfer. There is much feeling embodied in his set of "Don't's." We pass along his advice.

"Don't move, talk, whistle, cough, sneeze, groan, grunt or even think loud—while a stroke is being played.

"Don't stand close to, in front of, behind or cast shadows across the player's line—while he is addressing a 'putt.' If the ball 'rims' the cup it then becomes your duty to restrain the player from any acts of violence.

"Don't play from a tee until the party in front have all played their second strokes, replaced their divots, relighted their pipes, concluded their golf stories, collected their caddies, selected their next clubs—and are well out of range.

"Don't play up to a putting green until the party in front have all holed out, practiced their missed putts, replaced the flag, fixed up the score cards, exchanged the putters for drivers—and all players and caddies are off the green.

"Don't be vexed if the players in front can't find their lost ball. Should they, eventually, signal you to 'play through' (and then play along with you), show your appreciation by giving each of them a cigar. The 'Flor de Killdead' is made for this purpose, and is sold by all fireworks stores.

"Don't fail to fill up and to smooth over neatly all footprints in the bunker sand. If you carry in your bag a small garden rake, a bricklayer's trowel and a wire broom, the operation will require only about half an hour.

"Don't neglect immediately and properly to replace the turf. A small sprinkling can, a canteen of water, an ordinary rolling pin, a package of grass seeds and one pound of dehydrated ostrich manure, added to your equipment, will reduce this obligation to a mere pleasure!"

Principles in Golf Architecture

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Golf is a sport, not a game; and this distinction is fundamental if one is to attain a correct perspective of it, for both are endowed with principles of a different character. A game is enclosed in principles, strictly speaking, because everything about it is man-made. He levels the ground according to a predetermined scheme, marks it off, and superimposes a logical idea upon it. He is in every way master of the situation, and, to him, the surface of the earth is merely one of the exact tools of the pastime he creates.

But are we in a like situation when we deal with golf? Even if the last thing we would think of doing would be to level the ground, are we not, by setting up positive principles as to the manner in which it should be employed, applying a mental level which must tend to inhibit the imagination and accustom the golfer to expect certain things that must eventually establish themselves as prejudices?

Prejudices are like diseases; they creep upon us unknown, and, once established, few are able to be rid of them. And set principles upon golf architecture must finally turn into prejudices. This is exemplified today by the divergence of opinion over the Alps and Redan types of holes. To the golfers of the past, who knew only links-land golf, who were unsophisticated to any definite ideas upon golf architecture, these holes were

great holes. But it seems to me—and I have heard the arguments—that those who today condemn these holes as infamous, have not approached them in innocence, but have looked upon them through a matrix of certain principles associated with prevalent ideas of good architecture.

Games are civilized institutions as subject to change as are fashions in dress; but golf is nature, a beautiful nude, capable of giving an infinite variety of impressions according to the mind of the beholder. She is a three-dimensioned being, subject to the vagaries of ever-changing light; but once we have drawn her with the pencil-point of principles, we have reduced her to two dimensions, and we no longer behold her, but an orderly image of her mirrored upon the quiet waters of our mind. And perhaps in the drawing of her, we will have added something of our own, draping her figure becomingly with clothes of logic. We see this in the Rules of Golf, many of which are mere drapery upon the law of golf that the ball must be played as it lies, because we are not courageous enough to accept the law in its nakedness.

Were the playing of golf still confined to its natural habitat, this would never have taken place; but when courses came to be constructed out of inhospitable material, a modification of the golf of links-land and commons had to be made. Golf was going upon a journey into strange lands. It was no longer a matter of breathing the spirit of golf upon ground ready for such an awakening; on the contrary, its new and unfamiliar home had to be prepared to evoke this spirit. But spirit is a very intangible thing and is apt to evanesce when the object that gives it being comes to be analyzed. The new synthesis is apt to be corroded by logical thought. And, in the case of golf, the result of this process was its enclosure in a straight-jacket of rational ideas and theories, as much akin to true golf as cut hedges, mannered walks and formal beds of flowers are akin to a natural landscape.

Thus was born the Penal School of golf architecture; and its thought persists today. It is pervaded with the puritanical idea that all error is a sin. It is not satisfied that it has accomplished its high purpose until it has dug a pit for every transgression from the consecrated path it has provided from the tee. It revels in that type of smartness which is ever discovering subtle errors in the conversation of others. Like a true Puritan, it thinks of life in terms of a beneficent future, and of unfettered joy as a positive sin.

And that is about as much pleasure as there is to be had out of golf courses planned in this churchly manner. Bunkers are provided to punish every conceivable indiscretion of the player, and the intervening ground is, in consequence, a boresome expanse affording only the negative satisfaction of reflecting upon one's virtue. Golf becomes a contest concerned only with the avoidance of sin, and the way to the hole a prim path guarded on either side by the devil. The golfer, under the stress of this searching confessional, gradually succumbs to the habit of counting his beads, thinking to attain heaven when he is able to count no more than the par of the course.

And it follows that this Penal School is not satisfied that nature can accomplish its high tasks. Concerned only with human error, joying in the

punishment thereof, nature must be bent and torn asunder until it ceases to exist, and in place of it the hand of man is seen on every side. And thus those who belong to this school invent irrelevant and expensive ideas, because the ground that is to receive them is a secondary consideration.

But thankfully there were a few who took up golf architecture who had an instinctive love of nature, who never thought they were imbibing true golf unless it had the salty bouquet of sea breezes and their steps felt the spring of turf under foot as they wandered over that newborn, undulating, tumbling ground thrown up by the sea and modeled by the wind and rain of ages. They perceived that the holes they played at had no evident design, the greens having been placed where the grass grew most delicately; and these were, in numerous instances, table-lands, some so small in area that the ball could only be laid near the cup by a skillfully played run-shot. And they saw that the wind had eaten into the turf, or else the grass had not yet conquered the sand, and they understood what a bunker was. And in the company of a friendly rival they contested against the obvious difficulties and hidden mysteries of this land of enchantment; their worldly duties fell from them; the manners of the counting-house were forgotten; and they played "the like," "the odd," "one off two," and so forth, to the strokes of their opponent. Golf to them was not only a recreation involving an exercise of skill, but in links-land—that is, old sand dunes—they found a place of rest from the works of man.

Whereas the Penal School thought that it could sublimate golf by the imposition of rational ideas upon it, these lovers of nature were actuated to an evaluation of golf under a stimulus of emotion. It was evident that if they were to understand golf, it could only come from an analysis of that which excited pleasure. Thought, then, became the handmaiden of feeling; and in their searching examination to disclose its inherent qualities, they found that nature lay at the bottom of everything. They came to realize that in accepting nature as their playground, they were mastered by her, and to the extent they humbly admitted her supremacy, to that extent would they possess golf intimately. Thus the message their art was to communicate was revealed to them, and the Natural School of golf architecture was born.

This school has principles, but the ideas back of them are like flowers whose roots of perception lie in nature, whereas the Penal School is ever troweling the ground to bed its hothouse plants.

The limitless possibilities of this newer school are still in course of realization. It has not yet altogether broken from that stillborn inventive genius of the Penal School. To give oneself up entirely to nature requires a self-abnegation that few are blessed with. Such principles as equity, fair play, a just reward to skill, principles that govern in games, are continually obtruding. They undoubtedly have their proper place in golf, but as they are not to be found in nature, it behooves us to be very chary in marrying these ideas to her, that our offspring will not prove to be mongrels.

To perceive golf intimately we must do what the artist endeavors to do; that is, to regain the innocence of the eye. We must not allow our perception to be warped by accepted ideas, for golf is nature just as much

as the landscape the artist paints. If he approached his work with the prevalent idea that foliage in general, and grass in particular, was green, he would never see the true colors of nature at all. Nevertheless, if he is a true artist, he will not be satisfied to paint the reality of a scene before him, but will endeavor to express some idea of how it affects him, some mood of it, and feel himself at liberty to recombine its parts, to compose it in such an harmony that his idea will arise out of it as a chord of music. And yet with all the liberty he takes, his finished work must be a true representation of nature. In this respect, he is tied hard and fast. Thus limited, and yet not limited, does his fantasy hover over nature, and through his work we are given to see the world with new eyes.

And I conceive that the golf architect must approach his work in the same spirit. He, however, is limited in his juggling of the parts of nature. His art is one of interpretation. But his power to interpret correctly must be limited if he approaches his work with preconceived ideas that this or that *must* be. He immediately becomes argumentative, and a battle ensues, and to battle nature is costly.

Undoubtedly there should be present in his mind certain desirable and commendable features that he should endeavor to interpret from the ground; but these should not be in the shape of rigid formulas, but be present in the consciousness as a restraining influence. They should never obtrude to the extent of stifling the emotion which any bit of ground is capable of exciting by itself. That is, he should not endeavor to perceive his ideas in it, but should allow it to generate ideas for him.

And it is this very lack of feeling that so much golf architecture gives evidence of and that explains why many of our courses are laid out in a mechanical and cut-and-dried fashion. It seems dangerous, then, to put that which is desirable and commendable in the form of categorical principles. The moment this is done these things are elevated to the regions of the mind—are put on ice, as it were. What we want is to keep our ideas shot through with feeling, and not to take them from cold storage and plant them where we will, without any regard to their appropriateness. We must first feel a situation. We shall never have to worry ourselves about our ideas; the right one will pop up and marry itself to the situation.

And yet a tendency to standardize is inevitable. At one time courses ranged all the way from five to twenty-two holes. Eighteen holes is now the accepted number, and considering the cost of land, and often an inadequate acreage, it is, in most cases, very difficult to design eighteen good holes. And even here standardization has crept in, and it is now incumbent upon the architect to give a certain variety in the length of holes.

In all standardization, danger lies in a general hardening toward the center. This is exemplified by the evolution of thought upon the fundamental law of golf that the ball must be played however it lies. This law is as pertinent to Golf Architecture as it is to the Rules of Golf. So obvious was it, that it does not appear in the Rules until 1857.

If we now examine it carefully, reflect deeply upon it, we must perceive that its universal application imposes a penalty upon every stroke. This penalty may be either in the lie itself, the stance required to play the ball, or in its relative position to the hole.

If we can dispense with looking at golf through the binoculars of the rules, the lenses of which are divided by hair-splitting dialectics, we must see that a ball lying upon sand is in no way to be differentiated from a ball lying upon the fairgreen or in the rough. The edict that the club shall not be soled when the ball lies upon sand, merely interprets the law, in that an impression of the club-head made upon the sand changes the lie of the ball. This practice the law would enjoin upon the player whether the lawgiver had thought to state it in the Rules of Golf or not. Nevertheless, this redundant edict, necessary to inform the ignorant, has created a sharp distinction between ground defined as hazard and ground upon which one is permitted to sole one's club; and the latter we have divided into three parts, fairgreen, putting green and rough. With this convenient parcel of tricks in our hand, we are tempted to establish principles governing each, forgetting that the law knows no such distinctions, all being subject to its universal governance.

But having separated a bunker as a thing apart from the other three divisions, we say that it must be a chastener, a guide, cut in such a fashion this year, in another fashion the next, and the bed of it be raked. The rough must be just so long, the fairgreen just so short, and the green itself must be cocked at a proper angle; and thus we brew the law into a potion acceptable to the palate of our ideas. We no longer play the ball as it lies, but as we make it lie. Natural golf upon links-land knew nothing of this.

In constructing artificial courses it is evident that we have to prepare the ground upon which the ball is to lie; but the moment we dogmatically lay down that the ball must lie this way or that in our various arbitrary divisions according to some preconceived formula that we have established for each, we have placed a corroding hand upon the law of golf. It is for us to interpret the law of golf according to the peculiarities of every situation; and the demands of each, if we have seeing eyes, will manifest themselves. And if the golf architect is an artist, he will be guided by the particular topographical formation of the ground which he has to contend with, and his work will be stamped with success if all his modifications of it seem the result of natural forces.

What I have endeavored to convey is that golf architecture is not amenable to a yard-stick. It is not that we can dispense with certain desirable and commendable features; but if we make of these rigid principles we must rob golf of that variety, uncertainty and mystery which is its true nature. A golf course might be laid out according to the ten commandments of Golf Architecture, and yet afford little pleasure. And the pleasure which a course excites is, after all, the final test.

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