

The Architect's Responsibility and the Club's Responsibility

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The writer of an article under the title "The Need of Criticism in Golf Architecture" in THE BULLETIN of January 25, 1923, has opened a large field for discussion. As a matter of fact, it is doubtful if that field can ever be exhausted. As long as there will be a game of golf played, so long will there be many opinions on the architecture of golf courses. However, the fundamental principles of art have been and always will be the same, no matter whether they refer to a golf course, an edifice of stone, or a canvas.

True art as far as a golf course is concerned will be in strict harmony with the natural conditions of the estate to be developed. The success achieved depends entirely on the ability of the architect. However, no two propositions are alike, and consequently every golf course should have its own particular features which may easily be destroyed if any attempt is made to introduce imitations of foreign achievements.

The criticism of the architecture of any new golf course becomes the duty of the responsible committee specially appointed by the club concerned. The architect supplies the plans, with detailed specifications of the proposed construction; the appointed committee should go into all details, and these must be satisfactorily explained by the architect in case of disagreement and must be settled to the satisfaction of the golf club's committee. As a matter of fact, the construction can not commence before the plans and specifications have been approved by the committee. An architect is engaged to insure a satisfactory result; and such a result is doubtful, no matter how able the architect is, without the criticism and the cooperation of the special committee.

However, to be thoroughly successful with a golf course proposition, it becomes essential that the club undertaking the development of the course should realize to the full its financial responsibility in constructing a first-class course. A good architect can always supply an approximate estimate of the cost, but the plans should be prepared according to the financial ability of the club.

Large sums are involved in constructing and establishing golf courses. It is beyond my comprehension that clubs and committees should in many instances undertake such work without expert management. In such cases it is little wonder that criticism comes forward freely after the job is completed. Of course such criticism is in most cases resented, and it causes a great deal of feeling. Such courses prove to be very costly in the end, and without attaining that excellence which is so much appreciated.

An architect with perhaps thirty to forty years of experience does not fear just criticism, nor is he in doubt of success, if his work from the very beginning is carried out in conformity with his plans.

The same principles apply to the maintenance of golf courses. The difficulty of obtaining thorough, reliable, and competent greenkeepers will make it advisable to have every golf course under the supreme supervision

of an expert horticultural engineer, when such a man is available. With such service the clubs would secure not only economy but also thoroughly efficient treatment and management of their estates.

The BULLETIN of the Green Section of the United States Golf Association no doubt is a very great help to green committees and greenkeepers provided the information contained therein is applied intelligently. However, the difficulty remains of how, where, and when to apply the various experiences successfully. Local, climatic, and other conditions must always be taken into account. Unless these are considered, methods of doubtful benefit are employed. Few country clubs have the financial resources to enable them to experiment as much as is desirable.

There are men with lifelong experience who devote themselves specially to golf course interests. With the services of such men a great deal of unnecessary expense may be avoided and in most cases a far more successful golf course will be the result. The maintenance of a golf course is at the best a costly proposition; it becomes prohibitive if carelessly or inefficiently handled, and of course the aim of every club is to steer clear of ruin.

Sand Greens on a Sawdust Base

About two years ago it was reported to the Green Section that a sand green made on a sawdust base would provide a resiliency so that balls could be pitched to the green. The plan included a base of sawdust six or eight inches deep, well tamped, then covered with soil, and finally covered with sand. The first sand green of this kind was built on the course of the Ridgewood Country Club, Columbia, S. C., and a second one at Pinehurst, N. C. Mr. Richard S. Tufts reports on his results at Pinehurst as follows:

"I have just returned from Columbia and am glad to submit a report on the experience they have had there with their sawdust greens, and also on our own experience.

"I do not believe that these greens have worked out satisfactorily in either case. The main objection to them seems to be excessive maintenance. At Columbia they have been using too much sand and too little soil on top of the sawdust, with the result that the sawdust works up through the sand, making the putting very uneven. They have used from one-half inch to one inch of sand, which is too much, as heel-marks are always left in such an amount of sand.

"Our own experience with these greens has been a little more satisfactory. We used about 2 inches of loam as top-dressing on top of the eight inches of sawdust on one-half of the green, and about 3 inches on the other half of the green. The half with the thicker top-dressing became too stiff and a ball landing on the green did not receive the deadening effect of the sawdust beneath. The other half of the green has worked out satisfactorily, although we find that the maintenance is about twice what it is with the sand-clay greens.

"The main objection to these greens is that it is impossible to get the surface flat, as it is always slightly rolling and therefore not quite true to putt on. Furthermore, in order to use these greens it would be necessary for us to double the maintenance force that we have in use on the courses, and even then they would not putt as true as our sand greens. We therefore do not consider that it is advisable to replace our sand greens with the sawdust, even though their action can be made satisfactory."