

OUR GREEN COMMITTEE PAGE

THERE are good green committees and bad green committees. The best are those that take most advice. That is the reason for holding a symposium here every month for the exchange of ideas and the collation of facts about green keeping and golf architecture. The finest maker of courses in the world runs out of ideas from time to time; and the most indifferent golfer may contribute something of value if he has only imagination enough to plan one good hole. So the opportunity is here offered for green committee and private golfer, friend and foe, artist and critic to meet on neutral territory and argue matters out

We have said there are good green committees. But we make the admission mainly for the sake of argument. By far the best work in this or any other country has not been done by committees but by dictators. Witness Mr. Herbert Leeds at Myopia, Mr. C. B. Macdonald at the National, and Mr. Hugh Wilson at the Merion Cricket Club. These dictators, however, have not been averse to taking advice. In fact they have taken advice from everywhere, but they themselves have done the sifting. They have studied green keeping and course construction as it was never studied before. And they have given the benefit of their studies to the world at large. Seven years ago, when the National Golf Links was being laid out the ignorance of green committees was beyond all belief. For example no one (except perhaps Mr. Herbert Leeds at Myopia and Mr. Herbert Windeler at Brookline) had the remotest idea what sort of seed should be sown on a putting green. The most essential part of a green committee's duty was fulfilled in the most haphazard fashion by buying whatever the seed merchant offered. The putting green "mixtures" of those days included every sort of seed from fine fescue to rank meadowgrass. The seedsman evidently went on the principle that if he put in a little of everything something was sure to come up. And something always did come up; but it was generally the rankest grass of the lot which entirely ruined all chances of getting a real putting green. When the National greens were first seeded a mixture of that sort was selected. At the end of a year's time the greens resembled cabbage patches. What grass they contained grew in thick tufts with bare spaces between. Most of them had to be made all over again. Those that were not ploughed up had bad grass in them for several years afterward. The course was thrown back eighteen months during which time a thorough study was made of the best grasses for use on putting greens. Now the formula is exact and simple. A green can be seeded in August with the firm assurance that it will be played over by the first of June next

year. And the same formula holds good for any climate in the United States at least as far South as White Sulphur Springs. So much change has come about in seven years through experiment and research along scientific lines. For green keeping is becoming almost an exact science.

And yet hundreds of golf clubs are coming into existence whose organizers are without any knowledge of all of this science. And the knowledge is hard to acquire for it is not written in any one book. And it is amazing how well-to-do communities will embark on a golfing enterprise without any real understanding of what they are doing. A new eighteen-hole golf course with golf club attached cannot conceivably cost less than one hundred thousand dollars under the most favorable circumstances if it is to be a real golf course. Most golf clubs represent an investment of far more than that. Can you imagine sane men in any other sphere of life being willing to invest one or two or three hundred thousand dollars in an enterprise without possessing any expert knowledge of the business they are embarking upon? It is inconceivable. Yet in the golfing world this happens all the time. A golf professional who because he is skilled in hitting a ball with a club is supposed to have also the qualifications of an agricultural expert and a landscape architect is called in to lay out the course and give advice to the green committee. The result is nearly always a succession of mistakes which it takes years and large sums of money to correct. It would be just as sensible to hire a golf professional to build a cathedral.

The problems before green committees are ever increasing; but the most important of them come at the very beginning. The organizers of a golf club who go ahead without getting real expert advice, however costly it may be, are simply laying up stores of misfortunes for themselves. Many would-be golf clubs purchase property and then proceed to lay out a golf course. That is the first great blunder. It is positively criminal to buy land for a golf club in the neighborhood of any great city until the nature of the soil and the features of the landscape have been examined by someone who knows what the requirements are. In the second place it is suicidal to begin work of any sort until the land once chosen has been submitted to the most careful examination with a view to getting the utmost advantage out of the natural features. A course once laid out in the wrong way can only be corrected at great expense. For this part of the work an expert who is also blessed with imagination is essential. Sometimes the natural features are so well defined that the course lays itself out. The main outlines of the National were obvious at the first glance (pro-

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vided one knew what he was aiming at), but the details took months of study. Very few changes have been made from the beginning; yet even there changes might have been avoided. The ninth green was moved on twice, and the eighth was changed once. In both these cases the new greens required a good deal of grading and that is probably the reason why the easier way was adopted in the beginning. But it pays to be thorough from the start.

There is no excuse now for any new golf club making the mistakes which were sure to be made ten years ago. From Long Island to St. Louis there are courses which bear the imprint of Mr. C. B. Macdonald and the National. And anyone interested in laying out a new course can surely afford a journey to the National where he can get ocular demonstration of what should be done. Then there are a number of golf courses dotted about the country such as that of the Old Elm Tree Club near Chicago and the Detroit Country Club. They have not, perhaps, quite the variety and boldness of the courses inspired by the National; but they are very good, and they also form living text books of the agricultural side of course making. The chief rules are gradually getting to be stereotyped among the experts; but they are not written down anywhere. And there will always be wide scope for improvement and for imagination. For example it is only written the last three years that the wisest green committees are beginning to realize the necessity of watering the fair green in summer. The initial expense of the water plant is amply covered by the annual saving of good turf. We are indeed in a new era of course making and course keeping; but there is still much to be done that is new; and the results of experience are not tabulated. That is why a forum in *GOLF ILLUSTRATED* for the ventilating of ideas may be made a most valuable asset to the green keeper; and for that reason we welcome any enquiries and any information that may come to us; so that this department may become a circulating medium of ideas.

THE NATURAL CONSTRUCTION OF BUNKERS

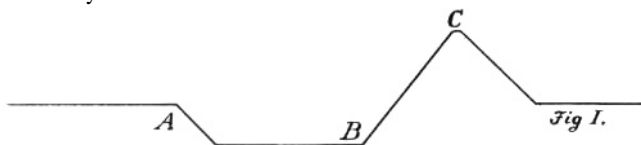
IN the laying out and building of a golf course there are three points of major importance. These are:—First, that the distances should be good; second, that the hazards should be well placed; third, that the hazards should be so constructed as to answer the requirements of their location and should look so natural that they do not detract from the appearance of the landscape.

In this branch of golf course architecture there has been a wonderful improvement within the last few years.

Thirty years ago the game was played on only a few courses, most of which were laid out among the sand-dunes along the sea coast of England and Scotland. Doubtless the hazards were there first, just as nature or accident had made them and the courses were laid out to take advantage of these hazards.

About that time the game suddenly developed a widespread popularity in England which in the course of a few years spread to the United States. As a result it became necessary to develop courses wherever a more or less suitable piece of land could be found in close proximity to a center of population. In a great majority of cases the land was a stiff clay with very poor drainage facilities and it is to land of this character that my remarks will chiefly refer.

Practically all of the courses built twenty years ago were alike in two respects. The greens were made perfectly flat and the hazards were of only one type. At certain intervals a series of intrenchments were made which looked exactly like the pits in which the Scotch farmers store their root crops in winter. A cross-section through a large percentage of the hazards built in those days would look like this.



An excavation a foot or more deep was made, the soil was piled up to form a regular mound, the mound was sodded and the trench covered with a few inches of sand. The resulting hazard was anything but good looking.

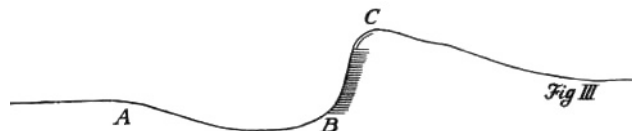
To the man who could play the game it presented no difficulty to speak of and when the rubber cored ball came into use it practically lost its effectiveness as a ball traveling with any force at all would hit the face B-C and go right on over.

To remedy this defect the faces were built by laying strips of sod on top of each other just as a brick wall is built. This took care of the trouble from the point of utility and at just about the same time it began to be generally seen that there was no particular need for the steep back slope and the first great step in advance had been made. Our cross-section developed into this.



Looking back from the green all that can be seen is a slight rise in the ground. The grass can be cut along with the fair-green and the matter of taking care of the back slope has been eliminated.

The next development was the idea that there was no particular need for having the ball drop from the fair-green to the point A. It might just as well run straight in. This changed our cross-section to the following.



Now it will be noted that in Figure I the angle ABC is 135 degrees. In Figure II it is about 120 degrees, while in Figure III it is almost a right angle. In our latest development the chance of a ball running through has been practically eliminated. Any man who plays at all well can play over and the poorer player can without any difficulty play back. We have therefore arrived at the desirable result that any player can get out in one stroke and the penalty in addition depends altogether on the players' skill. This of course is in addition to the fact that we have done away with the most unsightly feature of the hazard.

All of the foregoing is written only from the point of view of the cross-section which undoubtedly is the most important one. But before our hazard attains the desired result of looking natural it must be in good taste looked at from all sides.

The most important points to remember are that nature does not make straight lines and that all attempt at symmetry must be scrupulously avoided. Make the line on the side nearest the green irregular and religiously avoid having the line on the opposite side follow the same irregularities.

Get a few pounds of plastiscene or of the modeling clay that is sold for use in kindergartens. Spread it out on a flat board and roughly shape it to show the conformation of the piece of ground on which you propose to build your hazard.

On this proceed to work out your problem. Your pocket-knife and your thumb are the only tools you need. Being able to look at your work from all sides and also from above it should be not at all difficult to produce a result that has everything to recommend it.

Most hazards look unnatural because it is quite easy to trace the limits within which the work of their construction was done. If your clay model is well designed it will be very difficult to say just where the old surface ends and the new one begins.

If such is the case you may be sure that you have designed something that is going to look as though it belonged just where it is, and you can proceed to duplicate it on the course with absolute confidence.

Robert White