



MAKE THE PUNISHMENT FIT THE CRIME AND HAVE A PERFECT PASTIME

Is the gist of the author's criticism of the excessive penalty most short holes carry for the "dub." The eighteenth at the Wilshire Country Club, Los Angeles, Cal., scene of the recent Los Angeles Open, holds trouble for the timid

Penalties

By B. C. STEVENSON

GOLF in the matter of its penalties is still practically in the Dark Ages. In ancient times a man was hung just as dead for stealing a ham as he was for committing a murder, and the golf ball that fails to carry a water hazard, even by inches only, is just as unplayable and receives the same penalty as the one that drops in the middle of the pool. This may not be just, but no way has been discovered yet to make it so. If some Lord High Executioner could devise a way to "make the punishment fit the crime" we would have the perfect pastime.

Failure of the standard golf course to meet the composite requirements of its players is more conspicuous in its short holes than in any of its others. These are the trouble makers, and the ones from which poor and medium players derive the least satisfaction. To begin with, the places selected for them are often over some-awful natural difficulty, with an unplayable ball as the probable penalty for any serious mistake, and then by means of sand traps about the green trouble is multiplied until there is little chance for any-

one who cannot play a perfect shot to get on the green from the tee.

The reason for demanding a more accurate shot on these holes—which is essentially an approach shot—is presumably based on the fact that a tee shot gives a perfect stance and lie, and that it is always from the same distance or thereabout, while approach shots to other greens are made from a variety of distances and difficulties dependant upon the previous shot of the player.

player.

This is not good logic if the average players are taken into consideration because, although the short holes are always approached from the same place, the distance to the green, measured by the clubs necessary for them to reach it, is as varied as the approach shot to any green on the course. The long player who by a bad drive on a two-shot hole has left himself a brassie shot or the like for the green is usually given a rather open approach to recover, while the player who has to use a similar club from the tee of a short hole is confronted with ravines, sand traps, or lakes. This would



A 145-YARD PITCH WITH HIGH-SCORE POSSIBILITIES

This is the 16th at the Columbia Country Club, Chevy Chase, Maryland, where being a few yards short of the green is likely to make the score and temperature run up sympathetically

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seem like furnishing relief for a faulty player, while one who has committed no error other than that of lack of strength or experience is confronted with severe penalties.

There is no doubt that difficult hazards are thrill makers when properly negotiated, but I believe their value as such, even for players of a high class, is over estimated—particularly hazards about the green. An approach shot is always interesting, whether from a fairway or from a tee; to lay a ball close to the cup by the method intended is thrilling regardless of the presence or absence of hazards. Furthermore, hazards about the green, when they are serious, may even be detrimental to the interest of the game in an indirect way. At this stage of play there is such a difference in the value of a ball on the green and one in a sand trap or water hazard that competitive interest in the hole is apt to deteriorate before there is any putting done. It does not seem reasonable to have so conclusive a situation arise—and that perhaps from balls that were barely inches apart in their flight—when only one third of the shots recognized as standard for the hole has been played. It would be more reasonable for the drives or second shots on longer holes to be plagued by a multitude of hazards because then a player would have more opportunity to recover from the handicap of his error; and also there is the possibility that his opponent may not escape trouble on his own next shot or two.

I do not fail to appreciate the value of chance in golf—it is one of the greatest factors in creating the interest of the game and nothing should be done to reduce it—but am criticising only the *amount* of the forfeit placed on this short hole shot. For the good player the slightest miscalculation is apt to cost the hole itself, and for the mediocre one the shot is seldom the source of any joy. The thing that seems unfair in an unguarded green is that an opponent may fozzle his shot but still sometimes have his ball roll to as good a position as our own well played one. But why guard against such a performance so much more carefully at the short holes?

This situation, however, does not occur as often as we are inclined to think it does. Usually a poor shot leaves the player short, to one side, over the green, and with a worry-pay shot on his hands for the odd. For my way of thinking, this occasional luck due to the absence of serious hazards would be more than off in the other nine cases by the atenance of competitive interest in

The hole, as suggested above. The player who merely failed to get ing the green when he should have some so, whether from a bad shot, a miscalculation of inches, or ill luck, all has a fighting chance.

Although sand shots and those from her difficult hazards can be properly made, yet to lay the ball close enough to keep one's self still a factor in the match at this stage is the exception. I marvel at sand shots but I can not admire them. They are gross, they lack the charm of other well played shots.

Of course, a knowledge of sand shots should be a part of every one's game, and a fair percentage of errors should be punished in this way, but I think it is overdone on the short holes of many courses, to say the least. I have watched medium players during match play drive on these holes with hardly ever one of them on the green. Through their struggles with the sand and other hazards they often run up bigger scores than they do on the longer holes. (Continued on page 66)

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If the type or arrangement of the hazards were so changed as to let a larger group into the select circle, or even into a class worthy of honorable mention, as it were, the pleasures of the average players would be considerably stimulated without greatly interfering with the pleasure of the better players. This can be done by means of grassy basins, elevated edges of greens, and deflecting slopes in place of the over-worked sand and water hazards. By these and other mild interference pitch shots for the green can be demanded and at the same time fairly reasonable punishment be furnished for miscalculations and poor shots. The errant can be left with a possible recovery shot almost as delicate as the negotiation of a stymie, a recovery shot that can be tried for and not only hoped for. Neither would the short hole be made insipid thereby; instead, possibly it would be refined.
