

## THE CONSTITUENTS OF A GOOD COURSE

By THE EDITOR

There are several vitally-important factors which go to make a really first-class course.

Briefly, they may be summarized as follows:

- (1) Nature of soil.
- (2) Configuration.
- (3) Distances and arrangement of holes.
- (4) Disposition and character of hazards.
- (5) Situation and contour of greens.
- (6) General maintenance.

**NATURE OF SOIL.**—Underlying this is the all-essential question of drainage—natural drainage. To insure this there should be a sub-stratum of sand or gravel, from six inches to a foot or so below the topsoil, which should be of light loam.

Given these conditions, the quality of turf is bound to be good. And the "going" will also be good at all seasons, quite irrespective of rain or frost—firm, yet springy.

Too many of our courses, unfortunately, are lacking in these characteristics, being made up largely of clay or heavy soil—quagmirish in the wet seasons and hard as a brick in summer. And then, too, the turf of necessity is naturally coarse and heavy.

The true type of links is to be found only by the seaside, in their highest excellence, having as their basis nothing but pure, white sea sand with a comparatively thin coating of alluvium, on which only a very fine quality of various kinds of dwarf grasses can subsist.

**CONFIGURATION.** — The surface should be more or less undulating—

neither flat nor hilly . . . but a judicious blending of the two extremes. Not long swells of undulations nor unbroken stretches of level, but a finely-proportioned mixture of both. Any one who has seen Prestwick, or Sandwich, St. Andrews, or dozens of other natural golf courses in Great Britain, will readily recognize the ideal. Sad to say, we have nothing like it on this side—that I know of! The nearest approach to the real thing is the National Golf Links at Shinnecock Hills, just nearing completion.

The beauty of a course of this kind, topographically considered, is the infinite variety afforded for the proper execution of all sorts of shots . . . shots with just the right degree of elevation and shots from all kinds of hanging lies, which are wholly uncalled for on the large majority of our courses.

And trees of any kind are non-existent—as they should be.

**DISTANCES AND ARRANGEMENT OF HOLES.**—Holes should be so laid out as to provide for the playing of every conceivable sort of stroke, with every club in one's bag . . . and some of such a trying nature, with certain clubs that have yet to be invented—to bring them off easily and successfully. No two holes should be alike. Diversity of play should be the aim of the architect of a first-class course. And as the wind should always be an ever-present factor on such a course, provision should be made for the proper preservation of the value of each and every hole by having tees of such latitude as to permit the lengthening or shortening of the

distances from normal conditions, as occasion demands . . . or the substitution of alternative tees—two, three or even four of them, in some cases.

It is a great mistake to suppose that a long course means a good one—or that a short one presupposes one of inferiority. Golf, real golf, does not consist wholly of long swiping. It embodies and represents in its highest and ultimate sense much . . . very much . . . more than that. True, the fundamental principle is *far*—on the long and short-long holes—but never forget to couple with that the vitally-important word *sure*—far and sure. They should go hand in hand. And there yet remains more, far more, than mere distance, either from the tee or on the second shot . . . judgment of strength, combined with accuracy of direction, on the long game, highly intensified on the short game—approaching and, more particularly, putting.

Many and many a long driver would willingly exchange an approach of sixty yards or a putt of six feet for a drive involving a carry of one hundred and seventy yards or one on the level of two hundred and thirty. And, contrariwise, heaps of short players—good ones, too—would almost be tempted to sell their immortal souls to be able to get within twenty or even thirty or forty yards of the long hitters. So it is not a one-sided game, after all! Therein lies and consists its great, its never-failing, never-ending charm.

A good hole may be likened unto a pyramid, in that as the apex . . . representing the hole . . . is approached, the difficulties increase and less latitude for error is given.

Generally speaking, forty to fifty yards is amply wide for the fairway.

On two or three of the holes this might be cut down materially, by the judicious placing of hazards so as to provide a test for accuracy. But in such cases the reward should be commensurate.

If I had a free hand in the laying-out of a course, I should first arrange the distances approximately as follows:

2 short holes	100—160 yards
2 long-short holes	190—215 yards
2 holes	260—310 yards
2 holes	320—340 yards
3 holes	350—390 yards
4 holes	400—440 yards
1 hole	450—480 yards
2 holes	500—540 yards

The total distance would figure out some six thousand one hundred yards, provision being made for the contraction or extension of the distance on each hole by the use of alternative tees, according to the wind, and also the ground conditions as affecting run.

I should endeavor to have the first hole a good one—not too long—but one that demands good play . . . as, in case of a halved match, the first hole is a very important one. So are the second and third, for the same reason. Then, as the player gets warmed to his work, those involving some good hitting would be in order. And so on to the turn, which, if possible, should be in close proximity to the club-house. Have each half well balanced. For instance, the "out" holes should have one short hole, one long-short, and the others already specified, in proper proportion. The last two or three holes should be of a very testing character.

Particular attention should be paid to the topography of the ground, so as to utilize natural conditions to the best possible advantage.

DISPOSITION AND CHARACTER OF HAZARDS.—We arrive now at a consideration of that which makes or mars a hole—the proper placing of the hazards. It may be laid down as a general principle that hazards should be so arranged as to catch *a good shot which is not quite good enough*. Wherever you find the majority of balls go you are pretty safe in putting a trap in right there. Analyze the famous holes in the whole kingdom of golf; they are famous on account of their extreme difficulty . . . the absolute necessity for the bringing-off of a shot that is just right. On every really good course there should be two or three holes of this type . . . holes, the playing of which make even the stoutest-hearted "sit up and take notice" and ask himself whether it is wise to "go for it"—with all its attendant risks in case of failure—or play safe, the latter plan likely meaning the clear loss of a stroke and very probably the loss of the hole in the event of the opponent rising to the occasion.

Short holes should be so guarded as to prevent a topped ball from getting the green, which should be comparatively small, and with a plentiful supply of traps all around.

Long-short holes should have hazards necessitating a longish carry, with hazards all around the green. On holes of this kind the ordinary, every-day player should have the chance of playing safe by opening up a fairway to the right or left of the direct line—letting the center go as rough for the more ambitious until within twenty yards or so of the intervening bunker, forming a sort of oasis. This would give the duffer the opportunity of escaping trouble . . . at the loss of a stroke . . . on the tee-shot, but a sort of moral

hazard—a picayune affair—should be put in for his second. Or, he could play direct at the hole, within certain limitations.

Two-shot holes should, as a general thing, have a very narrow port or entrance immediately in front of the green, allowing a clear passage for a low second shot against the wind, with pots on either side and back of the green. Two or three of the holes of this type, preferably the drive and pitch kind should be well guarded in front of the green, necessitating a lofted approach, with more or less cut.

My idea of bunkering a course would be to make it easy for the short-player . . . easy, with regard to limitations of distance, but usually at the expense or sacrifice of a stroke on the *majority* of the holes. Leave him a fairly-open avenue provided his shots keep the line mapped out for him, but the route so laid out would not necessarily be in a direct line to the hole. The comparative freedom from trouble would have to be paid for by the negotiation of accurately-placed shots along a narrow line of greater aggregate length than that offered the good player. Such alternative line should not permit a short player to reach a green in the same number of strokes as the long player, *except* by masterful play . . . the execution of some particular stroke involving a heavy risk in case of failure.

Each shot requires to be placed in a certain well-defined situation.

The short player should not be permitted to have his cake and eat it too—any more than the long hitter. It is merely a question of the proper disposition of hazards . . . a very nice and delicate question it is true, but one which has not had the attention it deserves in the laying-out of

most of our courses. The old idea had as its object the placing of hazards principally across the entire width of the fairway, just far enough to catch a good shot of the short player, either from a tee or on the second stroke . . . and not far enough to worry the longer player. Extremely crude and uninteresting, from any standpoint!

Modern methods are different. Pots should be so placed as to make it imperative for the good player to place his shot in a certain desired position, with reference to the next shot. If the desired position is secured from the tee, a fairly-easy second shot is the reward, and so on. Allow not quite half the width of the fairway to the right or left for the short player, free from trouble of any kind up to say from one hundred and fifty to one hundred and sixty yards. But if he is capable of carrying the hazard provided for the tee shot but funks it and plays to one side, put a pot or two there to catch him, one hundred and sixty to one hundred and seventy yards away.

In short, lay out the course generally with reference to really good play, making it a *sine qua non* that either the tee shot or the second shot—in some cases, both—should be played both far and sure, especially sure. In other words, feature certain shots on each hole. On one or two in the round, afford opportunity for judgment of distance—preferably on holes of two hundred and sixty to three hundred and ten yards—by placing hazards which will catch a good, a really good tee-shot, so far as length goes, right in the middle of the course, some one hundred and ninety to two hundred and twenty yards away. Sounds unfair, *now*—but it is golf. Make it easy for really

good play, hard for indifferent play at the hands of good players, and comparatively easy for short players—the duffer class. It is quite within the bounds of possibility to do all this on *any* course, irrespective of the lengths of the holes, by the proper placing of hazards. It will, of course, be recognized that it is impossible, within the limits of this article, to do more than merely suggest in a broad, general way, the leading principles involved. But any one who has played over the new course at Pinehurst will have had an opportunity of seeing how a course should be laid out on proper lines. Another fine example is the Salisbury Links at Garden City and soon, another, the finest of all, will be open for play, the National Golf Links at Shinnecock Hills.

A word concerning the character of hazards. For the larger part they should consist of pots of varying sizes and depths. The nearer a green the deeper they should be. In any case they should be sufficiently deep and so faced as to hold a ball. Invariably they *should* be filled with sand to a depth of from six inches to a foot—preferably sea sand. And the cops, if any, should be covered with sand for several inches, if possible. This, however, is not of especial importance, *now*. Grass *may* be allowed to grow without seriously affecting their hazard value, even in the bottoms, where sand is not readily procurable.

SITUATION AND CONTOUR OF GREENS.—Advantage should be taken of natural conditions most favorable to the location of the greens, even at the expense, at times, of length of the hole. Certain places will at once suggest themselves as being most favorably adapted for greens, owing to

their peculiar nature or environment. These should be made the most of. So far as possible, the natural contour of the ground should be preserved. Diversity is the great desideratum. Out of the eighteen greens, I would suggest three fairly flat, two or three gently sloping, one or two on the punch-bowl order, two or three of the plateau type, and the rest more or less undulating. This, of course, applies more particularly to new courses, although old greens can be changed without any great amount of trouble, or expense. Out of the eighteen at Garden City, for instance, no less than seven have been altered more or less radically by the addition of undulations of a more or less pronounced character, and four have been changed by putting in mounds or ridges.

**MAINTENANCE.** — A course may conceivably have all the advantages herein suggested and yet be lacking in a score of little things due to carelessness in the upkeep, such, for instance, as poorly-maintained tees—which should receive almost as much care and attention as the greens—neglect of repairs to those parts of the course which come in for a good deal of wear and tear from iron play; failure to change the holes frequently; allowing long grass bordering the course to become so long as to cause the loss of balls; and, finally—and most important of all—that loving, watchful and unceasing care of the putting-greens . . . the heart and soul of a course . . . which conduces so much to the pleasure and satisfaction alike of all classes of players.

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MR. WALTER J. TRAVIS  
Finish of tee shot on the short ninth hole of the new course at Pinehurst