

Golf in its Most Economical Form

By Ty McClellan



Water, money and time threaten modern-day golf. Not so for sand-green courses. \$5 green fees to play all day. Fast pace of play. No irrigation. Greens that don't have a blade of grass on them, just oiled sand. Welcome to the world of sand-green golf.

Once widespread in the early 1900s, sand-green courses still are fairly common in several Midwestern states. However, many golfers have never heard of them. In fact, many notable golf facilities in the U.S. began with sand greens only to later convert to grass greens. In a way, playing sand greens offers a look back to the origins of golf in the U.S. and other parts of the world before automatic irrigation, highly technical equipment and new, improved turfgrass varieties. Fittingly, sand-green golf has been described as "1950s golf at 1950s prices" (Golf World, 2004).

Think sand-green golf is simply pasture golf? While occasionally true, sand-green courses - just like courses with grass greens - vary considerably in quality. Conditions also can vary widely due to time of year and regional site conditions. Some sand-green courses have rolling terrain in open environments with few trees and little separation between holes. Others have water features with plenty of trees. For example, at the nine-hole, sand-green Glasco Country Club in rural Kansas, there are a variety of par 3s, 4s and 5s, a tree-lined creek that comes into play on eight of the nine holes, and two dogleg par 4s (one left and one right). Some sand greens are flush with the ground; others are slightly elevated above grade. Sand greens generally are flat, but some have a little slope so players must still read the green and play some break.

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Updated as of 12/3/2015

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FOR THE GOLFER

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