

Golf's Endangered Species

Why ride when you can walk?

That's the penetrating question an entire section of *Golf Digest's* November issue throws out to the golfing populace. The golf course superintendent should take notice of it, because pampering to the effects golf cars have on his domain has become an integral part of his daily work routine.

The magazine makes several winning points in the advancement that golfers should return to walking their rounds instead of being transported over the course in the mechanized monsters. The premise is that the walker in golf is becoming an endangered species, along with the accompanying victim of modern technology -- the caddie.

Then, too, the theme of walking instead of riding has its side effects. In the article's own words, "...*Golf Digest* wants to see clubs and courses encourage, not discourage, walking in two key ways: by establishing separate times for walkers only and by renting pullcarts.

Of course, the golf course superintendent would probably endorse the whole idea of cutting back on the use of cars and promoting a return to walking. However, the pullcart as an alternative to the car is hardly an improvement or aid to his responsibilities of effecting and maintaining the peak conditioning of his layout. And there is some argument as to which is the carrier of more course damage - the golf car or the pullcart?

On the surface, the drive (no pun intended) to get golfers back to the original exercise-recreation-enjoyment purpose of the sport is a noble one. At one time golf provided some of the health-laced benefits which have seemed to stray into other pastimes like jogging and bicycling. Then, the golfer walked his five-six-seven miles a round and was deemed the healthier for it.

Next Meeting

Dec. 8, 1980

Holiday Inn, Dedham
Junction Route 128 & Route 1

Dir. Meeting - 9:30 a.m.

Reg. Meeting - 10:00 a.m.

Lunch - Noon

Educational Session - 1:30 p.m.



In the case of the affluent, the walking golf round provided young people a chance to caddie in which they were able to earn money and take a grasp of the game through observation. Out of this sometimes very close relationship of golfer and caddie, came a source of supply for the club pro shop as well as the PGA tour. The list of former caddies, either having played or are playing for a livelihood, is a long one and contains the names of some of golf's immortals.

Therefore, golf before the golf car achieved a number of worthwhile goals and served several equally fulfilling purposes.

The original purpose of the golf car was also a worthy one in that it allowed physically disabled persons to play the game without having to experience what to them was a burden of having to walk. That's when the powers to be, saw a financial windfall forming in the expansive use of the car and the riding revolution was on fire.

It is ironic that a move back to walking occur at this point in time when the rest of the game appears to be retracing the sport's historical steps. The design of courses is beginning to retreat somewhat in the emphasis on accuracy instead of strength by a return to normal length of holes, tightening of fairways and reduction in the size of greens.

It must be added here that economics -- the basis for the proliferation of the golf car -- is partly responsible for the reshaping of the course's physical appearance. Such an approach to the makeup of the layout lends itself to a saving in maintenance costs -- a saving almost mandatory due to the rising prices of equipment and labor.

There is some logic in the assumption that a return to walking will not pose that much of a financial drain on the country club and public course. Renting of pullcarts might take up some of the income slack. But it will never take the place of the golf car in dollars and cents received.

Resort courses, now entrenched in the required use of the golf car, will ignore the walking push. Those layouts must rely on the combined income of golf cars and green fees since

continued on page 3

Restating a Relationship

An old and valued friend of the New England Golf Course Superintendent's Association popped into the Newsletter last month through the mail-ways. He's Bob Mitchell, presently the guardian of the golf and grounds program at the nationally renowned Greenbrier resort in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia.

Bob has appeared on the educational agenda of the UMass Turf Conference and has been a source of information and inspiration to the profession with the sharing of his expertise and input into the intriguing field of golf course maintenance. He is, in a word, one of the giants of the trade.

Mitchell was interested in a Newsletter offering of last February, one which covered the pros and cons of membership involvement in the golf course conditioning process. That article presented both sides of the superintendent's planning and appreciation situation -- one in which he must work with a green chairman and committee, the other in which he answers to an owner, one-man rule operation.

The presentation prompted Mitchell to enclose one of his literary attempts with his letter. It was written in 1963. That's 17 years ago. However, many of those ideas are appropriate in the relationship of the green chairman-committee and superintendent today. And they are worth a re-reading.

Mitchell leans heavily on the functions of the green committee and its responsibilities to both members and supers.

"The green committee should have the interest of the superintendent and his personnel at heart." By this, Mitchell means the committee should work hand in hand with the superintendent in planning changes or the like, assessing his conditioning methods and then backing its conclusions to the extent of supporting them against complainers -- whether they be board members or the rank and file of the club membership.

"The committee should acquaint itself with the inner workings of the golf course." In other words, the chairman and his committee members should have something more than a layman's knowledge and appreciation of the problems the super faces.

"Invite the superintendent to play when the committee is appraising the golf course for possible improvements and maintenance practices." This is very important. The committee should solicit the expertise of the superintendent in those matters which could alter the physical appearance and requirements of the course. Bringing such alterations about is going to rest with the superintendent, anyway.

"Maintain informal contact with the superintendent." This should be something that occurs automatically. The chairman serves as a liaison between his committee and the super, between the board of directors and the super and between the membership and the super. Dropping by to see the superintendent promotes a double exchange. It gives the chairman a chance to inform the super of various comments

about the course and it affords the superintendent the opportunity to air an immediate problem that can't wait until a regular committee meeting.

Mitchell endorses the holding of regular meetings with the green committee. "I'm sure that a lot of supers would like to operate without ever seeing their committee and, frankly, considering some of the committee members I've heard about, maybe this plan is better.

"But personally and objectively, I prefer to keep the committee posted on everything involved in the maintenance of the course. I want them to know what is being done to reach certain objectives and I certainly want them to be aware of the cost of completing certain projects. When they are informed, they can pass the information on to the members and be prepared for any gripes and criticisms they receive."

Mitchell has his own ideas about the makeup of a green committee. After the appointment or re-appointment of a chairman, he likes to see a small committee formed. "Four members are enough," he suggests. "It makes it easier to get a small group together regularly and it limits the complexities and awkwardness of a larger working body. Another thing. One of the members should be a high handicap golfer, so that changes to be made would tend to meet the playing needs of the largest portion of the golfing membership." That's a suggestion which all clubs should accept as gospel.

In summary, Mitchell emphasizes that the relationship between chairman, green committee and the superintendent is what each party makes them. "We as superintendents must strive to keep the committee informed with the kind of facts that will encourage their role as policymakers but not administrators. This will encourage them to have enough faith in the superintendent to allow him to operate the golf course."

And that is a relationship, vintage 1963, restated. It is solid advice, based on the experience of one of the most successful members of the superintendents' profession. Bob Mitchell knows what he's talking about and the NEGCSA thanks him for sharing such wealth of knowledge with it.

Gerry Finn

A "Well Done" to Joe Rybka. Joe hosted the PGA/Foot Joy National Assistants Championship in late Sept. Under the severe weather conditions of this summer Joe held his course together and received rave reviews from the players and officials.

To be voted on next meeting

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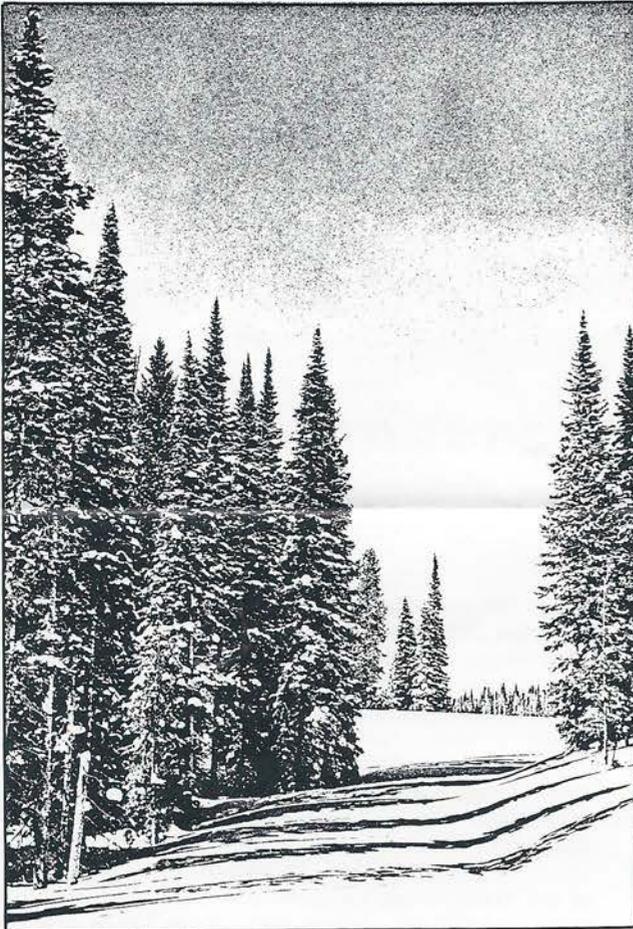
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Putting Summer Tools in Cold Storage

If, as Hudson Valley GCSA editor Bill Smart says, the frost is on the Penncross, then it's time for superintendents in the northern part of the country to store their equipment for the winter. A little preventive maintenance and time spent now can go a long way in minimizing problems when things start back up in the spring.

If you're storing your hoses, make sure they are completely drained before being stored. If water left in them freezes, it could cause the hose to crack and split. Store them coiled and lying flat. Hanging them on a nail or peg is probably the worst possible way to store a hose, because then tend to crack where they bend around the nail.

To extend the useful life of a wooden ladder or the wooden handles of tools, treat them with a wood preservative. A simple homemade formula consists of one part linseed oil to two parts paint thinner. Brush it on and store the ladder or tools inside, off a damp concrete floor from which they could draw moisture.

Wipe hedge shears and pruning tools with a rag dipped in paint thinner to remove sticky pitch and sap. Then sharpen and oil them thoroughly.

Remove the soil from shovels and other tools used to work the soil. If necessary, use a wire brush to remove loose rust spots. Then wipe them with an oil rag.

While you're at it, take a minute to wax the blades of your snow shovels so that wet snow will slide off instead of sticking. Treat the wooden handles with wood preservative.

To keep your feet dry while you're using that snow shovel, be sure to waterproof your leather boots with the proper sealant. Boots with leather that has been oil tanned require an oil-base sealant, while those with a chrome-tanned finish require a wax or silicone preparation. Work it into the clean, dry boot surface with a soft cloth and leave the boots in a warm place so the sealant can penetrate into the leather. Two coats should be enough for a new pair of boots, and an additional coat each winter should keep your feet dry for years to come.

Golf's Endangered Species, continued

they have no stable income as provided by initiation charges and dues at country clubs.

Certainly, the superintendent would welcome a decline in the use of the golf car since it remains a threat to his conditioning program. However, most supers have learned to live with the car and take the stand that cutting back on cars at the expense of increasing pullcart traffic doesn't really relieve their maintenance woes.

So, although the idea of walking the golf course instead of riding it constitutes a compelling urge to adopt it, the practicality of a golf car fleet has been established. What's more, it has become a main source of revenue for the club. The effort to curtail or eliminate it comes too late with too little clout. Good try. . .but unfortunately. . .no cigar. Gerry Finn

JOB OPENING

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How To Kill An Association

1. Stay away from meetings.
2. If you come, find fault and never offer an alternative.
3. Decline office or appointment to a committee.
4. Get sore if you aren't nominated or appointed.
5. After you are named, don't attend board or committee meetings.
6. If you get to one, despite your better judgement, clam up until you get outside.
7. Don't work if you can help it.
8. Oppose all banquets, parties and shindigs as being a waste of the attendees' money.
9. If everything is strictly business, complain that the meetings are dull and the officers belong to the old guard.
10. Never accept a place at the head table.
11. If you aren't asked to sit there, threaten to resign because you aren't appreciated.
12. Don't pay your dues.
13. Read mail from headquarters only now and then—never reply if you can help it

taken from *Hole Notes* - MCCSA

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