

## Upkeep of Approach Areas

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If golf has any merit whatever it is as a pleasurable, health-giving, uplifting pastime.

The measure of the success of any golf course is the extent to which players who have once enjoyed it show an eagerness to return to it and play it again. If any course possesses so widespread an attraction that it is periodically for its own sake revisited by players from all over the country, it may justly lay claim to being a national institution. How many such are there? As I write I can think of but one.

Various considerations enter into the termination of what makes a superlatively fine course. Certainly sound architecture, variety, test of the game, and landscape beauty play vital and necessary parts, but they may all strictly be grouped under the single heading of proper construction.

Another and an equally important element in the attainment of lasting success for a golf course is upkeep.

It is to one feature of this upkeep (which unfortunately is rarely given separate attention) that I desire to address myself here. I refer to the care, or lack of care, given to approach areas, *i. e.*, the ground from five to twenty yards in front of the green. This will, of course, not apply to such holes as are constructed to require a high pitched shot onto the green itself; these are few in number on any course and are usually guarded by bunkers, or by ground deliberately made rough, directly in front. The majority of holes are built with a clear opening to the green, varying in width, to be sure, but leaving an unobstructed opportunity to run up onto the green after a well-placed drive.

Should not this ground immediately in front of the green be just as true, of just as even and dependable a quality, as the green itself? How many greenkeepers, or committees, insist upon this type of maintenance? It is probably true that a large proportion of the courses in America pay no especial attention to these approach areas, with the result that they are no better than the fairways, uneven and rough, with grass just a bit longer than that on the fairway, because the groundsman has been carefully taught not to let his horses or the big mower get onto the putting green. In most cases all that a player can do is to pitch up into this rough area and trust to luck. Of two balls equally well pitched as to direction and distance, one may stop dead and the other go shooting over the green, or one may break sharply to the side and the other run on merrily toward the hole. Such accidents are not properly rubs of the green and should be carefully provided against. All this introduces the element of unfairness, which robs the game of most of its satisfaction. Every player is entitled to have ground on which to pitch that he can trust. He should be able to play his ball confidently with the assurance that it will get fair treatment on alighting, and he ought to be able to come close to an accurate calculation of the amount of run it will have on it after it is pitched.

The remedy for the difficulty is simple—a little greater care and attention to upkeep with a conscientious practice of the maxim that the approach areas should be just as carefully prepared and as carefully looked after as the putting green; they should have their own rolling, fertiliza-

tion, and cutting; they don't need to be level, but they should be smooth, of even texture, and uniform in quality.

At the Denver Country Club one man is employed whom we call the approach mower. He spends his entire time going from green to green, keeping the approaches cut and in good condition. He does not use a putting green mower, but the ordinary four-bladed hand lawn mower set low. The ground that he is to cover is determined by the committee with reference to the character of the shot up to the green called for at each particular hole, but in every event he cleans up all the spots near the green left by the fairway mower and not cut by the putting green mower. He does not have a very large area to mow at any one green and can get over *about half the course every day*. The grass that he cuts is thus just a little shorter than the grass on the fairway, but not as short as that on the putting green. His employment is not required except during the short season during which grass is growing, but the cost of his services is many times repaid in added satisfaction enjoyed by the players.

Every piece of approach ground is also given careful attention each spring and fall, has its own quota of fertilizer or top-dressing as regularly as the putting greens, and in every way is treated as a distinct and essential feature of the course to be kept up with as studied care as is devoted to any other portion.

It is only by strict attention to niceties of this character that any course can be maintained at high standard, and no course that does not look after its approach areas as separate and indispensable features requiring definite attention and treatment can hope to hold high rank or afford that lure of irresistible attraction which distinguishes this game of games and constitutes the determining test as to whether a course has the commanding merit of permanent vitality.

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## Hickory and Golf

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I have often wondered which wood was utilized in the making of golf club shafts in the early days before golfers were acquainted with the virtues of hickory. It is evident, however, that when hickory was first introduced in the game and tested as a shaft material, it was such an improvement over the material then in common use that its adoption was prompt and sweeping. I believe that at the present time hickory is the universal wood for golf shafts, and it has been practically the only shaft material until within the last few years, when steel has appeared as a competitor. The combination of strength, toughness, and elasticity in hickory has made it the world's foremost wood for certain purposes. As a shock-resisting wood its equal has not been discovered. The fame of the American axe is largely due to the hickory handle.

Nowadays one is constantly running across statements about the scarcity of hickory. Like the auctioneer, these statements repeat "going, going," but they hesitate over the "gone." Considering the demand, hickory *is* scarce; there is no doubt about it; but there *is* considerable left, and good stuff at that, although it is necessary to pick and choose more carefully than in the old days when there were fine stands in abundance.