

Thin Turf and Luxuriant Turf, Their Treatments and Their Relations to Par

MAYNARD M. METCALF

Par allows two strokes on the putting green and adds for each hole the number of strokes necessary to reach the green when perfect golf is played, all hazards being avoided. In good golf architecture the slope of the ground is taken into account, an all-uphill hole being laid out with shorter distance than is an all-downhill hole and par being reckoned in part in accordance with the slope. It is true that on some courses par is reckoned without reference to the slope of the ground; but such ignoring of a very salient feature can hardly be justified, the relation of distance to results from perfect golf being decidedly affected by the ground slope.

But the slope of the ground is not the only thing that affects the distance attained by the stroke. A clay course with ordinary turf gives great run to the ball in ordinarily dry weather, while a sandy soil, with any turf it will grow under ordinary treatment, is much more dead. On the other hand, to mention two examples of the opposite extreme, the East Potomac Golf Course, in Washington, D. C., and the course at Chautauqua, N. Y., have a very rich turf, of almost featherbed quality, which deadens the ball, preventing any great run unless it be cut shorter and be cut more frequently than is usual in fairway mowing.

Both of these sorts of dead fairways, those on thin soil and those with luxuriant turf, should be taken into account in laying out the course and in determining par. Chautauqua (9 holes at present) is 3,344 yards long, 6,688 for the 18. With its feathered turf it is very, very slow on the fairways, making the course in effect nearly a thousand yards longer than the ordinary full-length course of say 6,200 yards. Such turf as Chautauqua's is a great asset, but it involves special treatment in one of two ways.

If the grass in the fairways is to be cut the usual fairway length, the holes should be somewhat shorter than usual and the par reckoned with allowance for the very short roll. With this treatment there is the decided disadvantage that small hollows in the fairway will be left with longer grass, so long that the ball will sink half its diameter or more into the turf, making an unreckoned and undesirable type of hazard. It is far preferable to plan the holes with the usual distances and the usual par and then to mow the fairways very short and mow them every day during growing weather, or at least every second day. When so treated, luxuriant turf is a great blessing; but, like many luxuries, luxuriant turf is expensive if properly cared for. Even with daily mowing and cutting very short it is important to fill the slight hollows two feet or less across, making the fairway surface unusually even, thus avoiding spots of longer grass.

If there is luxuriant turf in the rough it must be kept mowed with a rather low-set hay-mowing machine to prevent "gumming up" the course by lost balls. In estimating budget for a course with luxuriant turf there should be fully double the ordinary allowance for mowing fairways and rough.