

# CURB THOSE CURVES

*Golfers seem incapable of keeping all four tires of a cart on a winding path for any length of time, but well-placed cobblestone curbing can be a turf-saver.*

by **ROBERT VAVREK**

**A** CART is a different kind of four-letter word to most superintendents. Yet it is not uncommon to find 50 or more rental carts at private and public courses across the North-Central Region. Turf wear and compaction from concentrated cart traffic often has a detrimental effect on course appearance and playability. Unfortunately, the damage is often concentrated in highly visible areas near greens or tees.

Motorized carts, however, are an important source of revenue for both private and public golf courses. Furthermore, the availability of power carts makes the golf course and the game accessible to golfers with a wider range of physical ability as compared to courses that require walking. In fact, it is virtually impossible to walk a round of golf at an increasing number of high-end resort courses that are being designed and routed for mandatory cart use.

The presence of a well-designed network of paved cart paths is a step in the right direction toward addressing the concerns associated with cart traffic. Golfers, though, just can't seem to keep all four tires on a meandering path — even a generous 8-foot-wide surface. Maybe it's the habit of never stopping on a highway, but instead

pulling off to the right and onto the berm. Maybe it's the fact that we know the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. In any event, the turf adjacent to paved cart paths takes a beating near greens, immediately adjacent to tees, and along the inside perimeters of any sharp turn in the path.

Well-placed curbing can reduce turf damage next to paths near greens and tees. Other options near greens and tees are to install a series of short wooden blocks or ropes/stakes to deter the "one tire off the path" pattern of damage that plagues most courses. Curbing an entire cart path, though, is not practical. An effective substitute for traditional curbing along a sharp curve in a path is cobblestone.

A number of superintendents have fine-tuned techniques for installing a slightly raised cobblestone-type berm immediately adjacent to a path using various sizes of fieldstone or paving bricks. A common denominator among these techniques is to excavate the worn compacted area near the path and then install a base of sand or crushed limestone to a depth of approximately 1 inch to support the stones. The tricky, tedious phase of the procedure is the handwork of filling in the narrow spaces between the stones

using sand, soil, or crushed limestone. Limestone and soil are more difficult to work with than dry sand, but the finished product is more stable. The crushed limestone sets up well and practically cements the stones together. The advantage of using soil is that the spaces between the stones can support grass growth and further blend the curbing into the surrounding terrain.

Cobblestone curbing has enjoyed the most success at high-end resort courses, where appearance is just as important as playability. These courses typically depend on cart revenue as an important source of income. Consequently, most of these courses possess a continuous paved path to ensure cart revenues during wet weather.

Make no mistake about it; the process of installing cobblestone curbing is a time-consuming, labor-intensive operation. Similar to building a stone wall, laying out just the right mosaic of stone is more of an art than a science. If the curbing is installed with care the first time, it will last many years and provide an effective barrier to carts without impeding mowing equipment.

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*BOB VAVREK has tried to straighten out the curves of golf course maintenance at courses across the North-Central Region for 10 years.*



*Turf immediately adjacent to a paved path oftentimes suffers from cart damage. A cobblestone berm is an effective alternative to standard curbing along areas of a paved surface where golfers cause damage when pulling their carts off of the path.*