

TURFCOMMS

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PURPOSE: To pass on what we learn willingly and happily to others in the profession so as to improve turf conditions around the country.

PRAIRIE DUNES COUNTRY CLUB - My favorite golf course is this Perry and Press Maxwell design nestled in sand dunes. It was love at first sight for me. I had moved to Dallas about one month before from Maryland. After a month of flatness, to suddenly be exposed to such a beautiful layout amongst sand dunes and vegetation that appeared to me to have been moved from Cape Cod was too much. After three holes at P.D.C.C. I thought I was home again. Cape Cod is only a hop, skip and jump from my birth place, Dartmouth, Massachusetts.

To fully appreciate my love for this little gem you will have to go there. But, I'll attempt here to give you a little insight. "The Dunes" as it is called locally is built on enough land so that there is good separation of holes. Secondly, the club has seen fit to only maintain greens, tees, fairways and a very moderate amount of rough. The rest is native plum bushes, yucca, cottonwoods and wild flowers.

Thus almost every hole presents you with a narrow expanse of manicured green turf contrasting so beautifully with the surroundings. On many of the holes Doug Petersan, the current superintendent, and members have added a new back tee.

Typically, these have been placed up on a sand dune so that you look down on a spectacular view. The best way to enjoy all this is to walk or ride around the golf course without your golf clubs. Attempting to play it can cause one to feel the rough is something other than beautiful. Unless of course you only stray a tiny bit and thus stay in the "moderate amount" of rough that is occassionally mowed.

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The "Maxwell Rolls" need to be described before I finish. The greens are not overly large averaging 4500 square feet. They are very definitely undulating, a characteristic of Perry and Press Maxwell design. They are never dull to putt on even at a 7 and 1/2 foot stimpmeter speed. A speed Doug doesn't let them slow down to very often. The small number of pin placements combined with heavy play from members and fans makes maintenance of these old soil base greens difficult. A sand topdressing program begun in early 1980 has helped considerably.

From a maintenance point of view the course does have some problems. Hutchinson, Kansas is not the coolest spot in the nation in July; and although, sand hills surround the fairways the soil in the fairways is most often a clay loam.

With the fairways located below the surrounding rough drainage is a problem. Most of the drainage problems have been solved in recent years by an extensive system of drains. Now all the course needs is zoysia fairways. Something Doug would very much like to see (both Dougs).

AMERICAN GOLF : A "new" VERSION OF GOLF

In the bitter cold of winter I read where a nearby golf course had adopted a new version of golf. I had no intention of visiting a golf course at that time of year so put it on my calendar for the first trip out in Spring. April is soon enough to be out on a golf course for me.

American Golf is a trademark of American Golf, Inc. of Dallas, Texas. You might have noted their full page advertisements in November, 1984 issues of Golf Digest and Golf Magazine. The National Golf Foundation (NGF) got upset because American Golf labeled their Rules for American Golf the National Golf Association's (NGA) Rules for American Golf.

What is new and different about American Golf? A six inch cup rather than that 4 and a quarter inch hole the rest of the world uses. That will be the biggest difference for the average American golfer.

Other "differences", you may carry 18 clubs in your bag. A mulligan is permitted on the first tee. You may improve your lie in fairway and rough. You may take a practice swing in bunkers to test the sand. Water hazards bother you, have no worries it only cost you one ball in American Golf. Hit the first one in, go to the other side and drop a ball two club lengths from the edge, and play on with one penalty stroke.

There are other similar modifications but, they are not going to modify very much the game the average American golfer is playing any more than the above. One rule those of you in the daily maintenance end may appreciate is that the golfer may putt with the pin in. This saves a lot of unnecessary traffic around

the hole. The hole is big enough so that the flag stick does not come in to play if left in.

American Golf is going to sell to the golf professional with a lease on the golf course and thus some control of what goes on. American Golf should speed up play. They claim 4 hours and 10 minutes for a weekend round compared to 5 hours and 20 minutes using USGA rules. They also claim a 10 stroke improvement in score. Thus a happier golfer.

From the maintenance stand point - more income generated should = more money in the maintenance budget. Don't count on it, you say!

American Golf has both a 6 inch and the regular cup on the greens. The players decide on the first tee which game they are going to play. Thus you now will have twice as many cups to change.

From what I saw at Oak Ridge Park Municipal Golf Course in Lewisville, Texas, changing the 6 inch cup is a problem. The plugs had either been set too low or too high most of the time, mostly too low. Many more old six inch plugs were visible than the standard size plug. The problem of changing the two cups and getting the six inch plug set correctly offsets the advantage of reduced traffic around the hole to a large extent. But, I do feel you could change cups less often.

I suggest you encourage the change to American Golf if you are at a daily fee golf course. Don't be caught mentioning it if you are at a private country club. This is probably a good thing for that daily fee golf course with slow bumpy greens and heavy traffic. It also is ideal for the brand new golf course opening up 6 to 12 months too soon.

How did I do playing American Golf? Well it was my first round of the year. The second round was played the next day at a PGA Tour stop. I did much better on the short golf course with the slow somewhat bumpy greens and 6 inch cups. Even though I three putted one of those greens aiming at a 6 inch cup. At the PGA Tour stop I putted one off the green and into the water. It was my second ball in the water on that hole.

On smooth fast greens I'll accept the challenge of the regular size hole. But, I'm not opposed to a 6 inch cup where budget and other considerations make high quality playing conditions difficult. The 6 inch cup is just what is needed for many of the bermudagrass putting greens I see.

DIANE AND DIANE GRADUATE

Diane Douglass, one of my former secretaries, graduated from Texas Women's University May 11. She left the USGA several years back intent on becoming a nurse. A life time ambition she has finally realized. Perhaps she finally needs a little explanation. Diane although young at heart is old enough to have had a daughter go to Texas Women's University before she did.

Diane Hawes, my youngest daughter, graduated from high school June 1. That is the last secondary school student for Jane and I. If you heard a big sigh of relief that day it was us and probably a thousand other anxious parents happy to see their youngest completing that important step. This Diane wants to become a primary school teacher. I'm not sure why after seeing how much work secondary school teaching has been for Jane.

FROM THE FILES - Rat Control: I hope you don't have a rat this problem but a recent article in Science News reminded me of similar observations on the Smithsonian Institute grounds in Washington, D.C. This article in Science News was about a California study of Norway rats and roof (or black) rats. The researcher collared rats with radio-frequency emitters to study their movements. He found the rats preferred thick stands of ivy, palms and dense bushes for habitat. They loved to eat fallen nuts and fruit littering lawns. They "devour hibiscus flowers like candy". The researcher is quoted as saying "Southern California has been landscaped for rats extensively".

At the Smithsonian a decade ago they found the large ivy plantings around their many museums combined with the food available in the litter tourist leave had created a large rat colony at each museum. So remember that low maintenance ivy can create a "new" problem at the clubhouse.

NICKLAUS BALL - One club professional noted that this half distance ball might result in slower play. Golfers using it will be striking the ball more often. I hope to have a better idea on how the ball plays by the end of summer. Should get a chance to play in a Pro-am with it in July.

EDITORIAL COMMENT - I have heard much lately about the bankruptcy of our farm communities. But, not until I read a little article in a northwestern South Dakota county paper did I appreciate how bad things are. This article was reporting an auction of land and houses in small communities there. The auction was on property for which county taxes had not been paid. One gentleman purchased 5 lots at \$5 each. Yes, that is correct \$5 each.

My son-in-law is a native of that county. He told of a three bedroom habitable house the owners were happy to get \$1600 for when sold recently. How about the Dakotas for a summer retirement home?

END