

study for golf course architects. Considering that it was laid out long before golf course architects were ever heard of, this is something of a derisive twist, but it is, at the same time, credit to its greatness and, though it is held by some as "not what it was," it influences to this day the thinking of modern architects, British and Trans-Atlantic.

What has changed its strategic character is its condition. With the use of automatic watering and artificial fertilisers, it matters far less than it did about the "line of attack," and it has become slightly outdated, like so many courses, with the advance of modern equipment. Everywhere you look, courses are in need of readjustment in order that they should play as they were originally intended.

Such a situation is no indictment of the original architects. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, it is the result of modern shafts hitting the ball far further than used to be the case. Bunkers laid out to catch the good player are now trapping the less good player who always has plenty to think about. On many courses that I know, there are only one or two bunkers in the whole round which worry the good player unless he hits a really bad shot. In one or two instances, you see bunkers now worrying good players' drives, when originally designed to trap their seconds.

In my opinion, a fairway bunker should (a) govern the play of the hole and (b) catch the good player's good shots which are not quite good enough. A hazard which does not enter the calculations of a good player cannot be in the right place, and a hazard which catches the bad shot of a bad player is not particularly desirable.

One remedy for this particular complaint, prevalent mainly on courses built before the Second World War, is to lengthen them, thereby restoring bunkers at their rightful range, but, more often than not, the confined nature of urban courses makes this impossible. Anyway, improvement is rarely achieved simply by lengthening. Several good par 4's have been turned into poor par 5's with the introduction of the present rules governing par.

In these cases, the only answer is to revise, and here the difficulty may arise in the area of the greens. Greenside bunkers are much more part of the green these days and adjustment is not always easy. Some other bunkers, including some of the good old-fashioned cross bunkers (still a good hazard on many courses), may have become superfluous, and, in the interests of economy and maintenance, may be done away with. It might be an interesting exercise for clubs to conduct their own survey in this respect, bearing in mind, too, that tree-planting can be more effective than bunkering. How many holes can you think of where

one single tree can "make" it?

If I could make a complaint against modern golf, it would be that it has become too standardised. A matched set of clubs has taken some of the fun and inventiveness out of shotmaking and the advent of watering gives a more predictable result to the finish of shots. The attitude of "taking what comes" is now considered old hat and golf is in danger of becoming stereotyped, but such an accusation is not applicable to golf course architects.

Too much standardisation in their work could reflect a lack of imagination in a field in which variety coupled with simplicity is surely the key. I have already emphasised the need for a "natural look" in construction work, and golfers would be amazed to learn that many of the features on golf courses which appear natural are, in fact, artificial.

No greater tribute could be paid to a contractor's work than such pieces of deception, and every architect would be quick to acknowledge a contractor's role as just as valuable as his own. If an architect's ideas aren't interpreted correctly, it doesn't matter how beautiful they may look on paper, but, even in days when there has been so much expansion in golf course work, good contractors are the exception rather than the rule.

Modern contractors, with their heavy machinery, can achieve so much more, in far less time, than their predecessors, but, although it is reassuring to think of these machines as creators as well as destroyers, the difference between success and failure (and profit to the contractor) depends entirely on the skill of those operating them.

Entrusting work to inexpert and inexperienced contractors, even on grounds of economy when funds are limited, is inviting disaster, since errors of judgment and workmanship can be far more costly to rectify, besides involving a loss of playing time and hence of revenue.

The best way is nearly always the cheapest way in the long run and an insistence upon employing only the most skilled labour is a wise precaution. There is so much more to building a golf course than merely eyeing the land and envisaging a few good holes. It must be viewed in the context of obtaining the best possible 18 holes and, when construction work has started, the architect has to undertake frequent supervisory visits so that, if mistakes are made, they can easily be put right and minor adjustments effected.

It was an awareness of the need for proper standards, and to give clients a qualified list from which to choose, that led to the establishment, in 1971, of the British Association of Golf Course Architects—plus the belief that jobs should be seen through, whenever possible, from start to finish.