

MERITS AND DEMERITS OF THE GARDEN CITY LINKS

By WALTER J. TRAVIS

GARDEN CITY is one of the best courses in the country. With the possible exception of Myopia, it is not too much to say that it is indeed the best. Good as it is, however, it is easily susceptible of improvement in many ways; and it is my present endeavor to point out its shortcomings, and at the same time offer certain suggestions looking to the removal of existent elements of weakness on several holes.

Commencing with the first hole: The long game of our players has so developed in the last year or so that it is no uncommon thing to see balls carry clear over the bunkers to the right and left of the fairway respectively. True they lodge in long grass, but it is not often sufficiently long to prevent the player reaching the green on the second shot. The bunkers in question should be both extended and deepened—extended some fifteen or twenty yards toward the green and deepened very materially, with the face nearest the green built up with layers of turf at a rather abrupt angle, not quite perpendicularly but steep enough to make it impossible to reach the green except by a very fine stroke.

The bunker immediately in front of the green, also the one to the right, should be deepened and faced in the same way, and these bunkers, together with the one back of the second green and the others guarding the fourth, fifth, ninth, twelfth, and those back of the seventeenth and eighteenth holes respectively, should all be covered with a fairly deep layer of sea sand. There are two objections to the present quality of sand or, more properly speaking, gravel in these bunkers. In the first place, the ball frequently is found "sitting up" nice and clear, the coarseness of the sand preventing its embedding; and, secondly, a shower of sand, gravel and pebbles usually is scattered on the green with the ball, sometimes also without the accompaniment of the ball on the first essay. The objection first cited applies in fact to all of the bunkers throughout.

The second green is absurdly large for a short hole. A pot bunker, with fine sea sand on top, should be made right in the middle of the present green, and the hole could then be alternately played to the right and left of this hazard. And it might also be well to raise the tee slightly, so as to give the player a better opportunity than now obtains of seeing the exact location of the hole.

The fairway from the tee shot to the fourth hole is altogether too wide. It should be curtailed to the left from ten to fifteen yards.

The sixth hole—one of the best—would be improved by putting a pot bunker about ten yards to the right of the old seventh tee, some twenty yards short of the present circular patch of long grass, and removing the latter. This change would compel straighter play for the second shot, and would also serve the same purpose for the tee shot going to the seventh hole.

The objection raised to the fairway from the tee on the fourth applies also to the eighth and ninth holes, together with the change suggested.

The ninth tee should be extended clear back to the fence, for use only when the wind is favorable.

The going to the eleventh hole from the tee is too wide. Narrow it up to the left. The green should be extended clear up to the road so as to take advantage of the natural undulations.

The bunker guarding the twelfth hole should be treated in the same way as suggested for the first hole.

The fairway on the thirteenth should be narrowed to the right just across the road, and a bunker corresponding to the one on the right should be put in on the left for a pulled second.

A bunker should be put in on the fifteenth hole, across the road to the right near the big sand pile, to catch a sliced second.

Another pot should be put in on the sixteenth hole to the left some ten yards from the second one toward the green. And the fairway should be narrowed to the right.

A small pot bunker is badly needed on the fairway of the third hole, to catch a badly pulled tee shot to the seventeenth. This should be just at the foot of the slope, a little more than half way to the left of the parallel hazard. This would also serve to catch a pulled tee shot on the third hole.

And, finally, the bunker back of the eighteenth



Bunker guarding first hole—shallow, sand too coarse

hole should be extended toward the green two or three yards and deepened.

As to the greens, the large majority are too flat, and consequently uninteresting. It would be comparatively an easy matter to remodel them. The work could be done during the summer months, when there is a lull in general play, and temporary greens could be utilized. These temporary greens could be worked up into excellent shape by taking them in hand a month or so prior to commencing operations on the regular greens.

The dream of having at least a few greens resemble some of the well-known ones in Great Britain is easily capable of realization. All that is necessary is to denude the present greens of their surface of turf, by means of a turf-cutting machine which peels it off in continuous rolls of even, uniform depth, arrange the undulations as desired, replace the sod, and fill in the interstices with fine, screened loam mixed with seed. Keep the whole moist and well rolled for a week and the green will be in fine shape a few weeks afterward. In this way it is quite possible to convert a flat, uninteresting green into one that approximates the real thing—to duplicate in short, to some extent at any rate, such greens as are to be found on the best links on the other side.

Outside of a few at Myopia, and one or two isolated ones scattered here and there throughout the country, we have nothing at all to compare with the general run of greens on the links of Great Britain.

The large majority are all on the same dead level of flat, uninteresting tameness and insipid uniformity, differing only in respect to the care bestowed upon their upkeep at different courses. They are all, or nearly all, characterless, featureless, entirely lacking in charm, and in bringing out to the full the fine capabilities of the player in the skilful negotiation of the great variety of

strokes necessary, both in approaching and in putting.

One thing is certain—no player, no matter whether he be at 18 handicap or scratch, would willingly play over even the best of our courses as they now are if he had the same opportunity of playing over another course possessing some of the attributes of the foreign courses which I have touched upon. He would take the latter every time.

So far I have adverted to what are, in my opinion, the principal features of weakness in the Garden City course. This article would not, in common fairness, be complete without some reference to its many good qualities. It is blessed in the possession of exceptionally fine turf throughout—so good, in fact, that the fairway is far better than the putting green on the majority of courses. This is due, primarily, to a comparatively thin alluvial deposit of loam resting on a sub-stratum of sand and gravel, thus inducing a somewhat thin and attenuated quality of fine grass, free from coarseness, and insuring also perfect drainage, so that even after a very heavy rainstorm play is not affected. This circumstance also permits of the indulgence in the game during the winter months, when other courses are closed.

Not only is the fairway distinctly good but so are the greens, although latterly these have shown a tendency toward comparative coarseness, largely due to the wholly unnecessary—and, in fact, pernicious—custom which has somehow grown up of adding fertilizer, promoting rankness, in a degree—and worms.

The general arrangement of the holes is good. Most of the roads, which constitute hazards, serve their purpose splendidly in this regard. Take, for instance, the ninth, eleventh, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth. Ordinarily these cannot be reached from the tee. With a favoring wind, however, they can. But here is where their strength and attractiveness as hazards come in. A player, under such circumstances, must play with his head and take a weaker club—a brassy, cleek or driving iron—from the tee, so as to be short. In all such cases, where the tee shot is properly played, the green can be reached on the second shot, which fact makes these hazards not only defensible, but furnish an excellent test of judgment as distinguished from hard hitting without regard to the second shot. If these hazards, or others, robbed the long player of any rewards in respect of his long game—if, in short, he were compelled to play short and could not reach the greener on his second shot, then they would unduly penalize him and unduly benefit the shorter player.

Yet, on these same holes, wind against, two very fine shots are necessary to "make" the third.

That is one of the charms of Garden City—the omnipresent wind. Having a free, unobstructed sweep, with the holes, pointing as they do to every point of the compass, it is no easy matter, even to the most skilful player to do the round in a still wind in low figures. And the holes of course vary according to the direction of the wind. Taking the play for a season, one will really have the advantage of playing over four or five new courses as it were, on this one course. And each and every round, irrespective of weather conditions, demand the playing of every club in one's bag, such is the diversity in respect to the distances of the various holes. Its merits are manifold—its faults few.



Second green—too large for a short hole



Twelfth green—a typical green; too flat