

Course Design and Pace of Play

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Presentation Outline

- Design Theory – Creating the Experience
- Design Impact on Pace of Play
- Current Trends and their impact on Pace of Play
- Operational & Maintenance impacts on Pace of Play
- ASGCA efforts to address Pace of Play issues



Design Theory – Creating the Experience

“It seems to me that he, who plans any hole for golf should have two aims: first, to produce something which will provide a true test of the game, and then consider every conceivable way to make it as beautiful as possible. He should have in mind not only the skill and brawn of golfers but their eyes as well.”

*A. W. Tillinghast
The Course Beautiful*



Design Theory – Creating the Experience

- The goal of any architect is to create a fair, inspirational, challenging, versatile, functional and aesthetically pleasing golf course that players of all skill levels will want to experience again and again.

“A good golf course grows on one like a good painting, good music, or any other artistic creation. It is not necessarily a course which appeals the first time one plays over it, but one that grows on the player the more frequently he visits it”.

Dr. Alister MacKenzie



Design Theory – Creating the Experience

- No two golf courses are the same. The time it takes to experience any golf course is as varied as the courses themselves.
- Many factors influence the creation of a great golf experience. They can include:
 - Topography
 - Vegetation
 - Climate
 - Hydrology
 - Soils
 - Environmental Issues
 - Economic Considerations
 - The role of the golf course



Design Theory – Creating the Experience

- Just as there are no two golf courses that are the same, so too all golf experiences are infinitely variable, and take differing amounts of time to get through. Many factors can influence the quality of the golf experience. Some of these include:
 - The physical characteristics of the course (both on and off site)
 - The skill & knowledge level of the player
 - The impact of the day's weather
 - The course set up
 - The maintenance of the facility
 - The habits of one's playing companions
 - The pace and flow of play throughout the golf course.



Design Theory – Creating the Experience

- Pace vs. Flow on a golf course are two factors that influence the golf experience in different ways.
- Pace is the total amount of time it takes to play a round of golf.
- Flow is how well players move through the golf course without having to wait, regardless of the actual time it takes to play.
- From an architectural perspective, Flow is the most important consideration impacting the golf experience.
 - If players are able to enjoy a round of golf that is uninterrupted by waiting to play, then the time it takes to play the round becomes less important.



Design Theory – Creating the Experience

- From an economic perspective, Pace and Flow are of equal importance.
 - In order to maximize the number of players able to use a golf course, proper Pace must be maintained by all groups (particularly the first one).
 - In order for the golf experience to be enjoyable, proper Flow throughout the golf course must be maintained.



Design Impact – Creating Successful Pace and Flow

- Just like many factors influence the creation of the golf experience, so too many design considerations can impact the Pace and Flow of the golf course. Some of these considerations include:
 - Routing
 - Clearing Widths & Under brushing
 - Strategic Design
 - Fairway Width and Angles
 - Green Contouring



Design Impact – Creating Successful Pace and Flow

- Routing influences Pace and Flow in a number of ways.

- Length

“There are many bad long courses and many very good short courses, and length has very little to do with Merit.”

H. S. Colt

- Sequencing of holes
- Distance between holes (green to next tee)
- Elimination of blind shots



Design Impact – Creating Successful Pace and Flow

- How clearing widths and under brushing is planned and implemented greatly impacts Pace and Flow.
- Reduce the severity of doglegs
- Increase playing width by:
 - Under-brushing deeper into forested areas
 - Expanding clearing widths
- Enhancing visibility around and through the golf course.
- Improving recovery options for players hitting errant shots.



Design Impact – Creating Successful Pace and Flow

- Strategic Design has a significant impact on Pace and Flow.
- Forced Carries
- Strategic Playability (providing options)
- Hazard Severity
- Hazard Placement



“There is no such thing as a misplaced bunker. Regardless of where a bunker may be, it is the business of the player to avoid it.”

Donald Ross



Design Impact – Creating Successful Pace and Flow

- Creating generous landing zones can greatly enhance Pace and Flow.
- Generous fairway width at 150 to 235 yards on tee shots accommodates most players
- Par 5 second shots should accommodate play 180 to 220 yards from the first landing area
- Expanding approaches and fairway cuts around the green complex is an effective method to facilitate Pace and Flow



Design Impact – Creating Successful Pace and Flow

- Moderating green contours effectively can improve Pace and Flow.
- Creating interesting putting quality does not mandate the need for radical contouring
- Properly designing surfaces with multiple drainage outlets can provide greens with manageable, fair and challenging putting quality
- Moderating green contours also enhances the chance for recovery shots and more successful pitching and chipping



Current Trends – Enhancing Pace and Flow

- The golf industry as a whole has become more innovative and responsive to the economic and environmental pressures that impact the long term viability of golf courses around the world.
- These innovations and responses have not only begun to address the needs for conservation and sustainability, but have also been coupled with solutions that improve the Pace of Play.
- Current trends that have impacted Pace of Play include:
 - Water conservation
 - Turf grass reduction
 - Bunker size reduction
 - Alternative facilities



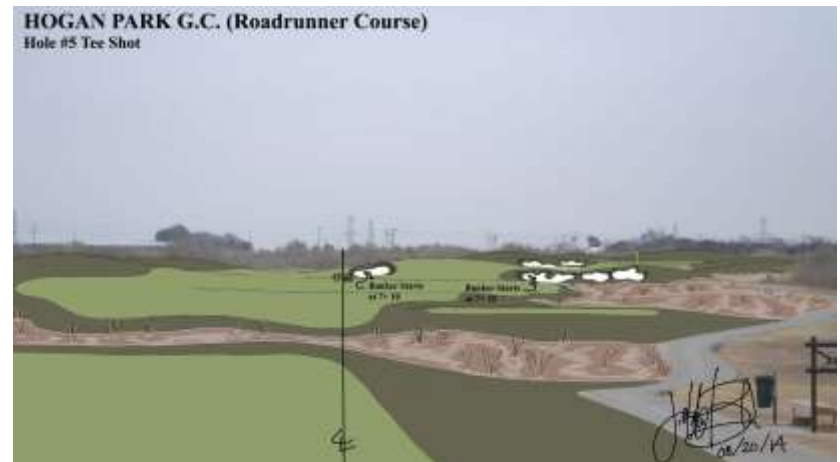
Current Trends – Enhancing Pace and Flow

- Water Conservation
 - Less use of water has, in many instances, resulted in firm and fast playing conditions that can enhance Pace and Flow if other architectural and playability factors are present
 - Less emphasis on lush, green, saturated conditioning effectively shortens the golf course
 - Reduced expenditures on water allows for maintenance resources to be re-allocated to improve the overall playing conditions of a facility



Current Trends – Enhancing Pace and Flow

- Turf grass Reduction
 - The trend toward reducing turf grass acreage goes hand in hand with water conservation. If the areas of turf removal are located properly, they should have a neutral effect on Pace and Flow.
 - Depending on the treatment of the turf removal areas, they can improve Pace and Flow by reducing the need to look for lost balls, and effectively expanding the playable area of the course.



Current Trends – Enhancing Pace and Flow

- Bunker Size Reduction
 - In an effort to reduce maintenance expenditures, many course are looking to reduce the overall “footprint” of their bunkers.



- Often this can result in a widening in the margin of error for mishit shots, and a reduction in difficulty for the less accomplished player.
- Reductions in time are also due to less raking.



Current Trends – Enhancing Pace and Flow

- Alternative Facilities and Features
 - Many clubs are creating alternative facilities to expand their golf offering to new, beginning players without creating a negative impact on their primary course. Some of these facilities are “stand alone”, while others can be creatively embedded into an existing course.
 - All of these offerings create a nurturing environment to learn the game, and help to eliminate conflict between beginners and more accomplished “regulars”
 - These facilities can also offer a golf alternative for individuals who may not have the time to play a four or five hour round, thereby reducing the traffic on the primary course.



Current Trends – Enhancing Pace and Flow

- Alternative Facilities and Features
 - Replacing the trend of increasing length at all cost, many clubs are now seeking to shorten their golf course by implementing new forward and junior tees creating an experience that is more suitable to their level of ability.
 - By keeping track of what tees golfers play, many clubs have discovered that providing shorter alternatives on their course reaches a greater number of players when compared to the back tee users.
 - Some facilities are embedding short layouts within the structure of their existing course, or providing 3 or 6 hole loops through creative routing alternatives.



Current Trends – Enhancing Pace and Flow



“Golf courses are becoming far too long. Twenty years ago we played three rounds of golf a day, and considered we had taken an interminably long time if we took more than two hours to play a round. Today it not infrequently takes over three hours.

Dr. Allister MacKenzie



Operational & Maintenance Impacts on Pace and Flow

- Create a fast Paced culture within the users or membership.
- Teach beginners etiquette and the need to keep up good Pace.
- Be cognizant of the course set up as it relates to Pace and the specific players and weather conditions on a given day.
- Pay close attention to maintenance considerations such as:
 - Tee Placements
 - Hole Locations
 - Green Speeds
 - Rough Heights



ASGCA Efforts in Addressing Pace of Play

- Participating and collaborating with the USGA in their Pace of Play initiatives.
- Created the Pace of Play Checklist to assist existing facilities in combatting Pace of Play issues.
- Collecting case studies to research the impact of Pace of Play on architecture and operations in an effort to determine best practices.
- Including educational sessions on Pace of Play issues to our members at the Annual Meeting and other ASGCA functions.
- Encouraging our members to promote the USGA Pace of Play initiatives with our clients and contacts.



ASGCA Efforts in Addressing Pace of Play



A. Initial Steps to Sizing Up the Issues of Pace-of-Play

- ☐ What type of course do you operate?
- ☐ What type of golfers (Hcp's.) do you cater to?
- ☐ What is your current USGA Pace Rating?
- ☐ Cart/Walking policies
- ☐ What are your current round times?
- ☐ Are round times consistent — or varied?
- ☐ What is your idea of an ideal round time?

B. Understanding Site Constraints

- ☐ How set-in-stone is your routing and course footprint?
- ☐ Is there any room for change and adjustment?
- ☐ Quantify the grade and site constraints
- ☐ Quantity soil types, vegetation and firmness

C. The Design Intent of the Course

- ☐ History and legacy
- ☐ Identify the essential design characteristics
- ☐ How does the design dictate set-up?
- ☐ How does the design dictate maintenance?
- ☐ Does the design limit flexibility (tees, lengths)?
- ☐ What changes to the design intent would be possible and beneficial?
- ☐ What type of golfers (Hcp's.) do you cater to?

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Pace of Play CHECKLIST & TIPS for working with your COURSE ARCHITECT



Pace-of-Play has become a household term in golf. What was once regarded as "something only the group ahead could solve" is now being tackled by all of golf's major organizations.

The members of the American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) are uniquely qualified to assist course owners and operators with Pace-of-Play improvement. Getting courses to move faster — and smoother — involves five basic ingredients:

- (1) *Player abilities, and the varying types of players on a course at any given time.*
- (2) *How the course is being managed (e.g., the starting time interval, sequencing at the first tee, assisting players, etc.)*
- (3) *Course set-up (e.g., tee flexibility, hole lengths, hole placement, etc.)*
- (4) *Maintenance and Turf Conditions (green speeds, rough heights, tall grasses, visibility, etc.)*
- (5) *Course design — The key variable that sets it all in motion.*

The goal is to create an even flow of golfers as they play the game, minimizing wait times and creating a more enjoyable experience. Your Golf Course Architect also has the goal of preserving the spirit of the game — to make sure that your course offers the fun and challenging aspects that lure people to play time and time again.

For more information visit: www.asgca.org

D. Routing & Sequence

- ☐ Does the current routing pose any routing obstacles?
- ☐ Where are the issues?
- ☐ Does the par order and lengths of holes work for (or against) good pace?
- ☐ Are their solutions that may not involve physical change? (Easy fixes)
- ☐ What are some ideas that may be "thinking out of the box"?

E. Course Set-up, Length & Flexibility

- ☐ Is tee flexibility ample?
- ☐ Is there a tee use policy and a way to enforce it?
- ☐ Are there solutions to set-up where wait times can be reduced or eliminated?

F. Course Conditions

- ☐ Greens speeds
- ☐ Rough heights
- ☐ Tall grasses, and their proximity to frequent play
- ☐ Fairway widths
- ☐ Hazard difficulty
- ☐ Forced carries
- ☐ Tree overgrowth (blind areas, visibility)
- ☐ Hole locations
- ☐ Firmness, roll, lies

G. Follow-up

- ☐ Master planning relative to Pace-of-Play solutions
- ☐ Turf area evaluation
- ☐ Tee addition planning

Produced in cooperation with the United States Golf Association

*For information on the USGA Pace Rating System go to:

www.usga.org/paceofplay



Thank you

