



Golf-course accessories: a traditional presentation

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You don't have to have an old, distinguished golf course—steeped in tradition—for it to look and feel like one. While design issues are crucial, golf courses can still exercise a hold on our imaginations by accessorising properly. Just as a piece of jewellery can enhance the look of a dress, golf-course accessories can strengthen the desired appearance and ambiance of a layout. Sadly, in too many instances, they undermine it.

While tee markers and flagsticks are essential for play, many golf clubs garnish their courses with all the extra trimmings. Ball washers, tee towels, water coolers, commercial benches and trash baskets, are liberally disbursed throughout golf courses. Electric fans, divot-mix containers, bunker rakes, directional markers and other signage are commonplace as well. Unfortunately,

birdhouses, lake fountains and waterfalls have also grown popular.

Above all, most golf courses have been thoroughly measured and contain a variety of colour-coded posts and markers that reveal precise yardages to all pin locations. In this age of information technology, even golf carts come equipped with global positioning satellite (GPS) monitors, which disseminate accurate yardages and other modern conveniences, such as, real-time scoring and messaging. Indeed, countless clubs have gone overboard in an attempt to pamper golfers.

It is easy to discard some accessory items as superfluous and indulgent. Golf purists find virtue with amenities reduced to their simplest form. Paul Wood, vice-president of sales for a golf-course sign company called

From Tee to Green, summarises the classical approach with accessories. He states, 'The big-name courses use the smallest stuff'. Surely, this is showing respect for the natural origins of the game.

Part of what makes golf cathedrals, such as, Seminole Golf Club in Florida and Cypress Point Golf Club in California, so charming is that they both share tiny, nondescript pro shops, outfitted with little more than the essentials for play.

Golf courses wear subtleties quite well. Understated amenities, which are functionally simplistic, look much more attractive when kept at a minimum. Nothing glitzy should cut the eye. Too often, golf courses appear overly contrived when dressed-up with excessive gear. Therefore, remove the 'bells and whistles', which clutter the

OPPOSITE: Cypress Point Club, Pebble Beach, Monterey Peninsula, California, USA. Clever utilisation of driftwood serves as a bench next to Cypress Point's fourth-tee complex. (Photo by Carlyle Rood.)

premises and take a conservative, minimalist approach with golf-course accessories.

Unfortunately, most accessories today are composed of glossy metals, moulded plastics and other synthetic compositions that are at odds with a traditional golf-course aesthetic. As such, these items appear artificial and become visually accentuated against a native landscape. Thus, it is always good advice to integrate the mere necessities naturally into a setting to avoid being a distraction from the golf.

Selecting proper golf-course accessories can also complement the restoration process. Many illustrious golf clubs evoke an antiquated sensibility by exhibiting old-fashioned golf accessories. Vintage, wooden flagsticks, for instance, can recapture the 'old-world' feeling and spirit to the golfing grounds. These stout flagsticks were commonly used at the beginning of the twentieth century when hickory shafts were fashionable and legendary architects, such as, Charles Blair Macdonald, A. W. Tillinghast and Donald Ross, were mapping out their masterpieces.

Today, wooden flagsticks are turned from

poplar hardwood to an inch in diameter. Shorter selections are recommended, preferably between six and seven feet in height, to recapture an old-style links look. They come varnished, exposing their natural grain finish, or custom painted in black-and-white stripe patterns. These sticks acquire more character over time as some degree of wear becomes visible.

Stout, wooden flagsticks are currently used at venues throughout the United Kingdom and are returning to classical designs in North America as well. Holston Hills Country Club—a Donald Ross relic in Knoxville, Tennessee—has restored its original look and feel by exhibiting these flagsticks.

In addition, Holston Hills uses aged redwood planks as benches, which appear much more charming than those that come with assembly instructions and a packet of screws. Golf-course superintendent, Ryan Blair, explains: 'All of our accessories make golfers feel as if they are stepping back in time. It's one of the ways we have chosen to honour our classical course heritage'.

Stout, wooden yardage posts provide another option. These posts typically measure only twenty-four inches in height and match the model and colour scheme of the flagsticks. Yardage posts are unobtrusive to play, because they are removable as opposed to fixed markers, like birdhouses and trees, which often impede a golfer's stance or swing. Inserting only one post per hole, preferably at 150 yards, will provide distance orientation without the muddle of measurements, which inundate all too many modern venues. The links-style course at Stanley Thompson's Cape Breton Highlands in Nova Scotia, Canada, integrates yardage posts in this fashion.

Reproductions and handcrafted refurbishments are also ideal for clubs that believe that there is a place in golf for tradition and history. A carpenter or local craftsman can customise green wooden boxes for divot-mixes on par-3s. This type of personal touch is what you would have seen in yesteryear when divot-mix containers were not commercially manufactured and mass distributed.

Likewise, an old-time hardware pail with a

coat of green paint suffices as a water bucket to rinse your irons following tee-shots. Roaring Gap Club, a Donald Ross design in North Carolina, has utilised green water pails for years. These weathered pails reek with character as their dings, dents and scrapes remind golfers of a bygone genre.

In addition, Old Town Club induces an antiquated atmosphere with its archaic grey stonewalls and bridges erected throughout the layout. Natural, stone tee-markers and cast-iron cups are other touches that create a distinct sense of time and place. Ball washers that turn and crank are also nostalgic. This distinctive style appears most fitting at Donald Ross's Augusta Country Club in Augusta, Georgia.

Other golf courses use accessories to enhance a cultural theme. For instance, Bobby Weed's Olde Farm Club in Bristol, Virginia, integrates four refurbished tobacco-drying barns within the layout. Baled hay, hedgerows and cattle crossings advance the farmland motif of this touted new design. 'The golf course is still a working farm', said head professional Robert McKenzie, who



Olde Farm County Club, Bristol, Virginia, USA. The sixth hole features an old, tobacco-drying barn that has been converted into a shelter for snacks and other conveniences. (Photo courtesy of Weed Golf Design.)

noted that there are more than 400 fruit trees harvested throughout the venue. Many farmland accessories at Olde Farm are, in fact, real. Similarly, Dave Axland and Dan Proctor's Wild Horse Golf Club in Gothenburg, Nebraska, is noted for utilising cattle skulls as 150-yard markers, simply because cattle grazing has always been prevalent in this area of the Midwest. Iron horseshoes also are used as tee-markers at Wild Horse to showcase another part of its native habitat.

In the same way, Cherokee Country Club, a Donald Ross design in Knoxville, Tennessee, uses carvings of arrows, spears and hatchets,

for tee-markers to complement a tribal motif. Accessories, or the lack thereof, impact upon the golf experience. Not enough thought, time or imagination is dedicated towards selecting appropriate accessories and properly integrating them into the field of play. Accessories are certainly essential to the restoration process in preserving an established culture or enhancing an antiquated theme. A traditional presentation is certainly in order at many golf courses today.