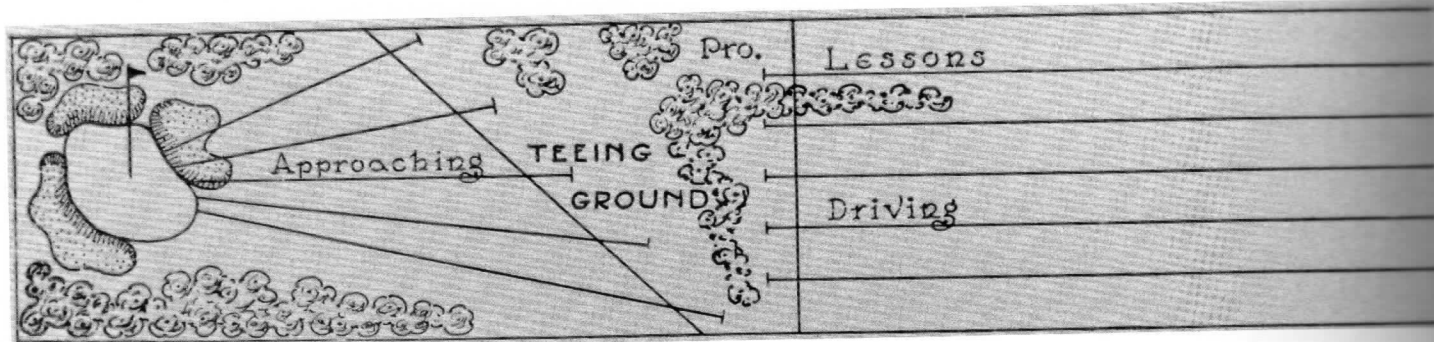


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A PRACTICAL PRACTICE GROUND



GROUND for Practice in proximity to the clubhouse is one of the essentials of the modern golf course. The need of it is recognized generally and demanded. The question of how to plan such an area to be given over for the practicing of various shots to as many as possible at one time is one which this article will attempt to answer.

When courses were planned in this country years ago, little heed was given as a rule to any practice ground. The pro was forced to get a toe-hold on any little patch near his club-shop and this pawky corner quickly became denuded of turf and his pupils were forced to knock their shots from a worn, clay surface rather than learn to nip them properly from turf. The instructor knew that this was wrong and the plea for suitable grounds for instruction and practice first came from the professionals. I think that nowhere will be found any who takes a more genuine interest in the progress of his pupils than the golf pro, and this honest desire prompted the request, which unfortunately was given but scant attention until the players themselves realized that the practicing of their strokes from well-kept turf was improving their games. It may not be far from fact to say that the excellence of American golf found itself with the recognition of the necessity of suitable practice grounds.

Today, committees, who are entrusted with the building of new courses or the reconstruction of old ones, invariably stress this point in conferences with the course architect. Indeed the realization of its importance is such that in instances where the lack of space around the clubhouse will not permit of that greatly desired plan of two swings of nine holes and practice ground, too—the former arrangement is abandoned frequently and the practice

ground given preference. But this should not be necessary if sufficient study is given to the selection of the site for the clubhouse. There should be room for both features, and it is possible that the sketch on this page may help.

It is to be inferred that at another nearby spot there exists a practice putting green such as will be found near every clubhouse, and it is to be hoped that this offers true turf. The plan which is illustrated provides for every shot in the bag, explosion and deft pitches from sand pits included, but it is best that the green be used only for approaches from the varying lengths. I am pleased to call this plan The Ridgewood, for it was there that it was originated when the new courses in North Jersey were planned. Let us regard it for a moment.

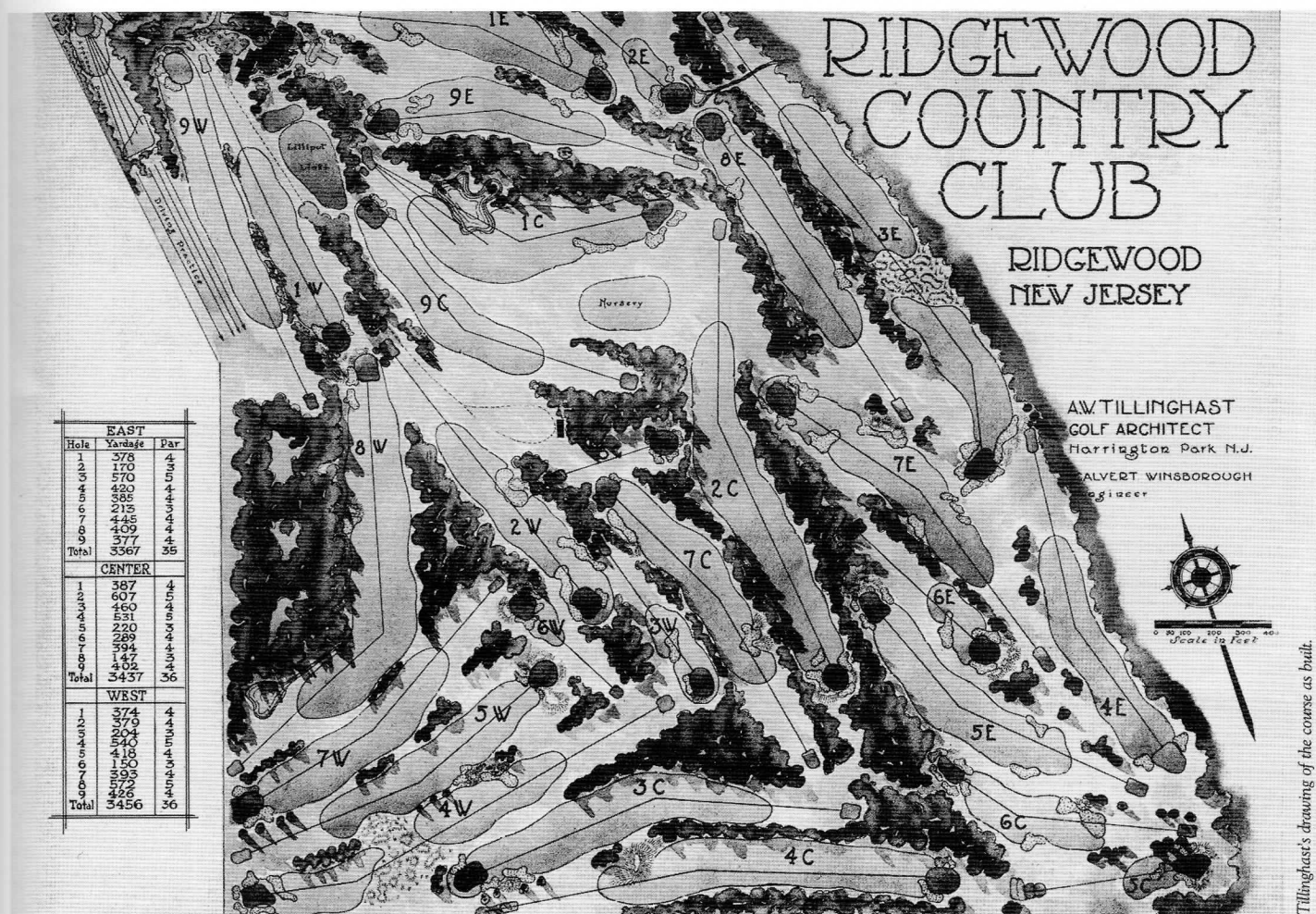
The Green itself was contoured and turfed exactly as any other of the twenty-seven, and the entire area maintained quite as carefully—teeing grounds, fairway and sand pits. It will be noted that the contour of the green shows the proper face to all approaches, which grade in length from a mashie-niblick to an iron of 175 yards. The teeing ground is immense, not only for the purpose of providing varying lengths for a number of players at one time but also to allow repairs to wear and tear. Immediately back of those who practice with irons to the green, there is a planting of trees and shrubbery, which completely isolates the play directly on the other side. From this side of the teeing ground, certainly seven or eight may drive simultaneously and without crowding (although the sketch shows but four lines). The range of the drives is up to nearly three hundred yards.

Now for the feature which I fancy—the private corner, completely screened by tree and shrubbery planting, for the instructor and his pupil. Naturally enough every one,

seeking instruction and coaching, would prefer to concentrate, giving ear to the pro without the irritating presence of observers. Such distractions cannot help and it would be equally annoying to consult a physician with all the other patients grouped around wagging their heads knowingly and in pity. I have observed novices at their golf lessons, getting along famously under the soothing encouragement of the instructor, suddenly tighten up and begin to hash horribly because of the embarrassing intrusion of an onlooker. It seems to me that this plan has merit, and I know it works out well, for after building the first one at Ridgewood, I introduced similar arrangements at other courses and without exception they are most satisfactory. Truly it is *Multum in parvo*.

As an illustration of the handicap of inadequate instruction grounds, I will refer to Elmsford in Westchester. (And I know that the gentlemen of that club will not mind inasmuch as that course is undergoing a complete reconstruction.) Until now the Turnesa boys have been forced to instruct their pupils directly in open fairways and in the face of constant play. Under these conditions, none of the instructors or pupils could give undivided attention to the

lessons even during the hours when play over the course was desultory, and at times when the procession was regular the instruction and practice had to cease. Throughout the country there are many similar conditions, though happily not so frequently encountered as formerly. On course after course are to be observed solitary players tearing up the fairway within a small area with divots all about as they practice to the serious damage to the regular course and great danger to themselves and others. And I am not the Pharisee as I regard these evils for in the past I have sinned when I have not stood firmly for adequate practice space when there was none too much property. But there came a time when a great light came over me and I resolved to sin no more. The finding of a practice ground is essential—near the clubhouse if possible but somewhere without a doubt, even in a remote corner. It is not the most desirable thing for the pro to have to walk far from his shop with his pupil or for the fellow who has a half hour or so to keep in stroke to have to waste good time in getting there and back, but even so, it is better than being forced to massacre the regular course.



Ridgewood Site Plan with practice range indicated on upper left.