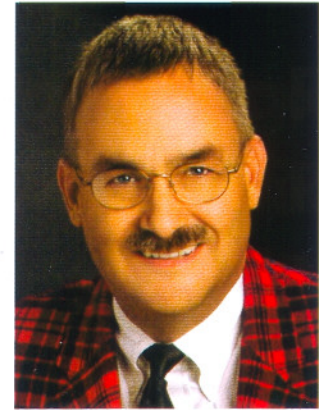




Remodeling, Restoration, Reconstruction... *What's the Difference?*



EDWARD BEIDEL, JR.
ASGCA BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Your club's golf course is in need of some invigoration. The Green Committee is investigating possibilities, but some members are concerned about keeping the classic course character intact while making improvements. Everyone agrees that something needs to be done...but what do we members really want to implement?

The terms, remodeling, reconstruction, and restoration, often used interchangeably, actually have different meanings. Remodeling describes changes to update the course for modern technology and enhanced player abilities. Except for new course construction, remodeling is the most common golf construction activity.

Restoration is the process of returning a golf course to its original state but today the term sometimes is used inaccurately. A true restoration requires returning the golf course to its original design, which was lost as a result of renovation or remodeling during an interim period.

To effect a true restoration, acquisition of drawings/sketches, still or aerial photographs of the original course layout, layout or the recollections of older members may help the golf architect replicate the original design. A true restoration sounds glamorous but it is a major commitment of time and resources.

Once members understand the extensive nature of the process, enthusiasm

230 yards from the primary tee box are now misplaced if the course is to challenge today's seasoned player. Therefore, restoring a course to its original design could fail to challenge and interest a proportion of today's golfers.

Another consideration is whether players are willing to give up the lush, green look achieved by today's modern irrigation systems and maintenance practices? Most golfers do not know that the mani-

Perhaps what we really mean when we talk about the latest boom in golf course restoration is really golf course rejuvenation - restoration of components to their original configurations and sizes but alteration of their placement to accommodate current technology.

In contrast, reconstruction is the process of rebuilding the physical structure of the golf course components (bunkers, tee boxes, greens) to reduce maintenance problems and accommodate the ever-increasing number of rounds experienced over the years.

may be diminished. In actuality, very few "true" restorations are implemented today because modern technology and golfer expectations have altered the game. Improvements in equipment have increased the average shot length such that bunkers formerly placed 200 -

cured look that they see on television is not fully realistic and virtually unknown when many courses were originally developed.

Players often do not understand the relationship between mainte-

nance practices and a golf course's strategic design. In the early part of the century, the lack of irrigation systems meant that many more areas of a golf course were "natural" terrain. These dry areas were often incorporated into the course design and became an important element of the game. Philosophically, returning to the original design would mean returning areas of the course to their original condition, whether dry or wet.

In addition, trees on a golf course present more than aesthetic value. They can play an important role in shot strategy. Often after a golf course is designed, clubs plant trees to improve aesthetic quality. However, as trees mature, they can become a screen rather than a frame, and influence shot selection and the playing line of the golf hole.

A complete restoration would require removal of mature trees in order to return the course to the original playing strategy. Although somewhat necessary to improve playing conditions and increase shot values, a tree removal program is not a popular recommendation.

To guide a restoration decision, the following items merit consideration. A true restoration means returning the course to its original design and conditions. How far are members willing to go to regain their 1920s classic?

If it does not include tearing up the sprinkler system, removing the trees and letting the turf grow, there are more palatable options. Here, the involvement of a golf architect working closely with facility members and personnel can provide appropriate and exciting alternatives.

Preserving history in the form of classic golf courses is an admirable goal. However, that must be balanced by acknowledgment of today's technological advances and the desire of superintendents, players and the golf architect to have a course that is challenging, interesting, enjoyable and aesthetic.

Perhaps what we really mean when we talk about the latest boom in golf course restoration is really golf course rejuvenation - restoration of components to their original configurations and sizes but alteration of their placement to accommodate current technology.

By rejuvenation, the course's original character and components are retained, while current demands and expectations of the modern golfer are met. **BR**

Ed Beidel, Jr. is a current board member of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. A leading golf course architect, his recent renovation credits include Riddell's Bay Golf & CC, Bermuda; Cherry Creek Golf Club, Youngwood, Penn.A; Northwest Park Golf Course, Wheaton, Md.D; and Needwood Golf Course, Derwood, Md.D. Beidel is based in Orlando, Fla.I and may be reached at (407) 658-6428 or (410) 707-5623.

ASGCA has a number of resources to assist clubs in the remodeling/reconstruction/restoration process, including "The Golf Course Remodeling Process: Questions & Answers." Visit the ASGCA website at www.asgca.org to download brochures and other free publications.

[INTERNATIONAL] - 44

Finally, clubs should try to create 'loyalty' programmes for visitors, getting visitors and members' guests to sign up for an e-newsletter, in which the club manager can circulate incentives and offers to persuade the casual visitor to use their club more regularly.

In a recent conversation I had with an owner of a golf club in Portugal, he stated that in order for his club to be financially successful, he needed to increase his visitor rounds from 20,000 to 25,000 per year. But he did not know if the 20,000 rounds he currently enjoyed were from 20,000 golfers who came to his club once a year, or 5,000 golfers who played four times a year (I suspect it was somewhere in the middle of these two numbers).

In order to get his additional 5,000 visitor rounds, he could spend a huge amount of money on an advertising campaign, or he could devise a scheme that would persuade

his 5,000 visitors to play one more round a year than they currently play. An e-newsletter is a perfect way for a club to communicate with their members and their visitors, and is a very powerful tool when used imaginatively.

Whilst the economic 'storm' is raging around your club, be sure to get to work on these types of initiatives and get them in place as soon as possible - they may not show overnight results to your bottom line, but they will ensure that your club comes out of these turbulent and difficult times a much stronger and more successful organisation.

Jerry Kilby is chief executive officer, Club Managers Association of Europe, based in London, Eng. He can be reached via email: jerry.kilby@cmiaeurope.plus.com