



## COMPLAINTS ON HOLE CUTTING

David Weston writes an appreciation of hole cutting.

Secretary At Work: April 2004 *(reviewed January 2012)*

In common with other secretaries on e-mail, I received an enquiry with regard to the cutting of holes with the aid of a “Board”. As a 14-year-old earning pocket money by working on my home course during the school holidays, (no Health & Safety in those days - but I survived), I was present when the new green chairman delivered the board to the head greenkeeper. When he left following his weekly meeting, his comment was “keep that board handy, where you can find it”. “Of course I will”, was Donald’s reply, as he took 4 six-inch nails and hammered it firmly to the back of the shed door!

At my present club, all staff members take the board out with them when cutting the holes. Perhaps if the problem that raised this enquiry was identified correctly, then it might be possible to solve it. I doubt if the use of a board or not will be the answer.

In summer medal play, all golfers “hole” out their ball, 20 per cent of shots played by each golfer will be into that 4.5 inch hole. In my opinion the selection of the hole position and efficient cutting of the hole (and replacement of the old one) is the most important task on the course. It is decidedly not the job for the non-golfing apprentice! Any of the following could be the reason for the secretary being approached about the changing of the holes and because the question was asked at this time of year, the first three are more likely.

1. There is a worn area about a yard round the hole
2. The edge of the hole is not cleanly cut
3. The members claim the hole is crowned

During summer:

4. They have not been moved
5. I had to putt over the old hole on the 8th
6. What a stupid place to put the hole on the 5th

If the club has followed the EGU advice and has a course policy document, then the procedure for the changing of holes, summer and winter, will be detailed and it should be relatively easy for the secretary to explain any deviation from that policy.

Firstly, consider the practicality of cutting the hole on a particular course. There are two types of hole-cutter. The split half cylinder is made for greens that have a good depth of loam, or are over a clay base (do use the board). With this type, the board is placed in position on a level site and the two half cylinders inserted and knocked down. One full twist and if the greens are firm, the plug will come out as a unit. The hole-cup is then inserted and knocked down. The plug removed should fit the old hole exactly. In summer, if the edge of the hole isn't cut cleanly, then the club needs a new replacement cutter of the same type.

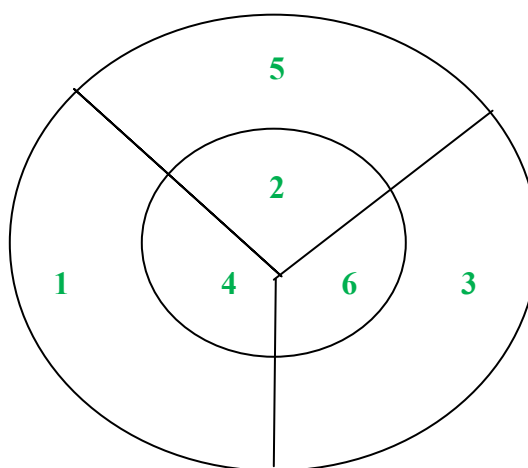
The second is the cylindrical "bogey" cutter on a T-bar shaft. This is the choice for greens that have variable depths of good soil, or are stoney, (do not use the board). The cutter is dropped smartly to make a clean cut a couple of inches deep and twisted to remove the turf plug. The cutter is then re-inserted, twisted and lifted repeatedly to remove soil until the depth is suitable for insertion of the hole-cup. The ground immediately round the cup is supported by placing the inside of both feet against the cutter to prevent the ground becoming slightly raised (crowning). It is far easier to make the judgement of the correct depth if the work area is not obscured by a board. With this procedure there is no guarantee that the volume of the plug and soil from the new hole will match the void from the old one. Any difference should be made up or lost by using loose soil/top dressing, carried round in a bucket for the purpose. There is a skill in packing the loose soil and plug so that it knits back perfectly level with the rest of the green. My fine was sixpence for each plug scalped by the mower or depressed plug spotted by the head greenkeeper. My weekly pay was only £2.00 (old money). I was a quick learner! Whichever type of cutter is used, the hole edge should be inspected and any prostrate grass trimmed off, if necessary, with curved scissors to leave a perfectly clean edge.

The members always assume that conditions on the day of hole changing were perfect. Perhaps they would like to try to cut new holes in a rainstorm on waterlogged greens, or cut them on greens without irrigation during a dry summer. That stupid hole position on the 5th was probably on a high spot, cut on a day when the green was in danger of flooding. That rounded hole edge on that same day was again a problem caused by trying to cut a new hole when the green was waterlogged. Having to putt over the old hole plug on the 8th is a direct result of it being the smallest green on the course and the number of useable pin positions is very limited. The holes are in the same place: of course they are! It's three weeks since the complainant last played and he always plays on a Monday. The holes have been moved twice each week since then, and are now back in the same area of each green again. That worn area a yard from the hole, especially in winter on wet main greens, is a result of all the members pressurising to play on them when they are waterlogged and insisting on each player having the flag attended. STRI advised that this rule of golf should be relaxed for winter golf to protect that area close to the hole, but few clubs follow it. The attendant's feet create a worn trampled area on the green at arms length from the flag. No one puts their feet any closer than that to the hole. As a 4-foot or longer putt crosses the worn patch, it may deviate and then as it slows, it turns as it moves onto the untrampled green ring round the hole. "It's 'crowned'" is the cry! It was not when the greenkeeper cut it and whether he used his board or not, would not make any difference.

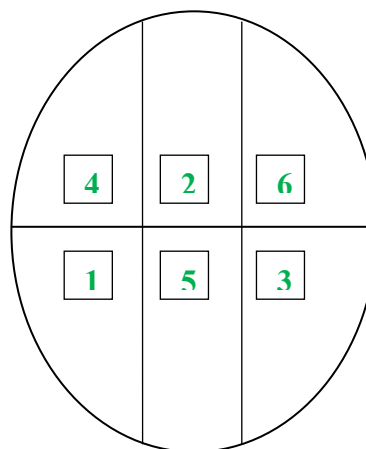
In good summer growing conditions, the grass adjacent to the hole cup grows better, as it has greater access to air, water and nutrients. This extra growth can explain why a dying putt turns away, another claim for a “crowned” hole, but this time in summer.

I believe in using all of the green for pin placements throughout both summer and winter (if conditions are suitable). The outer extremities of the green may be used in winter to reduce traffic across the greens. Using all the green evens out compaction. Holes should be moved a minimum of twice a week. The following is not prescriptive. It merely serves to illustrate how a hole moving sequence for every day golf can fit the R&A requirements for pins in competitive golf to be: 6 easy, six hard, six average; 6 at the front, 6 in the middle, 6 at the back. For example, each green is split into 6 areas, depending on its shape and contours,

- Outer left      **1**
- Inner Back     **2**
- Outer right    **3**
- Inner left      **4**
- Outer back     **5**
- Inner right     **6**



- Left Front      **1**
- Centre back    **2**
- Right front     **3**
- Left back       **4**
- Centre front   **5**
- Right Back     **6**



When the holes are first cut for summer, the hole on the 1st will be cut in area 1, the 2nd in area 2, 3rd in area 3 and so on. The 7th will be in area 1, as will the 13th. When the holes are next moved, the hole on the 1st moves to area 2, the 2nd to area 3 and so on. Holes 7 and 13 will then be in area 2. This procedure is followed successively, each time the holes are moved and it

avoids a new hole being cut adjacent to an old plug before it has had a chance to heal. If the personnel cutting the holes changes, it is easy for them to continue the sequence. Most clubs are there to provide golf for the enjoyment of the members. The above approach presents them with the same fair challenge each time they play, be it for pleasure or in a competition.

*[This document is prepared for guidance and is accurate at the date of publication only. We will not accept any liability (in negligence or otherwise) arising from any member or third party acting, or refraining from acting, on the information contained in this document.]*