



## HOLE POSITIONS

David Weston writes about the placing of Hole Positions on the green.

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During his commentary on the Masters at Augusta, Peter Alliss remarked that holes should not be positioned close to the edges of the green. On checking the August 1987 pamphlet “Recommendations for the Hole Positions for Competitions” published by the R&A, their advice was that the hole positions should be cut “at least four paces from the edge of the Green”. A phone call to them confirmed that this advice was still current although this information may now be obtained from their publication “Guidance on Running a Competition” Chapter 5 Course Set Up (P 38 to 43). Other factors, closeness to bunkers, severe slopes, old plug holes, distribution round the 18 holes are also mentioned as being needed to be taken into account when selecting the hole positions.

I had recently measured the areas and produced accurate plans of the greens at my home course. Over a period of years I had received comments from my course manager about the restricted area available to him to cut the holes on two particular greens. There had been complaints from members about how new holes were often positioned too close to old unhealed plugs, near slopes and holes not being cut “straight” for competitions.

As an exercise, I decided to calculate the percentage of useable area on each green where the holes may be cut in accordance with R&A advice. My initial exercise was to examine five basic geometric shapes and calculate their effect on that useful area for a green of 600 square metres. A perimeter strip, 3 metres wide (my guess at 4 paces) makes that area unavailable for pin positions. The usable area was calculated for each shape. As the exercise is theoretical it assumes the total area of each green to be flat. The third column gives the figures for the same exercise but restricting that perimeter strip to 2 metres.

Shape	Useful percentage at 3 metres	Useful percentage at 2 metres
Circle	63	75
“Ellipse”	58	71
Square	57	70
Rectangle (30x20)	56	69
Narrow Rectangle (40x15)	52	66
Symmetrical T Shape	46	59

The same parameter on an unusable 3 metre strip round the perimeter was then applied to the actual greens on the course, again assuming that all greens are flat. Areas are measured in Square Metres.

Hole	Area	Useful Percentage
1	365	31
2	517	47
3	514	43
4	515	45
5	437	43
6	607	49
7	400	45
8	238	33
9	434	44

Hole	Area	Useful Percentage
10	403	43
11	401	45
12	505	47
13	530	46
14	567	46
15	588	44
16	463	46
17	513	47
18	526	41

I was somewhat surprised to find that the figure was below a half for every green on the course. The 8<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> greens are obviously the two of major concern to the course manager. The 1<sup>st</sup> green particularly so, as there is a marked slope on the front half of the green, making that area unusable for pin positions. The green rises over a ridge to a flatter back section, giving him a very limited area on that back section if he is not to cut the hole on or near the ridge.

During the competitive season, 3 qualifying competitions are held each week, Men's, Ladies, and a Junior or Senior event. It has become standard practice to try to meet the requirements of cutting holes for competitive golf on every occasion when the holes are cut between April and the end of October.

For major and open qualifying competitions we consider it is important to adhere to the R&A requirements. However, for us and many of the older courses having smaller greens than those shown above, perhaps for internal club competitions the unusable strip could be reduced to 2 metres, with the proviso that no more than three holes per eighteen should be cut in the outer extremity.

It would help the beleaguered greenkeeper in keeping the new hole away from unhealed old plugs, particularly in drier weather. Column 3 of table 1 shows that by reducing that perimeter strip from 3 metres to 2 metres, the percentage of the area available to the greenkeeper to cut the hole increases by an extra 12 percent, irrespective of the shape of the green.

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