



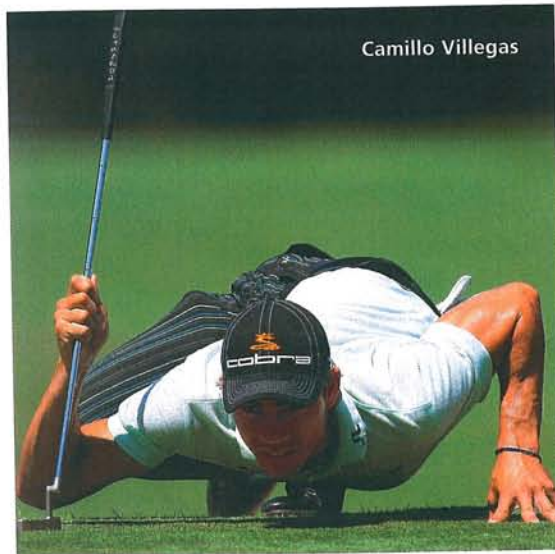
from **the designer's desk**

robert trent jones, jr

mr. stimpson and the stymie

Eddie Stimpson, an amateur champion, invented a device to measure the speed of greens after watching a competitor putt his ball off the green at the 1935 US Open. Stimpson hoped green keepers would adopt his device as a way to gauge consistency in the speed of greens, though his suggestions were ignored. As green surfaces got faster and smoother, one of golf's oldest rules, the "stymie," came under assault. Scottish golfers always accepted the unpredictable lie as an essential component of their game. American golfers hated any obstacle between their ball and the hole, and under the old rules, if an opponent's ball was on a putting line, players had to work around or over it.

In 1952, the stymie rule was abolished. That meant golfers could mark their balls on the green, violating the ancient prescription to "play it as it lies." With the abolition of the stymie and improvements in speed of greens, achieved through improved grass types, coupled with enhanced maintenance practices, putting took on even greater importance. In the aftermath of these improvements, Mr. Stimpson's invention was revisited and improved upon by the USGA. Adopted as the standard instrument for setting up championship courses and first used at the U.S. Open in 1977, the stimpmeter changed players' expectations dramatically.



The stimpmeter is "a furrowed, yardstick-like track that when tilted at a certain angle releases a ball from a notch... How far the ball rolls... Determines the green's speed". Based on studies of various green surfaces, the USGA created a chart of green speeds for everyday and championship play. Because of rules changes, we believe every golf course needs a maintenance manual that is appropriate for the contours and grass types of that specific course for both championship and everyday play, just as automobiles have specific maintenance manuals suited to each car type.

Grass is a living organism and cannot tolerate close clipping or intense rolling for too long. Wind and heat destroy closely cropped, gently contoured greens while firm, very contoured greens as at the Old Course in St. Andrews, with hardy mix of grass types, will survive even in a drought period. Our new links course in Washington State, Chambers Bay, echoes the robust and subtle defenses of the Old Course's greens. Recently touring professionals played Chambers Bay and all hit the green on the twelfth, a drivable par 4, but each walked away with a three-putt par, even though the hole was not set in an unusually difficult position. As the old saying goes: "Drive for show, putt for dough". ■

stimpmeter, un must

Eddie Stimpson invente sans trop de succès un système de mesure de la vitesse d'un green en voyant un putt en sortir à l'US Open 1935. Ce stimpmeter refait surface en 1977 quand la règle du stymie* est abandonnée. C'est une barre avec une cannelle en V sur sa longueur et en haut de laquelle repose une balle, l'autre extrémité posée sur le green. La balle quitte l'appareil quand il atteint un angle de 20°, roule une certaine distance, étalonnant ainsi la vitesse du green. Ce devrait être un must pour les clubs, avec un manuel d'utilisation lié aux genres d'herbe et aux contours des greens, pour un championnat ou pas.

L'herbe est un organisme vivant sensible. Trop rase trop longtemps, soumise au vent et à la chaleur, elle souffre. D'où le mélange de variétés d'herbe sur les greens accidentés de St. Andrews comme sur ceux de mon nouveau links à Chambers Bay qui réservent aussi des quelques subtilités aux joueurs, même quand le drapeau est posé au plein milieu.

(*) Les joueurs ne touchant pas à leurs balles sur les greens, elles formaient de vrais obstacles

