

'Seaside' Links Built in Kansas

Perry Maxwell, golf architect from Oklahoma City, who is perpetuating the late Dr. Alister Mackenzie's "natural motif" in links design, spent the week at Ekwanok with the purpose of revamping some of the outmoded greens and making them blend into the landscape.

For all its scenic charm, Ekwanok was built in the dark ages of golf architecture when course designers were wedded to the idea of making their greens simulate oblong gun platforms. Everything they did had a stencil-cut, artificial look.

The flat, undistinguished Ekwanok greens stem from this Edwardian era of banal conventionality. They don't present any surface to the view of the approach player. The circular or square cut bunkers, obviously man made, lack that ragged, helter-skelter weather-worn look which lends unobtrusive character to Maxwell's sand traps.

His is the art that conceals art—which creates a natural illusion without appearing to do so. Maxwell's frescoed greens suggest nature's process of erosion. They look as though they had grown

there from the beginning of time. This is green architecture at its subtle best, an achievement requiring the artistic soul and deft touch of a genius.

Maxwell is responsible for the natural contours of many greens at Pine Valley and Spring Mill. He did a superb remodeling job on both these courses.

Perhaps his most amazing creation is a duplicate of an English seaside links out in the bad lands of Kansas. The Sunflower State is the last place you'd expect to find a sand-dune studded course suggesting Westward Ho, Deal or Sandwich, yet photographs of the Prairie Dunes layout near Hutchinson, Kan., would fool a native of Cornwall or the Kentish downs.

"Soil erosion had thrown up those dunes in the Kansas desert," Maxwell told you, "and with a little molding of the terrain, plus the creation of bunkers, I conjured up a seaside links in the heart of the Mid-West. You'd swear the ocean was hidden behind those giant sand hills. Only the tang of salty air is missing."

G. T.