Serious new challenges ahead

Pete Dye: Times changing fast

BY MARK LESLIE

Pete Dye, who steps down as president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects during the annual conference in early April, says the major challenge for architects in the years ahead will be dealing with the myriad governmental agencies and regulations.

"With any development project in the United States ... whether it's a pipeline or factory or golf course or housing development, the environmental impact is the problem," said Pete Dye in a recent interview.

Nestled amid spectacular red rock cliffs in one of the most picturesque regions of America's Southwest is the new Sedona, Ariz., Golf Resort's 18-hole championship public course designed by Gary Park. It's located 90 miles north of Phoenix and 45 miles south of Flagstaff. Looking from the tee, this is the 227-yard par 3 10th hole. For more information on new courses see pages 12 and 13.

Ruling plus for developers

BY VERN PUTNEY

After more than four years of wallowing and almost being swallowed up in bureaucratic red tape, it appears the Sherman Hollow golf course in Huntington, Vt., will be built.

The golf industry around the country is watching the confrontation in Vermont because what happens there may affect golf course development nationwide.

Paul Truax, a Huntington native, and Vermont partners of the planned $225-million resort project within six months are expected to comply with what Vermont Environmental Board critics label a "nit-picking laundry list" of perceived deficiencies in Truax' original application.

The board on Feb. 17 voted 3-2 to refer the application to the Environmental Board. Esposito added that from the U.S.A. that are over 500 more plans are being made. And a lot of Europeans are looking to the U.S. for information.

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USGA grasses a breakthrough

Hailing breakthroughs in the most recent results of turfgrass research, USGA Executive Committee member Marion Farmer accepted the annual Golf Course Builders of America award on behalf of the USGA Green Section.

Farmer, accepting the plaque at the builders' annual meeting at the International Golf Conference and Show in February, cited the work of researchers that will lead to breakthrough varieties of turfgrass being made available this year.

"It is my firm conviction," Farmer said, "that the USGA in future years will look back on turfgrass research as one of its most

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BY MARK LESLIE

Golf's popularity is skyrocketing around the world as both residents and tourists flock to golf courses to enjoy the game. Many golf course developers are eyeing countries from East to West to export their knowledge and hardware.

"Whereas the United States is in the second or third golf boom, Europe and Asia are in their first — and they're lacking expertise in several areas," said James E. McLoughlin of The McLoughlin Group, who is spending more and more time consulting would-be golf course developers in Thailand, Italy, Austria, Norway, Belgium and even Yugoslavia.

American golf course architects, builders, club managers, and consultants like the Pleasantsville, N.Y.-based McLoughlin are being beckoned to Europe and Asia to fill that void in expertise as the golf boom spreads internationally.

Allard Hoogland, managing partner of Expoconsult in Holland which is organizing the first Golf Course Europe exhibition and conference, said, "There are more than 500 new courses planned in Europe and many new courses are being made, and a lot of Europeans are looking to the U.S. for information."

Perry Dye, the new president of the Golf Course Builders Association, agreed, "There's no doubt (golf expertise) is an asset that Americans can export...""The golfing capital of the world is the United States. We have 13,000 golf courses and that's why, as a nation, we're crazy over golf, only has 1,500," Dye said. "We definitely have the expertise. We've built more golf courses; we have more golf course architecture in the United States. So it's our natural export."

"It's becoming pretty common knowledge that the golf explosion is going around the world: the Far East, Europe, even South America." Dye said.

"Europe is getting ready to really bust on that market," said Ron Fremme, president of the Golf Course Management Association of Ohio said, "We've been getting inquiries but we're not interested yet. We've turned down a course in Saudi Arabia because of the time involved (in the travel)..."And Jeffrey Brauer of GolfScapes in Arlington, Texas, with a growing family at home, has decided against pursuing inquiries from people from France, Japan and Sweden among other countries."

But many architects are tapping into the overseas market. The Joneses, Robert Trent Jr., has both been designing courses on that continent, including one by Robert Jr. outside Moscow. Pete Dye, Palmer Design, Ross, Tom Fazio and Robert von Hagge and others are involved overseas.

Environment managers

Meanwhile, Hinckley's Club Corp. of America International has also made inroads in foreign countries.

"We are now building two country clubs in Germany, one city club in Germany and are looking at a couple of sites outside Paris," said Hinckley.

Hinckley said that in the past European courses were built by groups of golfers, and the economics of plain vanilla golf courses. His company is concentrating on the high-end resort courses.

CCA International, which investigated the European market in 1986 and in cooperation with Deutchbank in Germany formed a company called Club Corp. of Europe, has since begun acquiring land to build and operate country clubs in Germany, Italy, France, Spain and Portugal. Hinckley said he has nine projects in Spain, Italy, France and Germany in which the company is fishing the contracts for the land.

"With the opening up of the European Common Market in 1992 you are starting to see a lot of development in Spain, particularly in the resort area," Hinckley said. "Spain will be the big growth area. In France and Germany it takes two to three years to get permission to develop... Spain is less complicated and it's not as difficult to obtain a permit there. Also, Spain is trying to encourage growth, particularly in the resort areas."

Hinckley said 90 percent of the golf courses being built in Europe are on land leased from the government, few from the United Kingdom," Hinckley said. "We're going to find in more international-level golf courses with higher maintenance standards. You're going to have to develop more qualified talent over there, and some of that is going to be brought over from the United States — superintendents who in turn can train some of the locals."

Foreign visitors

Don Padgett, director of golf at Pinehurst (N.C.) Country Club and regional director of golf operations for CCA subsidiary Club Resorts, said contingents from foreign golf course developers visit his course on fact-finding trips every couple of weeks.

"They don't have the people (trained) to maintain the courses or run the clubs," Padgett said. "When they come to this country and CCA they look at what they have for golf and they get a lot more golf than they have here." Lack of training in operating golf courses is a major obstacle for foreign developers, Padgett said. "A lot of education has to be done. Probably the largest change in American golf in the last 30 or 20 years has been in the conditioning of the golf courses, and that's not going to happen overseas (overseas) have somewhat better upkeep and quality of the playing surface."

Padgett said when foreigners who plan to develop courses see the condition of American courses firsthand that's exactly what they're going to want over there (abroad)."

"And I'm sure most of the American companies will be there to help them," he added. Hoogland of Expoconsult said the number of golfers in Europe has doubled in the last decade and that number is expected to double again in the next 10 years.

All parties involved agree the scramble to fill the needs of all those course developers will be interesting.

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