are important to developers around the world. Maples pointed out that society members are now working throughout the world and most clients want a “U.S. championship course, which in their mind means challenging, not intimidating, and fun to play.” More AGSCA members are working internationally, especially in Europe, as the U.S. golf boom continues to roll out in other areas of the world.

More variety in nines

Tom Clark of Wheaton, Md., AGSCA secretary, explains that many developers are asking for 27 or 36 holes initially, with different degrees of difficulty on each nine. With this layout, beginners can build up their confidence on the easiest nine and progress to the others. Clark said this also helps speed up play on the tougher nines.

Bill Kubley, president and founder of Landscapes Unlimited of Lincoln, Neb., said, “We have more work today than I’ve ever seen. I think the outlook for the next 10 years is excellent. In fact, there are a lot of new companies coming into the course construction business because of the boom. I look for some of them to get into financial trouble because they’re trying to grow too fast.”

"The statistics certainly indicate a boom period," said Perry Dye of Dye Designs, Inc., of Denver, Colo., and president of the Golf Course Builders Group. “As our population ages, more people are playing more golf, especially in the Sunbelt areas. We find this true not only in the United States but internationally as well,” added Dye, who has been building a lot of courses in Japan.

Paul Eldredge, president of the Midwest Division of Wadsworth Golf Construction Co. in Plainfield, Ill., agreed a boom is on. “I see it continuing for the next couple years anyway," he said, “but I’m not sure it’s going to last 10 to 12 years” as many are predicting it will.

“After being somewhat stagnant for several years, the Midwest has become very active now. Where most of the work was in the southern areas a few years ago, the boom now seems to have moved back north,” Eldredge said.

Dave Canavan, a former president of the builders association and president of Moore Golf, Inc., of Culpeper, Va., said, “The construction of new courses has been ‘hyped’ as a boom market, but a lot of it is being done in conjunction with real-estate development. A golf course can satisfy the requirement for ‘green space’ to golf clubs for cluster zoning to build townhouses, etc.

“In some areas, like New Jersey, development is so expensive that a golf course is added to help generate income to pay development costs like wastewater management.

Today’s problems

Environmental concerns create most of the problems today, according to Eldredge.

“But, financing is tougher now, too. Will it be new, old, and lean, diet, or banks have gotten more restrictive on their loans. The last couple of jobs we’ve done, the owners had to jump through hoops to get their loans. We have to provide back-up for our billing, too.

“We can usually handle the field problems, but it’s the problems we don’t have control over that drive us crazy.”

Course construction costs have gone up an ‘unsayable’ amount in the last 20 years,” according to Canavan. The environmental restrictions are tougher, he said, plus things like insurance have risen as much as 400 percent.

“Now, you also have to be concerned about hazardous waste,” Canavan said. “If you’re building a course on an old landfill and uncover something like asbestos, the responsibility for taking care of it falls on the contractor.

“Planning today takes three to five years longer than it took before, the insurers, etc. Twenty years ago, construction would usually be underway 30 days after the final plans were approved. The last course we built in Florida required 37 permits from various agencies.”

“One big problem today,” said Dye, “is that good, premium land for courses just isn’t available. Golf course developers had a good choice of quality land 10 to 20 years ago. Today, we end up building golf courses on ‘unsayable land’ around marshes, flood plains, etc. and that means we’ve had to increase our understanding of environmental issues tenfold. And, it’s not only true in this country, but many areas overseas, especially in Europe.”

Kubley said a new course Landscapes Unlimited is building near Baltimore, Md., is “going to cost us $400,000 just for environmental protection. We have installed more than 8 miles of silt fences for a new course we’re building for the city of Reno, Nev. Plus, we have to keep three water trucks going all the time during construction just for dust control.

“In the past, you could usually open burn cleared brush. Now, it’s either pit burning, or you have to chip it and haul it away. Clearing costs alone can range from $400 to $8,000 per acre today, depending on state requirements.”

More complicated

Dye conceded that construction hasn’t changed much in the last 10 years, “but there is a much longer-term involvement for both the builder and architect, from planning clear through construction and maintenance practices.”

“Today, there is more planning required and the whole process is much more ‘structured.’ The builder and designer have to demonstrate what the end result will be, and that the environmental restrictions have been adhered to,” Dye said.

Rossi said the actual construction is no more complicated “because technology has increased so much.”

Continued on page 22

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Palmer Course Design Co. Arnold Palmer Exp, Pro Global 150 14
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Ponte Vedra Beach, FL LA Global 200 14
Harrison Minchew LA 35 6
Erik Torl Larsen LA, Asia, Eur 20 8

Pete Dye Inc. Pete Dye Exp US 65 70 1
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Continued on page 23
Continued from page 22

Continued from page 21

Architects will continue to evaluate each site and produce a design that accentuates its best features and provides a layout that will be environmentally sensitive and challenging to the golfers who will be playing it for generations to come."

"Probably 70 percent of the courses we build today require very detailed shaping," he said. 'Plus, owners want more today, too, like continuous cart paths, more sodding, and double-row or triple-row irrigation systems."

"With the environmental concerns and the complicated financing like bond issues, etc., builders go through hell today/"

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