

Golf world mourns death of Don Rossi

BY MARK LESLIE

One of the most "enthusiastic supporters" of the game of golf—Don A. Rossi—died March 11 after suffering a heart attack at his Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., home.

People from all segments of the golf industry hailed the 71-year-old Rossi, who led the National Golf Foundation for 13 years and, at the time of his death, was executive vice president of the Golf Course Builders of America and executive director of the National Golf Car Manufacturers Association.

Perry Dye, president of Dye Designs, Inc. and the GCBA, said, "To say you're going to miss Don Rossi isn't enough. We are going to feel it as an industry. He had an effect of cohesiveness amongst all groups. He was a great conduit to keep people who didn't even like each other going in the right direction..."

"There are some people who can help fill in the gaps, but nobody's going to replace Don Rossi... He did a lot of great things. I really have to think that the National Golf Foundation's here because he was leading it."

The National Golf Foundation of Japan, which Rossi helped found, named March 11 Don Rossi Day, created an annual Don Rossi Award to be given to a person who has made major contributions to golf, and donated \$5,000 to the Rossi family.

Paul Fullmer, executive secretary of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, who knew Rossi for more than two decades, said: "He was one of the major forces in golf in the last 25 years, not only because of his position with the NGF, the builders and car manufacturers, but because of his tremendous enthusiasm and magnetism."

"His work in organizing the Allied Associations of Golf may well be the most important legacy he leaves behind..."

Bill Bengeyfield, who retired April 1 after serving eight years as national director of the United States Golf Association's Green Section, said: "Don was a dear friend... He was one of those 'doer' guys, one of the 'real' people in the game. He had a marvelous attitude that affected everyone... He and Herb Graffis were the common golfer's good friends."

"He did wonderful, marvelous things with

the National Golf Foundation."

Business partner Jim McLoughlin of the McLoughlin Group said, "Don Rossi brought something to golf like no one else — true friendship."

That sentiment was echoed by Bob Rickey, former president of the NGF and head of MacGregor Sports, who first hired Rossi as executive director of the NGF.

"He was irreplaceable as a human being. That's my loss... If he was your friend you never had a better one. He'd do absolutely anything for you," Rickey said.

Rickey cited Rossi's ability to bring people in the industry together to work for a common goal.

"Within a few years he was as well known as any guy who had been in the industry for 30 years, because he was interested in everything in golf and he made himself available to help," he said.

Rickey said that after Rossi gained the industry leaders' trust — "which he did in record time" — he brought them together.

"Here was a guy who had no ulterior motives or personal ego involved. His only interest was to do what's going to help golf. Getting them together and getting them to trust and join hands was something that had never happened before in the history of the game the United States. And only because of that have we been able to make progress," Rickey added.

John Schilling, executive director of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, said: "Our staff is shocked and saddened at the news of Don's death. Don was one of the industry's true gentlemen and one of the game's most enthusiastic supporters. He'll be missed. He was a dependable and valuable resource for GCSAA and its members."

Rossi, who retired in 1983 after 13 years as executive director of the National Golf Foundation, had continued his career in the industry with the builders and golf car manufacturers associations and as president of Don A. Rossi and Associates, consultants in golf enterprises.

Raised in Detroit, the son of Italian immi-

LETTERS

Welcome in Utah

To the Editor:

Just a note to congratulate you on the very fine newspaper you are publishing.

It is a great service to golf and we here in Utah wish you the very best success with it.

Joe Watts, executive director
Utah Golf Association
Salt Lake City, Utah

Placement thanks

To the Editor:

Thank you for the excellent article about our new service. It was very well done and, most importantly, it was well read, as evidenced by the many inquiries received to date.

Edward L. Hoffman, CCM
Club Professional Outplacement, Inc.
Chicago, Ill.

Dye vows to fulfill Rossi dream

Golf Course Builders of America President Perry Dye said that with the death of executive vice president Don Rossi, the organization will be more determined than ever to achieve its goals.

"We're going to become the biggest and most powerful in the industry in his honor because that's what he wanted done..." said Dye, the president of Dye Designs, Inc. of Denver, Colo. "My determination to make what he visualized happen has increased a hundredfold. How I am going to do that I do not know, but what he visualized will happen, I promise you... We will finish what he started."

Dye said the builders association had "all the potential of being equivalent in

the industry to the National Golf Foundation, and he (Rossi) was marching toward that direction."

In finding a successor, GCBA officials will look for someone with the game goals as Rossi, he said. "I feel an affiliation with the European market is something that is a natural for us... so we will look for someone with that bent."

"We will have to go step by step. It's a lethal blow but I think Rossi's spirit will go on with us. People won't give up because he's done. They might try harder because he's gone — because we relied on him a lot. People were willing to work harder for Don Rossi than for the Golf Course Builders."

grants, as a boy he worked teeing golf balls for customers at a driving range. He earned his way through Michigan State in the 1930s on a \$35-per-term, one meal-a-day scholarship for boxing and football. He captained the boxing team and played on the football team that made one trip to the Orange Bowl.

He worked briefly as assistant football coach after graduation, then coached football, basketball and baseball, taught history and janitored at Jesuit High School in Dallas, where his football team won the state championship.

Joining the U.S. Air Force during World War II, Rossi served as director of athletics and physical training both at San Antonio Preflight School and Randolph Field.

He then worked as a sales executive for major athletic goods manufacturers, and returned for a second tour of duty as chief of sports worldwide during the Korean Conflict. He retired with the rank of colonel.

He received two medals for work in that post including a special commendation for administration of the Air Force Olympic Programs. He served on the U.S. Olympic Committee from 1952-54 and was parade marshal for the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki.

Rossi was commissioner of the National Industrial Basketball League, the forerunner of the American Basketball Association.

Moonlighting as a football official and winning appointment to the National Football League ranks, Rossi was named the first general manager of the Dallas Texans of the fledgling American Football League.

He was also vice president of Riddell, a sports equipment company.

Rossi joined the NGF in 1970 and was instrumental in setting up the first annual worldwide golf development meeting of officials from eight countries in London. It led to the National Golf Foundation of Japan and the Canadian Golf Foundation.

Under his leadership, the NGF sponsored yearly seminars for golf course owners, operators and employees, created the Joe Graffis Award for achievement in golf education and expanded its clinics for golfers and teachers.

The NGF started a club exchange program so that golfers can donate old clubs to juniors, and developed a Research and Statistics Division to track the growth of the game.

Rossi initiated the golf summits as well as the Allied Associations of Golf.

He also restructured the organization to include on its board representatives of the PGA, PGA Tour, LPGA, American Society of Golf Course Architects and Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Ruth; a son, Michael J.; and three daughters, Gayle A. Landen, Elizabeth N. Lum and Mary Donn Jordan.

Donations in his memory may be made to: Evans Scholar Foundation, Don A. Rossi Fund, Golf, Ill. 60029.

Erosion Control has never been more advanced



On steep slopes where mowing is impractical, wildflowers have become a preferred alternative to rip-rap and other permanent materials. Because wildflower seed germination and plant establishment occurs over an extended period, NORTH AMERICAN GREEN DS150 is used to prevent erosion and to provide protection from loss of costly seed. The matrix of materials provide an excellent mulch cover to retain moisture in the soil and prevent erosion from both wind and rain. The blankets slowly degrade long after the wildflowers are established. The beauty of your golf course can be enhanced by creative use of plants and organic materials to promote their growth. NORTH AMERICAN GREEN provides the soil erosion protection for these creative uses.

Contact your nearest NORTH AMERICAN GREEN distributor for more information on the full range of erosion control blankets for golf course use.

14649 Highway 41 North • Evansville, IN 47711 • In State (812) 867-6632 • 1-800-772-2040

EROSION CONTROL BLANKETS

For free information circle #108