Arizona's law threatens growth

BY PETER BLAIS

Arizona is moving ahead with water conservation plans that include limiting the size of most new, 18-hole golf courses to 90 acres within the water management districts. The Phoenix area, because of its higher temperatures and lower rainfall, is restricted to 120 acres.

Opponents argue that the new laws will hurt tourism, the state's second-largest industry, since smaller courses are generally more difficult to play. That will discourage high handicappers, who make up the bulk of tourist golfers, from visiting the state.

"Normally as a rule of thumb they figure on 130 acres for an 18-hole course. . . . I'm sure that 90 acres is going to be very tight," said Donald Rossi, executive director of the Golf Course Builders of America, who believes that environmental concerns could do more to slow the current nationwide golf boom than any other issue.

"They (state of Arizona) have a water problem and they're trying to do something about it. Water is going to be a big problem, not only in Arizona, but all over the country in another year or two," Rossi said.

Arizona Department of Water Resources Director Bill Plummer signed orders Dec. 5 that provide specific management plans for the Tuscon, Phoenix, Prescott and Pinal County active management areas. The department followed that in late December with 10,000 letters to water rights holders informing them of the new requirements.

The law, which was originally adopted in 1986, affects any course where construction started that year. Its aim is to reduce water consumption to 90% of the 1990 levels.

New Courses planned for handicapped

BY MARK LESLIE

An Ohio rehabilitation hospital plans to build the first golf facility for the handicapped in a project that could have far-reaching effects on golf courses nationwide.

Lessons learned from the technologies and designs used at the course at Edgewood Shaw Hospital in Akron may usher in a new era, especially for municipal courses that must abide by laws making public facilities accessible to the handicapped.

The project of the hospital's Development Foundation has drawn support and promises to provide challenges for all involved, from the design work (donated by Hurdzan Design Group of Columbus, Ohio) to the construction (some part of which is a gift of Wadsworth Construction Co. of Plainfield, Ill.) and finances (which include donations from the World Series of Golf, Wilson Sporting Goods and MacGregor Golf).

The hospital's vice president for development, Linda Cinson, said officials will soon decide exactly what type of facility to add to its current small driving range and two practice greens. They are leaning toward initially building a large driving range and three holes. Another six holes could follow later.

They hope to get construction started by this fall, probably building the driving range first so that it can be used even before year's end.

Lease one, build two

BY MARK LESLIE

Honorulu could earn a quick $100 million if investors bid on a proposed lease for the just-completed municipal West Loch Golf Course in Ewa.

Mayor Frank Fasi, for years Hawaii's leading critic of foreign investment, has proposed what may be an unprecedented build-lease arrangement. He hopes to lease or sell the course and clubhouse, which cost the city $20 million to build, for $100 million or more and use the profits to build two golf courses plus affordable housing.

The West Loch project sailed through the permit process while private ventures in Honolulu remain mired in the bureaucratic red tape. Officials feel potential developers may be willing to pay the large lease fee rather than tie up funds in the lengthy permit process.

The surprise is that "no one has said that's (amount of money) out of line. Everybody I hear is saying, 'That's reasonable,'" said Dave Mills, administrator for the Honolulu Department of Parks and Recreation.

Environment the major concern of architects

BY MARK LESLIE

Environmental issues running the gamut from wetlands to pesticide use are the most important problems facing golf course architects, according to a Golf Course News survey of the nation's leading architects.

Of the 55 architects who responded to the question of what is the most important issue they face, 37 listed a topic concerning the environment.

Several other issues received from one to seven mentions from architects, including the cost of construction and maintenance; water usage; keeping design natural; financing; obtaining permits; finding qualified help; the speed of play; the distance golfers are hitting the ball; the speed of the greens; and the influence of the professional tour on standards of maintenance.

The overwhelming response that environment was the major concern came from every region of the United States.

Denis Griffiths of Braselton, Ga., declared Continued on page 18
Opperman sales rep at Williamson

Fred D. Opperman, past president of the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents, has joined Williamson Nursery and Associates, Inc. of Huntley, Ill., as horticultural sales representative.

Opperman has worked in golf course management for more than 25 years, and was superintendent at Glen Oak Country Club in Glen Ellyn, Ill., for 19 years. He has been editor of "The Bull Sheet," the monthly newspaper of the MAGCS, for six years.

Ranks moves from Penobscot Valley Country Club in Orono, Maine, for four years, has taken the superintendent's reins at VA-JO-WA Golf Club in Island Falls, Maine.

Ranks is a former superintendent at Wavenock Country Club in Walpole, Maine, and assistant superintendent at Waterville (Maine) Country Club and Natanis Golf Course in Augusta, Maine.

At VA-JO-WA he said he doesn't plan major cosmetic changes, "just gradual improvements that will improve playing conditions for all players. Our goal is to make VA-JO-WA one of the top courses in the state."

Ranks is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts' Stockbridge School of Agriculture, where he concentrated on agronomy and turfgrass science.

Handicapped

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The obstacles

Most golf courses present major accessibility problems for handicapped golfers, whether they are wheelchair-bound or disabled in other ways.

"Until there is a way that we can get those (golf) cars around and get them on the greens and tees, people who have to ride in them and can not get out of them are going to have a real problem getting on real golf courses," said Peter Longo, an expert on handicapped golfing and member of Edwin Shaw's advisory committee on the project. "Until we can somehow get around that problem ... then the mass of people who are wheelchair-bound will not be able to actually play the game like everybody else can because they can't get on the greens and sandtraps..."

"People who can get around on crutches can play the game. But until we can get wheelchairs up there, the others can't."

"The No. 1 problem is accessibility," agreed Bob Wilson, executive director of the National Amputee Golf Association. "In California, for instance, handicapped parking is required by law at municipal courses; yet what good does that do if the courses themselves aren't accessible?"

"Right now the numbers of golfers in wheelchairs are few, but in the next 10 years there are going to be a lot," Wilson said, referring to the PGA-written "First Swing" clinics that are being taught to the handicapped nationwide.

By 1995 there's going to be a big demand for accessibility, Wilson said, adding: "The handicapped are the worst organized minority in the country. If they do get organized, the demand will intensify because there will be somebody out there screaming."

"And the 'munic' (municipal courses) especially will feel it because it's (accessibility) required by law and because the handicapped are supporting the courses through their taxes."

Getting onto tees and greens is the biggest obstacle for handicapped golfers, Wilson said.

Architect Barry Serafin of Hardzan Design said accessibility

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Handicapped

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problems will be overcome by:
• Cart paths from tee to green.
• Specially designed wheelchairs with wider
tires that reduce compaction on the greens.
• Access areas like ramps onto the greens
and tees.
• Honey-combed grate-type structures in-
stalled in the turf to prevent grass from being
worn down by wheelchairs and golf cars.
• Flat sand traps.
• And, possibly, an artificial turf such as
Mod-Sod on the tees and greens.

Recent advances in technology — from the
golf cart paths to customized golf cars and wheel-
chairs — could have a major impact on the
Edwin Shaw Hospital facility and others of its
variety of other problems caused by accidents I

Cison added that once the hospital’s new
golf facility opens — perhaps as early as next
year — it could serve as a testing ground for
similar facilities elsewhere.

"We are a rehabilitation hospital. Our rec-
reational therapists are working on this pro-
gram," she said. "We could conduct work-
shops for therapists in other parts of the coun-
try. We could let people from other regions of
the country come here.

"We have run three series of golf classes with
10 to 12 people in each... so we have some
experience in teaching," Wilson said.

Wilson, who has been involved in the Ed-
win Shaw project, said the golf cart or wheel-
chair first has to be able to get to the tee, and
then the putting greens.

He suggested that the growing number of
golf courses with bentgrass fairways maintain
their regular greens for the non-handicapped,
and add a second green somewhere on the
fairway for the handicapped.

"If you’ve got bentgrass fairways, just cut
the secondary green "low enough to put
on," he said.

"With this idea, you have access to that
green by the wheelchair and you don’t have to
worry about Mod-Sod or other artificial grass," Wilson said. Otherwise, he disagrees with
those who believe real grass greens can hold
up to the wear and tear of wheelchairs.

One supporter of natural grass is Tom
McKinney, the golf pro at Fox Den Golf Course
in Stowe, Ohio, who has worked extensively
with handicapped golfers and has dedicated
his time and expertise to the Edwin Shaw
project.

"The only handicapped people who would
put a strain on greens would be wheelchair
people. What percentage are in wheelchairs? In
our classes only about 5 to 7 percent," that’s
the handi-
capped. If you push the chair in a direct line
it probably won’t hurt it unless the ground is
wet. But if you go to the left or right it will tear
up the green. And if you pull the wheelchair back
it will tear it up.

OffEdwin Shaw’s current two practice greens,
one is natural and the other is Mod-Sod — and
Cison said officials will decide which type of
green will be used on the new course after testing
the two with wheelchairs this spring.

So artificial turf on tees and greens remains
open for debate, but other factors find agree-
ment from the circle of people who support the
facility.

Therapy

First and foremost, therapists see golf as
physically and mentally important to the handi-
capped.

"Physically, it gives them something to do," McKinney said. "Some can swing with only
one arm. Some can’t pick up their own ball but
they can hit it. Some who thought they could
never play again, find that they can.

"Mentally, some have nothing they can do
otherwise, and that’s part of the rehabilitation,"

Cison said, "Getting out helps their self-
confidence, gets them to set goals..."

She said the hospital “recognized that con-
structive leisure activities, such as golf... en-
"dream big" and develop the country’s first total
golf program for the disabled.

Twelve percent of Summit County’s popula-
tion consists of people with physical disabili-
ties from strokes, spinal cord injuries, ampu-
tations, birth defects, arthritis, blindness and a
variety of other problems caused by accidents
and disease, Cinson said.

The "total" program includes the new driv-
ing range, golf holes, two practice greens,
indoor practice facilities, and instructional classes
using PGA pro Longo’s "Challenge Golf" pro-
gram.

Cison said the hospital wants to provide a
venues in the area and develop a league; and
develop a staff with the expertise to deal with
athletes and fit special golf clubs.

Access is one of the 20 significant factors in
the design that gives one the course will serve as a
learning facility for the handicapped.

Although the land is flat, he said, "We want
to make it easy on them if possible but yet again
we don’t want it designed particularly for the
handicapped because they don’t perceive them-
selves as being handicapped. So you want to
try to make the golf course as regular as
possible.

McKinney added: "We want to try to build a
nice course... one that’s easy to get around
on, but not easier to play. Remember, many of
these folks have non-handicapped friends who
they want to play with.

Besides, McKinney feels that "inconveni-
Cars CAN be modified for special handicaps

Golf cars are not designed to fill the needs of the physically challenged. Yet, as National Amputee Golf Association Executive Director Bob Wilson said: "When you start getting into the question of wheelchairs you really open up a can of worms. Unless a person can get out of the car and into a chair unassisted, you've got problems."

Now a number of golfers are finding an alternative — having a golf car customized to fit their particular handicaps. Probably the first handicapped golfer to have a golf car customized was Dennis Walters, who was on the verge of joining the PGA Qualifying Tour in 1974 when a fluke accident rendered him paralyzed from the waist down.

After the accident, Walters customized a car "by trial and error," and it has been his ticket onto the course ever since. In fact, each week he gives dozens of trick-shot exhibitions from his car. The vehicle sports a seat that swings out to the side 90 degrees, allowing him to make his shot and swing back into the car.

"I have blueprints and if anybody writes in, I send them the blueprints," he said.

Handicapped —

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and expense-wise" the hospital could never operate a course just for the handicapped.

As for Edwin Shaw Hospital's part, Cinson has her sights on a parcel of land in Arizona who didn't think it was possible "to do anything; why don't we put in a golf course?" As for Edwin Shaw Hospital's part, Cinson said: "Our planning committee is really ready to go. We're anxious..."

Special training said making major impact

Longo, Carbin videotapes open frontiers to challenged

Handicapped people, who a few years ago had little hope of playing golf, may soon have a major impact on golf courses around the country. From Dennis Walter's public exhibitions to Peter Longo's "Challenge Golf" video and Kathy Corbin's "Never Say Never" video and program, the handicapped are being taught golf. They are finding that the game is not the impossibility they had thought, but rather can be an important part of their rehabilitation.

The National Amputee Golf Association, based in Amherst, N.H., has high expectations for the first Swing program which was developed by the Professional Golf Foundation's Junior Golf Foundation as an instructional booklet.

Last year NAGA Executive Director Bob Wilson taught eight First Swing seminars, and this year he already has 18 scheduled. One that he held at Grand Junction Veteran's Administration Medical Center in Colorado in February attracted 130 participants, including more than 90 in wheelchairs.

"The main thrust of our First Swing program is to provide physical recreation therapy with the basics of the golf swing so that they can use that as a form of rehabilitation," Wilson said. "If you wanted to look at the amputee population, it's probably skewed pretty much to the elderly from the standpoint that most of them suffer amputations because of diabetes. It doesn't matter if you're 4 or 104, the first swing is still your first swing."

"I imagine that if you're talking about 60- to 70-year-olds, they were golfers when they had all their parts. By using golf as a rehab vehicle, the idea is to show them that they can still play this game even though they're missing a part, and to get them out there playing again."

Wilson said he will conduct a First Swing seminar and clinic at any hospital that would like to host one, not just VA facilities, many of which have golf courses.

"Until Kathy Corbin and Peter Longo came along there was nothing (for the physically challenged)," Wilson said, adding that "Never Say Never" and "Challenge Golf" have had a major impact.

Wilson expects a growth spurt in handicapped golfers in the next few years because of First Swing and other clinics for the handicapped. "And they've all got buddies, too," he said. "By 1995 there's going to be a big demand" for golf courses to be accessible to the handicapped.

LPGA pro's plans for 18-holer in works

While Edwin Shaw Hospital proceeds with its plans for a golf facility for the handicapped, Ladies Professional Golf Association teaching pro Shirley Hicks is close on its tail with a plan to build a fully handicapped-accessible 18-hole golf course.

Hicks, a nurse who recently retired from the U.S. Navy and is living in Dublin, Calif., has her sights on a parcel of land in Barryville, Ark. She says the project is basically being slowed by lack of resources and money. She wants to buy 120 acres; he wants to sell 90.

Hicks said she is hoping for a quick resolution because she wants to begin work on at least a couple of holes soon.

"We have not decided who will build the course. She said Merrill-Lynch in Little Rock, Ark., and Kodak have expressed interest in helping fund the project, but have not committed themselves.

"We probably will know (the project's status) within the next six months," Hicks said. "The package is being revised and rewritten, and there are a lot of politics involved."

Hicks consulted Bob Wilson, executive director of the National Amputee Golf Association, and Dr. Alice Martinson, among others. "One of our biggest problems is to find a kind of material to put on the greens so we can put wheelchairs on them. Another is to make the course difficult enough so that it will be a challenge, but not too difficult so that it will impair anyone's ability to play," Hicks said.

She said southwest Arkansas is considered the third most desirable part of the country for retirees, taking into consideration weather, land costs and other factors.

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