Golf growth prospects far from 'bust'

You may have read or heard of the recent article in Forbes (Dec. 24) reporting on the National Golf Foundation's Golf Summit. The feature story titled, "Extrapolation Madness," questioned the NGF's growth figures for participants and the real demand for golf facilities.

In some instances I agree that the NGF's figures may be aggressive, but I disagree with the conclusion that the future growth of the industry is a bust.

I responded to Forbes with the following letter. I'll look forward to your comments.

The NGF's numbers may be wishful thinking—and I personally think that 350 new golf courses per year is preposterous. But remember, the NGF never projected that 350 new courses would be built. The projection is that 350 new courses will be needed to meet the demand.

The methods used to count golfers may not be reliable. However, you should understand that there is a need for new golf courses. The problems involving golf courses are not necessarily the courses, but rather the real estate development surrounding the courses. The demand for stand-alone courses, primarily in the public and municipal categories, is real. Just try to get a tee time at a Chicago municipal on Saturday morning in July.

I have presented Golf Course News' projections for new facilities on a number of occasions. Although more conservative than the NGF's estimate (we're projecting 150 new courses per year for the next five years, along with 200 renovations), this steady growth is far from a bust!

Sincerely,

Charles E. von Brecht