GLOBAL SHARING WOULD HELP GOLF INDUSTRY

By Stephen J. Rasher

Courses in dire need of scenic environment

I have actively played golf for 25 years, having been brought up through the junior ranks and par-ticipated in many state and local amateur events. Having played various courses throughout Louisi-ana and Mississippi, one very noticeable condition has emerged. As golf courses are built and en-tered maturity, the new development and construction surrounding them erodes the visual quality and unique character that is desired. Additionally, the course's functional requirements of parking lots, roads, utility buildings and other elements contribute to overall degradation of the course's visual quality as a whole.

These elements are a permanent part of every course. But need they be visible?

The visual image, beauty or character each course projects is tied directly to its scenic surround-ings. If no scenic environ-ment, it complements a course, it has no particular uniqueness and, more importantly, the level of enjoyment derived from it. A major golf course design flaw in practice today that supports this view is the virtual or near total elimi-nation of vegetation during construction. When this occurs, the course is forced to rely solely on off-site plant material to help create its visual image and character. Then, because of the subsequent periph-ery development, this off-site plant material is routinely and systemati-cally reduced to a splattering of miscellaneous trees and shrubs that have no real meaning or environ-mental impact at all.

The point here is that golf courses can help benefit im-mensely from relying on their own plant material to create, enhance and preserve their uniqueness, instead of using material that is specifically are the only true landscape that golf courses strive to achieve. The intuitive, creative and "plant-wise" designer is an asset golf needs. Trees represent an investment in the course's future, not an expense. Because trees and support plants greatly influence the design of any golf hole, short-range and long-range tree planting programs or "nest" holes is a must. Trees are a joy to look at, but not to realize now, so that the visual quality of where we play mirrors the thinking of the creative designer. Golf course design has to become more ecologically oriented to sur-pass the crummy? Beauty? Scenic value? Uniqueness? Visual integrity or character? Aesthetics? Are they enjoyable holes that are fun to play? All are of the hole's design and its relationship to the natural environment that creates the uniqueness and the unforgettable image in your mind.

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