President Pierman spells out builders' priorities

By Mark Leslie

A certification program to ensure standards of construction is Jerry Pierman's number-one priority as he enters his two-year term as president of the Golf Course Builders Association of America.

"We hope in five or 10 years people who build golf courses will ask a contractor if they are a member of GCBAA and if they are certified. That will tell us our standards are being addressed and recognized," said Pierman, president of Herman Golf Co. of North Palm Beach, Fla. Pierman succeeded Perry Dye as head of the 15-member organization.

Pierman said the golf boom of the 1980s opened the door for contractors to get in the business thinking it was easy—and big—money. "So we had some problems because of that. Now we've got to settle down, start the certification program, start policing ourselves, and bring the overall quality of work up to a better standard.

"But even more so, we can eliminate some of the problems we've had in the past—like projects over-running budget, getting started and not finished, starting with one builder but needing to call in another in the middle of construction."

Certification, he said, does not only deal with workmanship.

"That is number one in everybody's mind. But there are a lot of other problems that enter into building a course. We're trying to say, 'You've got to be financially solvent. You've got to have built so many golf courses. You've got to have qualified, experienced people. We want to see recommendations from former clients."

Saying that when a project runs into trouble, the builder is considered part of the problem, Pierman said: "In most instances that's not the case. The projects are probably financed incorrectly to start with, budgeted incorrectly, planned poorly, or the game plan was not stuck to during construction."

To attack the problem, Pierman and the GCBAA believe certifying builders is crucial, as is educating developers.

"The certification program is being put in place. It allows the members of the GCBAA to become certified through testing procedures once a year. "It tells the golf industry we are setting standards for ourselves. It does not mean if someone is not a member they are not a good contractor. But it says our members have met that standard," Pierman said.

The GCBAA hopes to conduct the first certification testing mid-August at its summer meeting during the PGA Championship in St Louis, Mo. Then, once every year representative of each company will take the test for renewal.

During this process, GCBAA members intend to police themselves.

"The hope is that future certified contractors will check the work of companies that want to become certified."

Pierman foresees future GCBAA-sponsored educational programs as a key for golf course developers, saying, "We're the builders. Who better to ask than us?"

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