European development lacks long-term focus

By RON FREAM

Golf development in Europe is not a growth industry today. The present economic slowdown (recession, or worse) throughout Europe has only added to the problems of many golfcourse operators. The boom years of the mid- to late 1980s saw a spate of projects in England and the other side of the Atlantic. All of these assets were built with little foresight or concern for the long-range economics of the project. The explosive growth of the '80s encouraged golf developers who lacked the necessary combination of expertise, vision and an understanding of the demands and requirements to see a project through from conception to opening. It was all too often the case that the neophyte developers lacking both the personal knowledge and access to others with prior experience to properly grasp the financial situation. Lack of players, declining levels of greens fees, slack membership sales, bankruptcies and empty clubhouses are the all-too-frequent results.

While new golf development is generally on hold in Europe today, the sport is still a popular one which is attracting more players than it is losing each year. In light of this, the overall demand for golf facilities will resume or continue to grow at a rate of perhaps 3 to 5 percent per annum. It is easy to see how any project designed to maintain the momentum of the present economic slowdown could be a success.

One significant fact which has emerged from the trauma of recent and ongoing European realignment is the need for future developers of golf projects to move more clearly and precisely define both their market and its long-term financial capacity. Examples of poorly designed, cheaply built, miserably maintained golf courses which are little more than cow pasture are common. Lax modifications or ego-driven "name" or signature projects are suffering now too, on occasion, due to enormously high levels of expenditure not necessarily spent wisely. It is easy to see why large, golf construction is even easier to spend too much on golf construction.

By RON FREAM

Golf course architect Ron Fream is president of Goldfinch —Ron Fream Design Group, Ltd. He recently completed Kiergolf in Kerimaa-Savonlinna, Finland. He is currently working on a project with EuroDisney.

X.G. Hassenplug, 84


A civilengineer, Hassenplug began his golf career on the construction side in 1948. When architect I.B. McGeever died during construction of Overbrook Country Club, he finished the project. He then went on to work with architect Dick Wilson on two high-profile projects in Pennsylvania — Radnor Valley near Philadelphia and Westmoreland Country Club near Pittsburgh.

Upon completion of these projects, Hassenplug moved in to private practice combining golf course design with his knowledge of land planning, irrigation and civil engineering. He designed 30 courses and remodeled another 17 mostly in Pennsylvania and Ohio.

He is survived by his wife, Grace; son, John; two grandchildren; and his sister, Mary Lou." Memorial donations should be sent to Fox Chapel Presbyterian Church, 385 Fox Chapel Road, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15238.

Clifford L. Demming, 84

BRIDGTON, Maine — Clifford L. Demming, 84, a golf course architect, superintendent, and musician, died at a local hospital after a brief illness.

Mr. Demming got his start at designing and building golf courses in the early 1920s, when as a teen-ageer he helped his father, Grant Wilson Demming, as superintendent of Grantwood Golf Course in Solon, Ohio. Right after high school, Mr. Demming went to work maintaining his father's golf course, and by age 20 he was head greenskeeper at Grantwood, a job he held until 1940.

After his family sold Grantwood, Mr. Demming went to Aurora (Ohio) Country Club as superintendent. In 1943 he designed and built Sleepy Hollow Country Club on the Chagrin River near Cleveland. In 1955 he served as superintendent there for many years. He spent most winters in Florida and during the 1950s and 1960s he designed and built Mount Dora (Fla.) Country Club.

Mr. Demming was a member of the Golf Course Greenskeepers of America and the All States Club of Eustis, Fla. He retired in 1970 and moved to Bridgton, where he was a local school bugler in the Bridgton Town Band.

Surviving are his wife of 54 years, Esther S. Smith Demming of Bridgton; a son, of Fort Devens, Mass.; a daughter, of Bridgton; a brother, of Richmond, Va.; five grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter.
Roberts on Gore

or bad, desirable or undesirable. The senator states uses well all the evidence at his disposal to emphasize the serious nature of environmental deterioration both locally and globally. He believes public support for his position can be developed, media influence can be positive, and technological influences in data availability can be convincing.

We must scrutinize the issues and evidence to determine the level of our support for environmental causes. To do this effectively, Gore initiated a fundamentally sound approach. "I began to separate the parts of the environmental issues that were fundamentally local in nature, like hazardous waste sites, from those that represented threats to the entire globe."

Only in this way can we grasp the true significance of what is happening around us, and determine appropriate courses of action.

Gore writes, "The more deeply I search for the roots of the global environmental crisis, the more I am convinced that it is an outer manifestation of an inner crisis that is, for lack of a better word, spiritual. As a politician, I know well the special hazards of using spiritual to describe a problem like this one. For many, it is like one of those labels that warns a motorist 'steep slope — truckers use brakes.' But, what other word describes the collection of values and assumptions that determine our basic understanding of how we fit into the universe?"

We need to know who we are and why we are here. Is it to destroy the earth? Are we here to rid the earth of this civilization? Is it really materialism that we worship? Does the concept of dysfunctional family life extend to civilization in general? These are spiritual questions that involve values.

Many leading educators in recent years have lectured on the real issues of our time being spiritual and not technological. And yet, our attempted solutions so often emphasize technology.

The senator details the needs to change attitudes regarding earth sciences, economics, sociology, learning from history, psychology, philosophy, religion and implications of development. Without these changes, there may be reasonable doubt whether civilization can survive. Gore suggests a "Marshall Plan" approach, based on assumptions that democracy and modified free markets are preferred worldwide; and a global civilization is preferred over one with diverse objectives.

Five strategic goals must receive attention to realize true implementation of this plan.

1. World population must be stabilized.
2. Appropriate technologies must be developed and shared worldwide; and a global civilization is preferred over one with diverse objectives.
3. A new global economic plan must be set in place.
4. A new generation of treaties and agreements must be enacted.
5. A new global environmental consensus must be implemented.

Gore believes it is crucial that this plan be carried out now before population increases make a global environmental consensus even more difficult. Gore describes changes needed in global

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Fream on Europe
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big maintenance cost courses are in operation. Attracting players to big name courses may only work for the first visit. Return players, or players willing to spend large sums on the greens fee, may become a decreasing occurrence, unfortunately for the developer or operator of the project. By this time the "name" or signature architect has been paid, but who is going to cover the mortgage payment or the on-going maintenance costs?

The golf architect and project master planners can help the developer or promoter realize financial and market targeting actions during conception of the project. Excesses in design, construction and maintenance of a golf course all deduct from the net profit. A golf architect who is aware of the financial realities of the project and incorporates financial realism into the planning, design, and construction and into their impact on long-term maintenance is helping to assure the long-term financial success of the project.

Regardless of present economic trauma, a growing standard of living will continue to fuel the need, or market, for golf facilities throughout Europe and Scandinavia. While the economic reorganization going on in Eastern Europe will be a slow and tedious process, the former Eastern Bloc nations will recognize tourist trade as an excellent potential source of outside income and emerge as attractive locations for golf facilities. Russia and other of the former Soviet states will also evolve as potential locations for golf projects, once the industrial privatization and land ownership issues have been more completely clarified. The Mediterranean coast has considerable potential for green fee, open-to-the-public development thought processes. The success of existing and future golf courses in Europe will revolve around economic conditions, quality construction and proper levels of turfgrass maintenance. The course may be called public, daily-fee, country club, or resort, but the economics that will place a higher value on environmental quality. He identifies hidden costs that we overlook when calculating the true value of products and services. In a way, for generations, we...