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 golf course operators. The boom years of the mid- to late 1980s, saw an explosion in golf development, especially in Europe, 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. All too often, these projects were poorly designed and built by 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 and continue to grow at a rate of perhaps 3 to 4 percent annually. If this were sufficiently less than before, but growth which must be accommodated nonetheless.

One significant fact which has emerged from the trauma of recent and ongoing European economic 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 pastures are common. Lavish, prestige- or ego-driven "name" or "signature" projects are suffering too, on occasion, due to enormously high levels of expenditure not necessarily spent wisely or efficiently. It is easy to spend too little on golf construction. It is perhaps even easier to spend too much on golf construction. Unfortunately, many would-be developers of golf courses in Europe and Scandinavia are first-time players in what really is a complex, no-holds-barred business. Naive developmental opportunists would be golf architects, contractors of questionable knowledge and ability, and greenskeepers of modest capabilities who frequently attempted projects themselves or served as "consultants" on projects where the developer, promoter or money-man perhaps knew more than his "consultants". At worst, the financial side was no more experienced than the neophyte consultants.

Financial feasibility studies, market analysis and marketing targeting can help to guide the planning and design of a project. It is simple economic analysis which points out that a creatively designed golf course which cost the equivalent of 4 or 5 million US dollars to build, and plays to full capacity for approximately 150 or 200 rounds per day will generate more profits than a signature or "name" course costing 2 to 3 times more which can only realize half the play with significantly higher greens fees.

It is becoming obvious, almost worldwide, that making the necessary balances favorably in the long-term may not be a sure thing when big name, big budget,

Not much balance in Gore's environmental treatise

By DR. ELIOT C. ROBERTS

Public concern for the state of our environment is real. Golfers, course superintendents, and neighbors must know that practices followed in managing resources are environmentally sound and in the best public interest. This can be difficult when so much gloom and doom is associated with land, air and water quality.


The strongest part of Gore's book has nothing to do with ecology but with the human spirit and how we lose in terms of caring for the land around us, as God would have us.

Beware of one thing: There's so much emotion in the landfills, solid waste, and pollution of streams and rivers. It's a lot easier to talk about those kinds of pollution and be accurate with scientific detail. But Gore mixes this with changes in the atmosphere; and, despite what he says, no one has near conclusive evidence in that area.

When expedient, he downplays opponents of his views in the scientific community. It's suggested only 2 percent disagree with his claim of the dangers of global warming. Indeed, among the agricultural scientists, few agree with him. Because of Gore's emphasis on ecology and the human spirit we need to review some of his thinking.

Gore states, "The ecological perspective begins with a view of the whole, an understanding of how the various elements interact in patterns that tend toward balance and persist over time." He adds, "Ecology is the science of the balance of elements in the global environment also apply to forces making up our political system."

But the fact is that ecological principles have nothing to do with balances. Life forms flourish or perish in response to environmental fluctuations as they adjust or fail to adjust to never-ending changes. It's only when human places value on one life form another that the element of balance comes into play.

Politically, we tend to place supreme importance on perpetual standard of living and quality of life at all cost. Gore defines politics broadly as "the means by which we make collective decisions and choices." In another sense, politics is the art and science of the possible. When you or I believe a certain course of action is possible and we desire to see change, we become politicians in our effort to make something happen. Politics has nothing to do with right or wrong, fact or fiction, good

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Golf Course News earns design award

YARMOUTH, Maine — "Golf Course News" has been awarded an Ozzy Award for Design for Excellence, bestowed by the editors of "Magazine Design & Production." More than 1,500 entries from publications across the United States and Canada were received in this category of "Best Overall Design, Tabloid or Business Newspaper." A panel of judges from publications across the United States and Canada were received in this category.

According to "Golf Course News," Michael Kreiter said: "Each and every entry was carefully screened, rated, and reviewed by a nationwide panel of judges demanding professionals who have won scores of national design awards themselves. And the judges agreed: This year's competition was the toughest ever. Congratulations to... your staff for producing an exceptional publication."

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X.G. Hassenplug, 84

PITTSBURGH — X.G. "Xen" Hassenplug, 84, a golf course architect who practiced primarily in the Northeast, died Sept. 24, from cancer.


A civilengineer, Hassenplug began his golf career on the construction side in 1945. When architect I.B. McGovern 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 in partnership with a 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, Betty Ink.

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.

Mr. Demming got his start at designing and building golf courses in the early 1920s, when as a teen-ager he helped his father, Grant Wilson Demming, in the design and construction of Grantwood Golf Course in Solon, Ohio. Right after high school, Mr. Demming went on to work with 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, Ohio. 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 served as drummer in the Bridgton Town Band.

Surviving are his wife of 54 years, Esther S. Smith Demming of Bridgton; a son, Fort Devens, Mass.; a daughter, of Bridgton; a brother, of Richmond, Va.; five grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter.
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big maintenance cost courses are in
operation. Attracting players to a big
course may only work for the first
visit. Return players, or players willing
to spend large sums on the greens fee,
may eventually 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
golfing 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 Mediter-
ranean coast has considerable potential
for expansion of golf facilities, so long as
intelligent land use planning, environ-
mental protection and pollution control
become stronger factors in coastal
development thought processes.

Long-term growth would appear to
indicate "daily fee", open-to-the-public
courses and resort destination projects
as those with the most favorable pros-
tects.

The success of existing and future golf
courses in Europe will revolve around
knowledgeable planning, creative and
thoughtful design, quality construction
and proper levels of turfgrass
maintenance. The course may be called public
daily-fee, country club, or resort, but the
basic fundamentals for financial success
remain the same.

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