

# Development Letter designed to fill a need

One of the things I enjoy doing in this space is pointing out how far-flung, seemingly irrespective stories which appear in the current issue are actually connected by industry trends — some subtle, some not so subtle. Such is the case on pages 1, 3, 24, 30, 31, 34, 35 and 54 this month.

The aforementioned stories may seem disparate but, as some of our readers already know, they have everything to do with a new *Golf Course News* publication called the *Development Letter*, a newsletter which

tracks golf course projects from conception through gestation to their birth.

The *Development Letter* is designed to let builders, architects and their suppliers know exactly where the golf course projects are being considered, and by whom. This is becoming increasingly important because the mini-boom is over. Projects aren't about to fall into anyone's lap these days.

As the story on page 1 indicates, National Golf Founda-



Hal Phillips,  
editor

tion figures indicate a slow, steady dropoff in golf course openings over the next few years. Financing remains very hard to come by and this will be reflected in the number of golf courses christened during 1993, '94 and '95.

Those involved with the construction of golf courses will have to scramble for business — some are already scrambling. We believe the *Development Letter* will aid the effort.

The front-page story jumps inside to page 31, where a similar article (on page 30) talks about prospects in the golf range and alternative facility marketplace. The *Development Letter* will also track these projects because, as we learned at Golf Summit '92, these things are bonafide profit centers. The construction of golf ranges at existing 18-hole facilities, incidentally, is the fastest growing portion of this market.

On page 3, a story details the possible settlement of the Michigan Homestead project which — like the Canadian Three Sisters project described on page 24 — has been slowed by nagging environmental concerns. The *Development Letter* will routinely feature environmental news of note because anti-growth activism is a major hindrance to golf course construction — second only to the lending crisis.

Sadly, we must also turn to pages 34 and 35, where the trusty course charts appear this month. Because the *Development Letter* will issue updated charts every two weeks, these charts will appear in *Golf Course News* only on a quarterly basis. The twice-monthly *Development Letter* charts will be bigger and better — complete with more thorough contact information, i.e. more timely entries, better project descriptions and phone

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## Do they really have ears for hearing?

Did you hear about Mack, the man who thought his wife was going deaf?

While his wife sat at the kitchen table one day, Mack walked to the far side of the room, turned his back to her and said, "Can you hear me?"

There was no reply, so he moved closer. "Can you hear me?" he repeated.

Still no answer, so he walked right up to her back and asked clearly, "Can you hear me?"

"For the third time, yes, I can hear you," his wife said.

Mack's problem seems pervasive in society today. And I'm not saying I'm immune. This human "condition" keeps people apart and at odds.

One group believes it hears perfectly, is totally tuned into "the whole truth and nothing but the truth," has its mind made up, thinks "the others" are deaf, yet itself refuses to hear opposing or alternative ideas.

Those on the other side of an issue are the same. Thus the twain shall never meet.

This appears the case with golf course superintendents and extremists in the environmental movement.

Even your **proving** a theory, exposing a misinterpretation, expounding on scientific data cannot turn the ear of some.



Mark Leslie,  
managing editor

"Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool in his folly," Proverbs 17:12 tells us.

A millenia or so after Solomon penned that statement, at a time when politics had become even more

the shaper of culture, Henry Adams added a new dimension to this truth. He said: "Practical politics consists in ignoring facts." newsnewsFriends, believe this: There are many who do not **want** to have "ears to hear and eyes to see."

They prefer blessed ignorance and a cause.

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## Letters

### EUROPEAN VISION LACKING

To the editor:

Congratulations for your guest commentary by Ronald Fream: "European development lacks long-term focus," in the November issue. He touched on several habitual problems which seem to be plaguing the European market. Most notably an absence of vision on the part of developers. As a previous resident and golf course superintendent in Europe, I couldn't agree more with Mr. Fream's analysis.

What Mr. Fream failed to note sufficiently, however, is the degree to which Americans are culpable in the creation and perpetuation of these problems. We as Americans have an inane belief that every country wants to be like America. We assume everyone speaks American and that they don't care if we naively launch into a narrative in English... because of course, everyone wants to speak English.

Accordingly, we assume that Europeans want American-style golf courses. Yet we don't stop to contemplate all the socio-economic factors involved. In France, for instance, golf is very much the game of the upper-class, virtually inaccessible to the average citizen. In fact, contrary to popular opinion, the average French person could care less about golf. It

follows then, that very few public courses are built. Without public courses to take the game to the masses, the game has no chance to develop and flourish. So here we find ourselves building exclusive, high-profile, private golf courses, constructed to American standards. Virtually unsustainable (and unmaintainable) from an economic standpoint, they stand little chance of survival. Hence this contributes to the stagnation of the game.

I witnessed more than one project doomed to oblivion by poor planning, bad advice, lack of sufficient forethought, and uncompromising architects possessing an infatuation with name-making. Still Americans are trying to force feed high maintenance designs to ravenous Europeans.

Mr. Fream noted the importance of using financial realism in the planning design and how it effects long-term maintenance. Bravo! Ron. I have seen Mr. Fream's work in France firsthand, and he has perhaps the best grasp for this long-range vision. He is to be commended on his desire for quality while maintaining some sense of the economic impact of the design.

Some clients admittedly demand U.S.-style courses at whatever cost. But a certain responsibility rests with the architect/

consultant to explain in depth the consequences of such impetuous behavior, even at the cost of forfeiting that "name golf course." Financial stability and longevity will benefit the architect, client, and the game of golf.

Steven M. Cook  
Golf Course Superintendent  
Wakonda Club  
1400 Park Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa

### TOP 10 ANNOYANCES

To the editor:

Golfers are a funny lot. And sometimes they can really test your nerves. Not that I'm complaining! After all, I'm a golfer myself, and the game of golf is the source of my bread and butter (and sometimes laughter).

Since spending my teen-age years and present adulthood as a greenskeeper, I have noticed that there are certain questions and comments that consistently come from the mouths of players.

And you know what? I'm getting tired of hearing them.

Here they are:

The Top Ten Worst Questions and "Humorous" Quotes from Golfers

1. When moving the tee markers: "Just a little closer to the hole, fella."

2. When the crew is working in

the sandtraps, and a golfer's ball happens to land in it: "Why didn't you just kick it out?"

3. "These greens don't hold very well," says this one guy after hitting a low 1-iron into the green from about 250 yards out. He was a 21-handicapper.

4. After putting the buckets of drinking water out for the day: "You've got vodka in those things?"

5. After changing the cups, a golfer's ball dribbles on the green, and the guy points to his ball (which happens to be three inches from the old cup, and 50 feet away from the fresh one) and says, "Why didn't you leave it here?"

6. Another time while changing the cups: "You should make a trench that begins at the edge of the green and narrows down toward the cup." (I almost like that idea).

7. "Ooops! Sorry, I didn't think I actually came this close to hitting you," while picking the ball out of the grass bucket on the greensmower.

8. "What are those white stakes for?"

9. "These greens are slow," when the golfer has a bad day.

10. "You guys really have the course in great shape," when the golfer has an unusually good day.

Donald G. Urso  
Pond View Golf Course  
Westerly, R.I.



## Hills: Ranges take pressure off golf course managers

Practice facilities are taking the pressure off golf courses by providing areas for golfers to improve their shot-making and for beginners to learn the game, according to Arthur Hills, president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects.

"Golfers who can't get a tee time can work on their game at practice facilities, which are usually more accessible than golf courses," said Hills. "In addition, golfers who don't have the time to play an entire round can practice

putting, driving and many other shots even if they have less than an hour to spare.

"Practice facilities allow beginner golfers to learn and enjoy the game without the pressure of playing on the course," he said. "New participants also can learn the etiquette and rules of the game, which will make for a more enjoyable experience once they actually play a round on a regulation course."

### DESIGN TRENDS

There are several types of prac-

tice facilities, including stand-alone driving ranges, extra holes on golf courses, and deluxe training centers that feature driving ranges, putting areas and bunkers. Large practice tee areas allow the golf course superintendent and golf professional to distribute wear over a larger area. Teeing areas are often one-half to one acre in overall surface area.

Target greens at designated distances from the teeing area are becoming more common. Lesson tees are often designed as sepa-

rate teeing areas at the end of the practice range or at the sides of the teeing area. If the lesson tees are located at the end of the range, an adequate buffer distance of approximately 350 yards (or greater) must be implemented.

Practice bunkers and practice greens are often implemented into designs by the golf course architect. Practice greens should be of ample size; 10,000 square feet plus is typically a desired surface area which allows for a variety of cup settings.

### PROVIDING ADDED VALUE

Practice facilities built in conjunction with golf courses help golfers develop skills, while providing an excellent location for testing new equipment before purchase.

In addition, these facilities offer an excellent source of revenue for golf courses.

"The additional revenue generated through lessons and from the driving range can be used for capital improvements to the course," said Hills.

### LEARNING CENTERS

A typical driving range has 40 to 100 tees, requires approximately 15-20 acres of land and can accommodate hundreds of golfers each hour.

Taking the driving range concept a step further, learning centers offer golfers the opportunity to work on a variety of shots. As an example of an elaborate learning center, Hills cites the Man-O-War Golf Center in Lexington, Ky.

"The 30-acre project features a three-tiered driving range, chipping area, putting green, realistic target greens and golf-swing video analysis," and entice them to return."

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CIRCLE #141

## Ears for hearing?

Continued from page 10

The problem is: Ignorance is not blessed — it's just absence of intelligence; and a cause can all too often be the sole embodiment of folly.

And to those who apologize for an environmental activist's distortion of certain facts or refusal to scrutinize or give credence to scientific findings, I say: An excuse is a only reason stuffed with a lie.

### NEW FINDINGS, NEW OFFICIALS

Does this all sound like we're fighting a lost cause in getting environmental activists and government officials to really pay attention to scientific research like:

- Dr. Tom Watschke's pesticide runoff studies;
- superintendent Edward Nash's tests at Bayberry Hill Golf Course which corroborated the Cape Cod Study figures; and
- University of Florida and Missouri State University practice golf green investigations?

Perhaps. Perhaps not.

President Bill Clinton and Vice President/self-proclaimed environmentalist Al Gore have brought with them a new chief of the Environmental Protection Agency — Carol Browner.

She is said to be tougher on people, easier on land.

The golf industry should be quick to find out if she has ears to hear and eyes to see. It will then know from the outset what, and whom, it is facing in this age of rewritten wetlands legislation and tree-cutting mitigation.

But at the same time, the golf industry should make sure it is not itself deaf to truths spoken by the new people on the block.