

Daily fee facilities deserve level playing field

An apple fell on my head during Golf Summit '92, hosted last fall by the National Golf Foundation in Orlando. During a panel discussion on alternative facilities, Bob Barrett — director of golf at Sunbelt Golf Corp. — described how his firm has successfully financed a multi-course golf "trail" in Alabama using state pension funds.

This wasn't news to me. *Golf Course News* had already published stories on the Jones Trail, so called because all the projects were designed by Robert Trent Jones, Inc.

However, when Barrett had finished, our table was asked to discuss various aspects of the Jones Trail project. My view was unwaveringly clear: What a great idea! Alabama ranks 48th in public golf availability. Affordable greens fees prevail. The state helps fund the project with an eye on tourism dollars down the road. And local builders are put to work.

Most everyone at my table

agreed — everyone, that is, except the Zimmermans, a married couple from Wisconsin who own and operate Kettle Hills Golf Course in Richfield. The Zimmermans are tired of competing with "government-funded" (read: municipal) golf facilities in the greater Milwaukee area. The Jones Trail — with its inventive albeit socialistic funding mechanism — was the last straw.

"I wonder how the private daily-fee operators in Alabama feel about this project," said Mr. Zimmerman, politely but with some irritation.

And you know, he has a good point. Because most of them weren't created to make money, municipal courses are often subsidized by city budgets — and they don't pay property taxes. The result? Artificially microscopic greens fees.

Mr. Zimmerman's argument was driven home at Public Golf '92, a conference



Hal Phillips
editor

sponsored by *Golf Course News* in November. Private operators of daily fee golf courses agreed with Mr. Zimmerman: They simply cannot charge municipal-level greens fees

and turn a profit.

There's another problem here, totally unrelated to the golf course industry. The Reagan-Bush years saw a sizable decrease in federal funding of mandated programs. Cash-strapped state governments, in turn, passed on these cuts to municipalities. Federal education funds, for example, are at an all-time, per-pupil low.

Perhaps we can kill a few birds with one measly stone. Cities and towns are beginning to realize their golf courses can be money-makers. If dressed up a bit, these facilities could charge more for greens fees, and thus augment municipal

budgets. Maybe the golf profits could be earmarked for something specific, like schools or trash pick-up.

Among other things, Public Golf '92 taught us that, when it comes to renovations and/or start-up developments, municipalities currently have multiple finance options.

If municipal courses raise their greens fees and offer commensurate value, isn't everyone better served? The private daily-fee operator gets fair competition. The municipal government can sustain needed programs. While the taxpayer/golfer pays more for municipal golf, he or she also gets a better municipal facility.

Private daily-fee operators don't want municipal facilities to close their doors. They just want to compete on a level playing field.

With a little ingenuity, cities and towns can make the competition more fair, and solve some of their own problems at the same time.

Public Golf '92 was chock full of lessons for learning



From the State-of-the-Game prologue by Rick Norton to a dynamic presentation on using television and radio to market your golf course by National Golf Course Owners Association President Vince Alfonso Jr., many lessons were taught at Public Golf '92. *Golf Course News*' first conference on the profitability of public golf was jam-packed with helpful



Mark Leslie
managing editor

information from some masters of the industry.

Information and suggestions were many and varied. My favorite came from Steve Lesnik, president of Kemper/Lesnik. "Preserving the condition of the golf course is managing for profit. Otherwise, it's like selling a soiled baseball," Lesnik said.

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Letters

MORE SHAPERS OF NOTE

To the editor:
I enjoyed reading "The shape of things to come" by Mark Leslie. A good shaper is invaluable, as it is their work that makes the difference between an average course and a good or great one. All the shapers mentioned are exceptional and deserving of the accolades, but I believe you missed two. Their names are Harold Dulin and Bill Grisham. Harold started shaping in 1945 with Perry Maxwell and continued on with Press after Perry's death. Bill, who works for Harold, started somewhere around 1956 and is still working.

It would be hard to list all the courses they worked on, I doubt if they even remember, but here are a few where they left their mark.

- Cherry Hills C.C. (Denver), Hiwan (Evergreen, CO)
- Prairie Dunes (Hutchinson, KS), Pecan Valley (San Antonio)
- Kissing Camels (Colorado Springs), Fairfield Bay (Clinton, AR)

(Some of this work is remodel as well as original construction) Both men live south of Spring-

field near Crane, Mo. Neither has been much for recognition and I thought maybe it was time.

Just visiting with Harold is a real treat.

Pat LeValley, P.E.
Project Manager
Wildcat Golf, Inc.

INSENSITIVITY CHARGED

To the editor:
I am writing in reference to the choice of word reflected in your caption concerning the distinguished Powell Family ("Powell clan honored by NGF" — October, 1992).

The term "clan" was not only repulsive but was extremely demeaning to the African-American Race. The accomplishments achieved by the Powell Family are certainly significant, and should have been mentioned. Mr. Powell who designed, developed and owns the Clearview Facility is probably the only African American in our country to have accomplished this extraordinary feat. In addition, Renee enjoyed a 13-year professional career, the longest tenure of any African American on that tour.

I believe as a service to your

readers, these facts could have been related. Further, this extremely coveted award is certainly one that demands an explanation of those criteria used to select, as well as the list of prior recipients.

Golf continues to be a major contribution to racism in our country. Articles such as this type, minimal treatment of achievement, does little to improve the plight of minorities in this industry. I have made the effort to acquaint you with what I believe could be an honest oversight.

Elmer Beard
President
Jackson Park Golfer's Assoc.
Chicago, Ill.

Editor's note: The word "clan" is a term of Scottish nomenclature meaning family or blood relation.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADDENDUM

To the editor:
I enjoyed reading the attached article ("Landfill course catches world's attention," October, 1992 edition) and would like to make you aware that part of the technology that made this project possible was designed and installed

by our company. The Horizontal Well System that was used at the St. Lucie course has been patented by us and developed over the last five years. It is currently working in seven major golf courses in Florida and South Carolina and is planned for use at a dozen more courses in the Southeast and the Bahamas.

We feel this technology will be widely used in the golf course industry in the future, because it will solve, in many areas, the one problem that is most on the minds of owners and operators: a good supply of irrigation water! This system can recover and recycle water from surficial water supplies that lie beneath golf courses in quantities great enough to fulfill most irrigation needs.

I have included information on our systems, as well as a video, and I hope you will give mention in your fine publication to let the industry know that there is an alternative source of water now available.

Donald R. Justice
President
Horizontal Wells
A Division of HDSI
Cape Coral, Fla.

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