

Letters

SNOW RESPONDS IN TRACS DEBATE

To the editor:

I couldn't agree more with a statement made by Dr. Mike Hurdzan in an editorial in the October 1992 edition of *Golf Course News*. Yes, I agree completely that the USGA Green Section is biased!

Indeed, the Green Section is biased in favor of green construction techniques that are time-tested, have proven to be widely adapted throughout many climatic zones and environmental conditions, have been proven scientifically valid through numerous research investigations, and are published and available to anyone and everyone.

And the Green Section is biased against recommending green construction methods that are based on unreviewed or dubious scientific evidence, have not been field-tested over a reasonable period of time, rely on "miracle" amendments of which little is known, require unnecessarily high use of fertilizer and water, are not published and available in the public domain, or are

based on techniques that have consistently produced mediocre to poor results, such as the on-site rototilling of amendments into the surface of sand-based greens.

Yes, the Green Section is biased, and I'm sure that the clubs and courses we serve would have it no other way!

In 1968 the Green Section published a small booklet entitled *Building Golf Holes for Good Turf Management*. It contained many little tips to use during construction to help ensure the long-term success of the turf once the construction job was done. Though it has been out of print for at least a dozen years, we still receive many requests for this publication.

Not all of our Green Section agronomists have extensive hands-on construction experience, but we know from visiting more than 1,800 golf courses each year that too much of the construction work we've seen has ignored the long-term maintenance needs of the turf!

We also know, better than anyone, about the price paid by golf course superintendents and

THREE CHEERS FOR HURDZAN

To the editor:

Three cheers for Michael Hurdzan taking a direct stand on the U.S.G.A. and the TRACS program.

The key elements golf superintendents and green committees miss when they deal with the U.S.G.A. are:

1. The expense and exposure of U.S.G.A. "down in the trenches" knowledge mentioned by Hurdzan is non-existent.

2. The U.S.G.A. is simply a money-raising group that attracts donations from a naive American public.

The victim is the young inexperienced superintendent who is risking a career by listening to unproven opinion.

course officials who have tried to deal with growing grass on lousy profiles. The golf course pays big bucks to get itself out of the mess, golfers are needlessly inconvenienced, and too often the superintendent pays with his job.

I might be going out on a limb, but I feel that the junior golf members who have gone through some of our training installations, have much more of a grasp on green construction methods and the upkeep of those greens than the U.S.G.A.

What the U.S.G.A. wants the public to believe is that qualified design and construction techniques are non-existent. What they should really do before they embarrass themselves any further is check people's credentials. It looks to me that Hurdzan has some excellent credentials.

Tom Briddle
Vice President
TecTonic, Inc.
Longmont, Colo.

The Green Section's proposed TRACS program (Turf Renovation And Construction Services) was conceived with the idea of educating superintendents, developers, owners and course officials about how the *dos* and *don'ts* of golf

course construction will affect the long-term maintenance of the turf on their courses.

This is absolutely in the realm of Green Section expertise. Based upon the tremendous favorable response we received about the TRACS program, it seems that superintendents and course officials agree.

However, to reach more people than could possibly be reached with a TRACS program, we have decided to write an expanded version of *Building Golf Holes for Good Turf Management*. It will be a "how-to" manual with one purpose in mind—to help golf courses enjoy the best possible turf for the dollars they spend on construction.

Many golf course architects and builders are dedicated to doing their best for their clients. We would welcome their input, including that of Dr. Hurdzan, in putting together our manual of tips for construction success.

James T. Snow
National Director
United States Golf Association
Green Section

EXPANDING ON FREAM'S COMMENT

To the editor:

I read with interest the commentary by Ronald Fream on the state of European golf development (November, 1992). I agree with Mr. Fream's conclusions and too have experienced first hand the follies of developers both in Europe and in Asia. However, I would like to expand on his comments. Mr. Fream politely declined to point out that many projects are conceived by ego-driven individuals hell bent on creating a monument to themselves. These projects are often times perpetuated by the expert golf architects and golf consultants from the U.S. The naive don't hold the mo-

nopoly. As mentioned by Mr. Fream, projects are created and controlled often times by someone who totally ignores the economic realities of the project. They enter a fantasy world that borders on lunacy. What is common among many golf consultants, project managers, and architects is a lack of concern at the time to do anything about it. After all, the money flows in projects like these. The famous phrase "we have found the enemy and it is us" should be relevant in retrospect.

The immediate future of European and Asian golf development is dependent on building more low end daily fee projects. Architects and consultants need to steer clear

of the "monuments of ignorance" of tomorrow. We need to recognize that relative to U.S. standards there are not many golfers on the European or Asian continent. There are just too few inexpensive public golf facilities available elsewhere in the world. Because there are so few, there is a very weak "feeder system" of experienced golfers willing to upgrade into higher quality public facilities and private clubs. Upscale markets don't exist in many areas.

Unfortunately, land costs remain a big obstacle to the development of lower end daily fee facilities. It is very difficult to achieve an acceptable rate of return on projects of this caliber. We have an opportunity. There is a current debate going on in the Uruguay round of the GATT talks (General Agreement on Tariffs & Trade) concerning farm subsidies. Basically the problem is the amount of farm land in production—principally in France and Germany—due to their respective governments price supports of this industry. Farming is a lucrative business for the French and German farmers. The price supports given European farmers encourages more production which in turn lowers world prices. This hurts U.S. farmers. The U.S. has recently threatened severe retaliation actions if the European community does not reduce these subsidies (i.e. 200% tariffs on white wine, et. al.). These threats have moved the discussion along and at this writing it appears that a compromise is likely. European farmers and communities dependent on farming obviously will not accede without a fight. Our opportunity as golf architects and consultants would be to promote golf facilities as an alternate use of farm land. Cogent arguments exist when the benefits to a community are outlined in terms of the economic contributions that a

Bylaw changes? If it ain't broke...

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5. Field Staffing

I must admit that I am somewhat at a loss as to the justification for implementing this program. While I realize that there are many individuals maintaining golf courses in the United States who are not members of our association, I would not consider the majority of these people golf course superintendents. The idea that these field staff personnel will be funded partially by the recruiting of new members seems to be a very iffy proposition at best. Additionally, I am more concerned with getting quality members in our association than I am with increasing our membership and dues base.

The setting up of seminars, workshops, conferences, training seminars and speaking engagements around the country already has been accomplished through the efforts of local chapters and our existing GCSAA staff. I don't see how a field staff person will significantly add to the already excellent programs available to our members.

In conclusion, I do not doubt for one second that the proposed changes are, in the eyes of the Board of Directors of GCSAA, in

the best interest of the membership. While I would encourage our Board of Directors to continue to bring proposals to the membership that they feel are in everyone's best interest I am concerned that so much of our association's funds have been used in promoting these changes (special mailings, etc.) Of particular concern to me has been the obvious use of our national magazine as a forum to try to gather support for these proposals. I have always felt that our magazine should be an educational tool, but lately it has taken on the air of being a political tool as well. This is particularly disturbing when there is no opposing viewpoint being offered for review as well. In fact, our magazine does not even have an editorial page where an opposing viewpoint can be aired.

I think that the upcoming meeting in Anaheim will be the most important one since I have been a member of the Association. I am confident that regardless of what the final tally will be in the voting that the Association will continue to thrive, because we have so many individuals who are committed to its success.

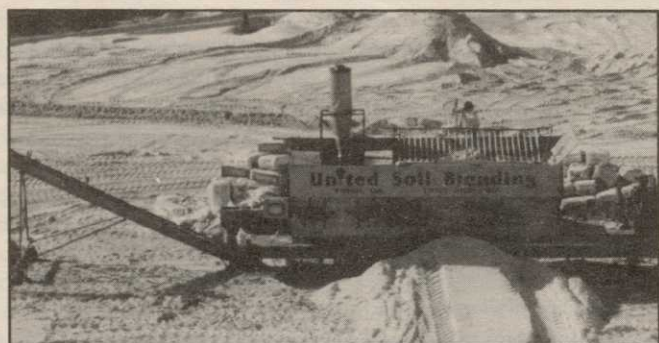
Bob Maibusch, CGCS

golf facility would bring. Factor in the offsetting costs of the reduced or removed farm subsidies and all of a sudden there could be a reasonable expectation by state or municipality that a golf project for the common person at affordable prices makes sense.

Promotion and awareness will be the key to success in this area. We have a lot of work to do. Presently, the foibles of the aforementioned egoists around the world have hurt our overall chances for growth. A

mechanism to consolidate a philosophy and determine a joint strategy among golf architects, golf consultants, and other golf companies should be found. In the absence of a cooperative effort in this regard, we risk slow to no growth and every Tom, Dick & Harry will continue to undermine our professional credibility. Or is it Thomas, Dagmar, und Heinrich?

Rudy Anderson
GM, Wolferts Roost CC
Albany, New York



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