EXPANDING ON FREAM'S COMMENT

To the editor:

I had the interest of the commentator 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 projects are created and money flows in projects, but too often the superintendents and consultants need to steer clear of the "monuments of ignorance" of tomorrow. We need to recognize that U.S. standards are not many golfers on the European or Asian continent. There are just too 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 to 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. As a result, there is a current debate going on in the Uruguay round of the GATT talks (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) concerning farm subsidies. Basically the problem is the amount of farm land in production — principally in France and Germany — and the resultant government price supports of this industry. Farming is a lucrative business for the French and German farmers. The price supports given European farmers, however, finance more production which in turn lowers world prices. This hurts U.S. farmers. The U.S. has recently through a variety of recommendations if the European community does not reduce these subsidies (i.e. 20% 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 community leaders are not likely to voluntarily reduce these subsidies and all of sudden there could be a reasonable expectation by state or municipally that a golf or grass professional can make a living 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 folklore of the aforementioned egoists around the world have hurt our overall chances for growth. A course official who has tried to deal with growing grass on lousy profiles, the golf course pays big bucks to get itself out of the mess, golfing members who have gone through some of our training seminars and speaking engagements around the country already have been accomplished through the efforts of local chapters and our existing GCSSA staff. I don't see how field staff will see professionals significantly add to the already excellent programs available to our members.

In conclusion, I do not doubt for one second that the proposals and ideas of the Board of Directors of GCSSA, in golf course & facility would bring. Factor in the offsets that reduced or removed farm subsidies and all of sudden there could be a reasonable expectation by state or municipally that a golf professional can make a living 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 folklore of the aforementioned egoists around the world have hurt our overall chances for growth. A course development 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 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 educative tool, and I have 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. In fact, as 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 the readers 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 Maibach, CGCS

TecTonic, Inc.

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 bylaw. While I realize that there are many individuals maintaining golf courses in the United States who have not been members of our association, I would not consider the majority of these people golf course superintendents. The idea that this field staff personnel would be partially funded by the recruiting of new members seems to be a very iffy proposition at best. Additionally, I am more concerned with the quality membership 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 GCSSA staff. I don't see how field staff will see professionals significantly add to the already excellent programs available to our members.

In conclusion, I do not doubt for one second that the proposals and ideas of the Board of Directors of GCSSA, in the best interest of the membership. While I would encourage our Board of Directors to continue to bring proposals to the membership, I am confident that everyone's best interest is concerned that so much of our association's funds have been used in promoting these changes (special mailings, et al.). 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 educative tool, and I have 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. In fact, as 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 the readers 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.

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