

Public Golf '93: An event you won't want to miss

Readers of *Golf Course News* may have noticed the recent articles and advertisements concerning Public Golf '93. Indeed, similar advertising appears on page 39 this month, while a story announcing our speakers' program can be found in the Management section.

If you were one of the 100 or so people who attended last year's conference, you would know the Public Golf Conference is an annual event designed to help owners and managers better cope with the ever more competitive world of golf course operations.

If you didn't attend Public Golf '92, this column is for you. Your first question might well be: What the hell is *Golf Course News* doing holding conferences? Well, my boss tells a tired ol' story about the railroad industry, which failed because it never realized it was in the *transportation* business, not the railroad business. Tired

or not, that's a compelling example of what *Golf Course News* is trying to do for the golf course industry.

We're in the *communications business* and, quite frankly, our success depends on the success of golf course operations all over the country. It's not getting any easier to turn a profit these days, but there are success stories. There are examples of innovation and efficiency that can be duplicated, even improved upon.

In reporting the news of our industry, we come into contact with these successes (and failures) every day. We've handpicked the successful people and invited them to speak, answer questions and *communicate* their experiences at Public Golf '93.

Pro shop retailing. Marketing. Practice facilities. Cart rental. Management strategy. Public



Hal Phillips,
editor

relations and promotion. Food and beverage. Maintenance practices. Golf instruction.

What do these things have in common? Money can be made or lost in all these areas, depending on how you handle them. Public Golf '93 is designed to help you make the most of them.

For example, Vince Alfonso — owner and head pro at The Rail Golf Club in Springfield, Ill. — will speak about promotion at Public Golf '93. Not only is Vince a marketing genius (he's got his own radio and TV shows, not to mention 200 outings each year), he was recently named 1992 Merchant of the Year by the Gateway Section of the PGA of America.

Rees Jones is one of America's top golf course

designers, but he's made another name for himself through renovation. What does a course renovation accomplish? It adds value to an existing facility — and what owner doesn't want that? Jones will speak at Public Golf '93 with Larry Hirsh, a golf course appraiser who will discuss some very interesting ways to add assessed value to golf course properties.

The bread & butter items for any daily-fee owner are probably green fees and cart rental. Ken James, vice president American Golf Corp., is involved with the operation of more than 200 daily fee facilities, in locations all over the nation. Who better to discuss innovative ways to maximize profits in these areas?

The two-day conference features some 20 speakers, and I can't do justice to them (or their ideas) in this column. Suffice to say, we think we've

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Sierra article yet another lesson in agenda journalism

*"S*ticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me."

That's a phrase that rolls so easily off a kid's tongue, but is it ever really true — even when we grow up? I got hit by a brick barrage of words last month and it *seemed* like the blow was directly and firmly to the back of the head. Did I imagine that? Yeah, probably.

It amazed me, but a *Sierra* magazine "reporter" 1,500 miles away over a telephone line knew exactly my facial expressions as he interviewed me, what I was thinking during a pause in conversation, and my feelings on grass going brown (though we never touched upon that subject and he guessed wrong: I have editorialized in favor of

"brown is beautiful").

The "reporter," of course, was writing for his audience — Sierra Clubites, Findhorn-ologists, the types who'll go all out to save the spotted owl and turn a blind eye to 500,000 lost jobs. I guess we couldn't expect an unbiased approach to golf course development and its effect on the environment.

We noticed that he didn't talk to any scientists for facts to support his vitriolic diatribe assailing golf, golfers and superintendents.

No mention of Ron Dodson, president of the New York Audubon Society, and his Golf Course Wildlife Sanctuary Program.



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

No mention of Clemson University's Dr. Ron Kendall and his research at Kiawah Island's Ocean Course.

No mention of Dr. Stuart Cohen who, when at the Environmental Protection Agency, oversaw the Cape Cod Study on the effects of pesticide use on ground water.

No mention of Dr. Tom Watschke of Penn State and his studies on pesticide runoff.

The list is lengthy of people with "PhD" after their names whom he did not interview in his quest to prove that, as *Sierra* put it, "Nature pays a price for our love affair with golf."

In fact, the reporter's "scientific" source was a man who

completed one year of college, holds no degrees, conducts "insect counts" as his research and has made a career out of opposing golf courses.

In the span of three paragraphs, the reporter stated as fact:

- "To understand why golf courses are awash in chemicals..."

Sounds like Flood City, doesn't it?

- "Superintendents must fight moisture, wind, heat extremes, molds and fungus (and, in my hometown of Austin, dreaded fire ants) to keep their 'greens' green."

That's curious, because fire ants don't migrate to greens, guy.

- "Putting greens are more

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Letters

DO WE REALLY NEED FIVE SETS OF TEES?

To the editor:

As a fellow golf architect, I read with interest Dr. Michael Hurdzan's proclamation that five sets of tees are now the standard for new golf courses (*Golf Course News*, August 1993, page 26). Respectfully, I must disagree.

Certainly with the increased traffic which has resulted from the golf boom, more teeing space is necessary on many golf courses, daily fee layouts especially. And there has been a trend among quite a few practicing architects toward distributing this area over four or even five sets of tees per hole.

However, I question the need for such a wide selection of tee grounds. In particular, the back tees I've seen on a lot of modern courses are totally unnecessary,

put in just to boost the course rating for advertisement purposes and the course's "Resistance to Scoring" in *Golf Digest* competitions. The only people who play these tees are six handicappers who insist on "playing the whole course," and shooting 90. Often, for the club professional or even Tour events, you will find them playing forward tees on at least a few holes (At Butler National, they put grandstands on the back tees so the spectators won't notice they aren't being used). New courses would be cheaper and faster to play if architects would simply resist the temptation to build some of their back tees.

Nor do multiple tees fix other playability problems. For example, abrupt dogleg holes generally don't work well because of the unpredictable length of the average player's drive — those

falling short of the dogleg point may have to hit a wedge around trees in the corner, while longer hitters playing from the forward tees don't know just how far to lay up. But architects build these holes more often today, because they've convinced themselves that multiple tees will deliver all players to the dogleg point, every time. Unfortunately, average golfers don't hit their drives consistently for distance or direction.

It seems to me a lot of great courses have managed to survive with only two or three tees per hole — places like Merion, Cypress Point, Crystal Downs or the National Golf Links of America — and their shot values still hold up pretty well for everyone. Instead of building forced carries and all their bunkers precisely the same distance from the tee, the architects of these courses gave a lot of

thought to distributing their hazards through the course, so that every player was affected on different holes, based on the topography and on how far they hit the ball.

In the British Isles, they managed to survive with (gasp!) one men's tee, one women's tee, and one "medal tee" which is reserved for club tournaments or for good players who obtain the secretary's permission to play from it.

The idea that shot values need to be "relatively the same" for all golfers on each individual hole, by building five sets of tees, has resulted in predictable designs which ignore the natural topography and cost more to build. But it doesn't make for better courses.

Tom Doak,
president
Renaissance Golf Design, Inc.
Traverse City, Mich.

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Leslie comment: The Sierra agenda

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susceptible to chemical leaching than fairways or roughs because beneath that thin layer of turf is a base of 70 to 90 percent sand. Chemicals sometimes leach through sand, especially after heavy rainfalls. If those chemicals eventually migrate into, say, a stream filled with brook trout, which have a low tolerance for pollution, the fish may die."

Should have made that call to Dr. Cohen, friend.

And you might like to know that the "success stories" of

developers and superintendents who respond to environmental concerns can be summed up neatly in one paragraph near the end of the article. The winners? David Stone at the Honors Course in Ooltewah, Tenn.; Tom Cassat at Pine Ridge Golf Course in Towson, Md. (sorry, Tom, we know you're actually in Lutherville, but who's counting mistakes?); and Eagle's Landing near Ocean City, Md.

You'll get more out of this week's *National Enquirer* than *Sierra*. Hey, at least everyone

knows better than to believe what you read in the *Enquirer* — though probably more of it is truth. And the *Enquirer* editors and writers must be much less uptight — what with not having to save the snail darter from cruel mankind.

Some day an unbiased article may appear in *Sierra*. Until then, they are preaching to a choir of happily misinformed-and-wanna-stay-that-way folks.

As for me, I'm going to watch who I share my innermost silences with. Bruce, you're forgiven even if you don't ask. That's my duty.

Hurdzan comment

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plain golfers who would be willing to staff a Peace Corps of Golf. Willing to travel to a land or region without golf — be it eastern Europe, Mexico, South America, or an American Indian reservation to establish golf.

I am not so naive as to think that this would be a simple undertaking. But with cooperation of the U.S. ambassador corps and personal invitations from host nations, the big guys in

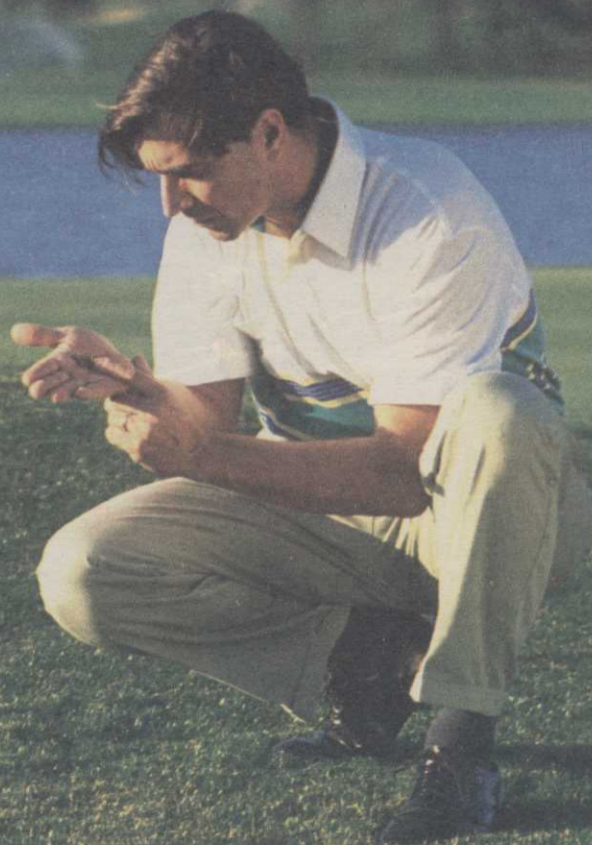
golf could make it happen.

What is the long-range incentive for each of us beyond personal fulfillment? First, there is a financial incentive that if golf becomes a national pastime it opens up new markets for professional expertise and equipment.

Second, it enhances the possibility of a world tour. Third, it would foster peace between nations. It would make golf a universal sport and not the idle, rich, white man's game it is perceived to be now. Golf would have little opposition to becoming an Olympic event.

And lastly, many of us would have a lifetime memory of sharing and giving to a nobler cause ... a game we love called golf.

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Public Golf '93

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assembled a blockbuster program that will more than interest you — it will help you make money.

Public Golf '93 is scheduled for Nov. 14-17, at Wild Dunes in Charleston, S.C. Yes, there will be a tournament held at the Tom Fazio design on the 14th. Not just any tournament, mind you — the first annual Editors' Tourney, where *Golf Course News* editors Mark Leslie, Peter Blais and myself will display the form that earned us three places in the nation's Top 10 People You Don't Want In Your Scramble.

In any case, we think Public Golf '93 will be worth your while. For more information, contact the Golf Course News Conference Group at 207-846-0600.

AGC spinoff

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able for purchase on attractive terms.

"Further, management believes that a substantial number of these courses are managed by *ad hoc* organizations of golf professionals and property managers that lack the expertise and centralized management capability to operate, market and maintain such courses efficiently.

"The Company believes that by acquiring such golf courses and installing experienced golf course managers and management systems, its revenue and income from acquisitions can increase."

Apparently, investors agree. The 9.7 million shares of common stock hit the New York Stock exchange Aug. 10, selling at \$20.375 per share. Two weeks later, it closed at \$20.625, a 1/4-point jump.

NGP is very happy with the reception investors have given its initial public stock offering, according to a company official.

"It's gone very well," said Executive Vice President and CEO Ed Sause. "The underwriters are very happy. It was well priced and successfully marketed."

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