

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,
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