Innovations in service and management at Public Golf

just as greens fees drive profits at a golf course, so does innovative service and management steer the vehicle. Ideas that fit this scenario overlapped at Golf Course News' recent Public Golf '93 conference in Orlando, Fla. From American Golf Co. Vice President Kenneth James' wisdom in filling tee times to National Golf Course Owners Association President Vince Alfonso Jr.'s admonitions to give to the community, attendees from Florida to Hawaii learned a spate of money-making ideas.

We share a fraction of them here, suggesting, as Lansbrook Golf Club General Manager Gregg Gagliardi did: "Every area has ideas that work: you have to find your own promotional opportunities within your market. If you're going to make money, you've got to push and drive business. Flexibility in your operations is a must. Service is number one."

To better serve the golf course industry, Golf Course News has expanded the annual Public Golf conference into a trade show and three-tracked educational symposium for superintendents, owners, managers and developers. It's called Golf Course Expo, and it's scheduled for Nov. 10-11, 1994, in Orlando, Fla. In addition to a management program, Golf Course Expo will offer educational programs in agronomy and development.

HAYES, HAVE NOTS
One theme that rang out at Public Golf '93 was that golf course operators have not because they ask not.

"People wonder how we got all this help. It's because we asked," said Elaine Fitzgerald of Fitzgerald Promotions Inc. , near Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. For years she has Fitzgeralded hundreds of thousands of dollars in free advertising for two golf courses by tying them into promotions of area hotels, she has gotten major mileage by placing brochures in visitors bureaus and chambers of commerce.

Bobby Vaughn, president of Sunbelt Corp., which has opened the 18-course Jones Trail in Alabama, supported Fitzgerald's stance. "We've spent less than $150 per hole per year for the last three years promoting and marketing this concept," he said. "Much of our publicity was generated for free because we asked. And now we have finally given people a reason to come to Alabama." Among the Jones Trail's successes:

• As a major tourist attraction, it had the highway department put up signs in Alabama.
• It worked a deal with AAA in which it is featured on the cover.

continued on page 57

Thanks for five years of news, views, people and places

Don't be alarmed! I'm not resuming my monthly column, which we "axed" a couple of years ago when Editor Hal Phillips came on board, I am taking space this month to thank our loyal readers and advertising clients for supporting Golf Course News on what could be considered a minor milestone in publishing.

Five years ago this month, I showed up at the Gulf States Golf Show in Mobile, Ala., with the idea that I was supposed to be a vermin (the name of my newspaper at the time) publisher, Terry Buchen, the CGCS Branch Manager, and associate editor, Tim Hiers, the CGCS Associate Director.

The show was a financial and promotional success, but the editors, publisher, sales manager and the rest of the staff were left with a bad taste in the mouth.

This short five-year period has become a full-blown, successful reality.

Shortly after the '90 show, Peter Blais came on board as associate editor and, of course, Vern Putney was hammering out stories until some health problems sidelined him (he's back, in fine "Jettie," as contributing editor). Our editorial staff found a leader in Hal Phillips, who joined us at the New Orleans show in '92. All of the original staff is still with us and continuing to provide you news for the industry.

During these five years, there have been many interesting happenings in the industry, I'll never compete with Letterman, but with an assist from our editors, I've come up with a few "Top Ten" and "Best of" lists. I'm sure we've missed a few of your favorite items or names in the News, so please send along any additions. Here we go:

1. Top Ten News Stories
2. Weather-related disasters affecting golf facilities Hugo, Andrew, Iniki, quakes, floods, drought — and the incredible resilience of the nation's superintendents
3. Rule changes paid to the speed-of-play issue
4. Emergence of golf course management companies
5. Flights of the Asia-Pacific market
6. Major reorganization at top of GSACSA (for the better!)
7. Boom in daily-fee/public-access facilities
8. RCT liquidation of properties, landmark foremost among them
9. Mergers and acquisitions on the supplier side, as the industry continues to mature
10. EPA and state regulations, along with chemical deregistration under FIFRA

And the number-one news story from the year 1988 to 1993...

1. More than 1,700 new golf courses open for play. The NSF was right: That's nearly one per day!

One of my lasting impressions from that first show in Anaheim was how persnification people are in this industry. Along with the new leaders at GSACSA, a slew of personalities has emerged in the golf world over the past five years. Here's my list, in no particular order:

• Mike Hughes, executive director, National Golf Course Owners Association — the growth of the NGCOA speaks volumes
• Perry Dye, Dye Designs — single-handedly kept the 1993 course category on course
• Mike Daily, GCMA — had our hands full of business and consumer magazines.

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Continued from page 57

Thursdays promotions in July and August.

A dime more to put another player on the golf course.

Grass and people: Those are the two things you have to spend your time thinking about,” said Lesnik.

By saying a golf course should “spend what you have to spend on turfgrass maintenance — you’ll get it back in the long run,” Lesnik added: “We’re as concerned with the quality of service as we are about the person who paid $95 [at another course]. It could mean the difference between a good round and a bad round.”

Five years of GCN

Continued from page 10

builders association alive, and stayed very busy in Asia-Pacific.

Phil Arnold, executive director, GCBA — the guiding hand.

Jim Snow, director, USGA Green Section — now, more than ever, the turf authority.

Carol Brewer, administrator, Environ- mental Protection Agency — like her or not, she’s a force to be reckoned with.

Steve Mona, executive director, GC- SAA — a new beginning.

Randy Nicholas, outgoing president, GCBA — oversaw the passing of the torch.

Tom Fazio, architect — solidified his reputation as golf’s top designer.

Mike Shannon, head of KSL — made big splash on management side by snapping up La Quinta and PGA West, then acquiring Fairways.

Craig Price, president, American Golf Corp., and AGC on acquiring a bingie, then formed publicly held acquisition wing, National Golf Properties.

From a publisher’s point of view, it’s interesting to note a large number of publications have entered this market over the past five years. If I miss one, I apologize to any of my peers. But here’s a sampling:

Environmental Summit

Continued from page 3

management, founded 12 years ago by actor Robert Redford, specializes in bringing together the forces of environmentalists and developers. According to Director Terry Minger, the Center — a 501-C3, or non-profit organization — has staged “meaningful, productive” conferences on oil drilling in the Bering Sea, reauthoriza- tion of the Clean Air Act, the ozone debate, global and disease.

“We’re an organization that builds bridges,” said Minger. “We’re not an advo- cacy group. When we brought people to- gether for the Bering Sea seminar, we had 18 oil companies there, as well as environ- mental groups.”

Minger had no idea how many golf courses are expected to close more than the 65 or 70 advertised, equally representative of the golf/resort industry and environmental groups. Minger added that he possesses a solid grounding in the golf world, having been city manager in Vail, Colo., during con- struction of a Pete Dye course there. Minger was also involved in the development of Desert Mountain Golf, the Palmer course in Whistler, British Columbia, Canada.

“Golf has been a given a bad name be- cause of the mega-developments,” Minger said. “It’s a question of selling property in- stead of playing the game as it was originally constuted. We aim to invite people from the golf industry to show the green side to the good side.”

Instead of sniping at each other and filing lawsuits, we’re going to sit down and talk. We’ll see what the environmental groups find wanting and how the golf course industry can respond and, in the past, I believe golf has shown itself to be very responsive.”

Patterson said a preconference meeting is scheduled for June or July, and speakers and conference organizers can devise a first-draft program and walk through it.

“We’ve contacted more than 25 key indi- viduals and organizations on both sides

Golf Course News

Golf Course Construction

Project Managers, Shapers, Lay-Out Spe- cialists needed at once.

PGA CERTIFIED

GOLF PROFESSIONALS

The City of Virginia Beach, Virginia (pop. 402,000) is soliciting proposals from PGA certified golf professionals to manage the pro shop at each of their three munici- pal golf courses. Interested parties are noti- fied that three separate proposals—one for each pro shop—are available. All PGA certified golf professionals who are inter- ested in submitting proposals should con- tact the City Purchasing Division at (804) 427-4438 to obtain the necessary pro- posal documents. John McConnell/Proc- urement Specialist.

Golf Courses Wanted

Southwest Georgia is interested in purchasing or leasing golf courses.

Call Dick Campbell at (505) 899-0960.