

Do golf and casino gaming mix? The jury is still out

America has either come a very long way or sunk to its moral depths, but this much can be said without fear of contradiction: Casino gambling is beginning to carve itself a niche in the nation's fastest-growing vacation trend, the family-style destination resort.

Indeed, the idea of changing your average resort into a theme park may have already taken hold. Don't expect the good folks at Disney to install slot machines in Epcot Center anytime soon, but don't be surprised if more traditional vacation spots start buying into the lucrative, low-overhead appeal of gaming.

Las Vegas, because it's the birthplace of modern American gambling, is further along this curve than any of its resort competitors. As it matures further, Vegas will look more and more like a giant, gambling theme park. By day, "fun for the whole family" will mean parents playing golf and shopping; kids frolicking by the pool and indulging themselves in various "theme" activities. The whole brood will get together for dinner, after which the kids will go to bed and parents will make a bee-line for the casino.

Indian tribes across the nation have begun to see gaming as their economic panacea (see story page 1), drawing millions of Americans to out-of-the-way places like Fort Thompson, S.D., and Loughlin, Ariz. Following the lead of Las Vegas — the gambling community's role model — tribes also see gaming as the first step



Hal Phillips,
editor

toward creation of full-service, destination resorts.

You may have gathered I'm not a big fan of organized gambling, which tends to separate cash from the pockets of those who, in general, can least afford to lose it. However, it's impossible to ignore the bright side here, which is the huge potential growth for golf.

The game has long been a favorite of resort developers who must occupy vacationers during daylight hours. Unlike seaside resorts, most Indian reservations have no beach component — making golf even more important to providing outdoor activities.

Golf developers who've spent the last 10 years wading through seas of red tape may salivate uncontrollably at the idea of building courses on land unregulated by local pols. Land on Indian reservations is often plentiful and, because the tribe owns it outright, beyond cheap.

Don't get me wrong: There is money to be made here as golf rides the coat tails of this burgeoning trend. But, developers beware: There are pitfalls that shouldn't be underplayed (see story page 33).

The temptation — as it was in the late-1980s with regard to real estate-based developments — is to seize immediately upon this new golf vehicle before the competition does.

Yet the family-style gaming theme park is not a proven commod-

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Knott's call for return to classic design a worthy crusade

In the beginning: Brown. Unmanicured. Unruly. Natural. Unique. Not bound by rules beyond a tee box, a green and a cup. This is what golf courses were made of.

Today: Green — always green. Grass smooth as a billiard table and fast as a speeding bullet. Holes in multiples of nine. Well-defined. No blind shots. Never (well, hardly ever) two consecutive par-3s. Never (well, hardly ever) two consecutive par-5s. Contrived. This is what golf courses are made of.

Such is the Tale of the Prodigal — The Prodigal Golf Nation, that is. Just as the United States is an evolving analogy of the prodigal son, is not golf as we know it today, at many facilities and in many ways, an analogy of the prodigal son?

Just as the prodigal son left his roots to frolic in the (Egads!) pig stench, among other things, has not Golf Nation departed from its roots?

While it has fallen victim of the "We Can Do It Better Syndrome," the natives are stirring. Many course designers in Golf Nation are now espousing "Back to Basics," calling for a return to "classic design." They may not actually be doing it, but they are espousing it.

A few others are actually Doing It. And, hooray for Hollywood, the president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, Don Knott of Robert Trent Jones II International, has proclaimed this return to the classics as his Number One Call to Duty. Why nine holes, or 18 holes when the land you're dealing with is too small? he asks. Why always have lush green turf? he asks. Why,

Letters

TORO RESEARCHER ANSWERS WALL STREET JOURNAL REPORT

To the editor:

Your May 2 Marketplace article, "Golf Courses Are Denounced as Health Hazards" did a great disservice to the golf industry as well as the emerging group of environmentally responsible turf-care companies working to pioneer new management techniques.

Virtually every superintendent will agree that the turf management practices used on a golf course need to evolve as our understanding of the environmental impact of fertilizers and pesticides grows. Most golf superintendents are well-educated, skilled agronomists anxious to make their

(The above letter to the editor appeared in the June 1 Wall Street Journal. It has been reprinted with the author's permission)

courses environmentally safe for their players, crews and communities.

A new breed of turf nutrition companies is emerging. Their programs use the natural balance in the turf to control infestations and promote improved playability on the golf course. These products use environmentally responsible formulations (and no pesticides) to minimize the impact on the local ecosystem. Many employ "spoon feeding" programs that apply light but frequent doses of liquid nutrients stay in the root zone and less is leached into ground water or runs off into holding ponds.

New diagnostic techniques also can help the superintendent apply only the nutrients and trace minerals needed at that particular time.

All of us associated with the

why, why to scores of little rules man has made over the last 100 years that have narrowed the concept of a golf course to, in effect, rule out the very classics from which golf grew.

In the end, the prodigal son saw the light. He realized the error of his ways, how they led to his destruction. His father welcomed him back home with outstretched arms. The sentinels of Golf Nation would do the same to our own prodigal — wouldn't you say?

...

He has been called sinister, diabolical (or was that "dye-abolical?"), and a savage envisioner of nightmares for golfers. But those who know him, love him. Next winter they can know him better.

Golf course architect extraordinaire Pete Dye, not to be outdone by his author/designer buddies, is coming out with his own book in November (see story, page 32). What will Pete title it? "Bury Me in a Pot Bunker." Appropriate enough. Word is, Pete is leaning toward the subtitle "18 Holes That Changed the Course of the Game." But, how about "Bury My Heart (or Driver or Putter) in Crooked Stick" — and subtitled "PGA (Purgatory Grabs Able-bodied) West Revisited"? — Or "Spitting Upwind in the Teeth of the Dog"? Any ideas?

Meanwhile, Pete is venturing into the world of clothing design. The Bowie, Md., firm Membership Bounce has announced its Pete Dye Architect Series golf shirts, which will consist of signed interpretations of newly created golf holes. His trademark — island

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golf industry recognize that our horticultural practices need to change as our knowledge of environmental pollution grows. Rather that vilify the golf superintendent for past practices, you need to recognize their pioneering work to improve the environment on the course. We will all benefit from that work and still enjoy a good round of golf."

H. Parker Smith Jr., director
Toro Probiotic Unit
Scottsdale, Ariz.

FAUBEL AGREES: GOLFERS SHOULD HELP FUND TURF RESEARCH

To the editor:

Mark Leslie's editorial in the June issue of *Golf Course News* ("It's time for golfers to pay their fair share") is right on target.

Superintendents have worked diligently for years to provide research support so they might pro-

vide better playing surfaces for golfers. The United States Golf Association has probably made the most impact with the millions of dollars it has provided for turfgrass research. The full impact of their efforts will be felt for years to come.

At the present time, the turfgrass industry in Michigan is being used as an example by other traditional agriculture groups for their efforts to raise money for research and extension, an effort which is having a very positive effect on the College of Agriculture & Natural Resources (at Michigan State University).

Ultimately, it is the consumer who pays the bill. However, if the funds are to be raised, it is the responsibility of those within the industry to find the vehicle.

Jerry Faubel, CGCS
Saginaw (Mich.) Country Club



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

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Nicklaus to put stamp on par-3

BRANSON, Mo. — Officials of Bass Pro Shops Big Cedar Lodge and Nicklaus Design have announced plans to develop a Jack Nicklaus Signature Par-3 golf course on Big Cedar Lodge property near this town. The course, a part of The Audubon Signature Cooperative Sanctuary Program, is the first Nicklaus-designed track in Missouri.

"I'm looking forward to working on the course in an area of the country that is trademarked with its natural beauty," said Nicklaus. "This area in Missouri has tremendous features to the terrain and is one of the top new golf markets in the United States."

The course would surround the former residence of Dr. Graham Clark, which would serve as both pro shop and restaurant. The layout will be suitable for play by family members and experts. A practice area is also planned.

The facility, which has a commanding view of Table Rock Lake, will be known as the Top of the Rock. The course will be planned and operated in an environmentally friendly manner with maximum attention being given to preservation of wildlife habitat and the natural surroundings.

John Santacrose, executive director of The Audubon Society of New York State, said: "We welcome Bass Pro Shops Big Cedar Lodge as a registered member of the Audubon Signature Cooperative Sanctuary Program. We look forward to expanding our long-standing relationship with Johnny Morris and his organization."

With help from the Audubon Signature Cooperative Sanctuary Program, maximum attention will be given to preservation of wildlife habitat and the natural surroundings. This is the first Missouri golf course to be registered for the signature program and one of only 10 in the nation.

This is the first phase of what the company hopes will eventually become a world-class golf center that will include an 18-hole golf course. The complex will initially include a 5,000-square-foot retail golf shop and clubhouse, plus a restaurant with one of the most panoramic views in the Ozarks. The course and facilities are initially planned to be open to the public.

NORTH PALM BEACH, Fla. — Paragon Golf Construction, Inc., a construction services company affiliated with Golden Bear International and Nicklaus Design, has announced that construction has begun on the Nicklaus Design restoration project at LaGorce Country Club in Miami, and 54 holes at two sites in Asia. Several other courses are under contract, with construction scheduled to begin over the next few months.


"We are excited to break ground and begin the restoration of such a great course like LaGorce," said Paragon President Tom Sasser. "During our two-year affiliation with Jack Nicklaus, approximately half our work has centered in China, Taiwan and Japan. As our third project in the U.S., LaGorce gives us the opportunity to continue to showcase our abilities here at home."


Internationally, Paragon is constructing two courses in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia — one by Jack Nicklaus and one by Jack Nicklaus II. The company is providing its construction services for Nicklaus design at the Jerudong Resort in Brunei.

Construction for the LaGorce project is expected to take four months to complete, while the targeted completion date for the Asian projects is the summer of 1995.


THE REMATCH

THE CHAMPION THE CHALLENGER





McCUMBER GOLF



PALMER COURSE DESIGN

JUNE 2 1994 JUNE 3

OSPREY COVE HIDDEN HILLS

GLADIATORS OF A DIFFERENT ILK

The master, Arnold Palmer, may want to join his charges next year, when Palmer Course Design plays McCumber Golf, Mark McCumber's design company. McCumber, with its president at the helm, defeated the Palmer-less Palmer troops, 26-19, in two days of competition in June.

"We took them to their knees," joked Chris Commins, executive vice president and a lead architect with McCumber Golf.

T-shirts in the form of a fight card billed, simply, "The Rematch" were screen-printed for the occasion, for which the companies fielded 18 players.

The McCumbers are now 2-0 versus the Palmers in this friendly, head-to-head, annual rivalry that started in 1993. The two sides met at the McCumber-designed Osprey Cove course on June 2 and Palmer-designed Hidden Hills on June 3. The format was match play, using best ball, aggregate, alternate shot and singles. Each match was nine holes, with each golfer playing 18 holes a day.

— M.L.

Leslie commentary: Worthy crusade

Continued from page 12

greens and railroad ties — will be prevalent, said the company's Andy Parker, who is also arranging an entire line of Harvey Penick sportswear.

The merchandise will arrive at pro shops nationwide next spring, Parker said.

"It is a first," Parker said. "Most companies go after Tour players with varying degrees of success. "Those guys are so up and down, it's a crapshoot. With Pete and Harvey, we have two highly visible men in golf who are not players."

With the shifting financial world, what sort of developers are safe? Municipalities must be good clients. Right?


Wrong, says Jay Morrish (see interview on page 31).

"I automatically and routinely turn down any job in which public money is involved," he said. "TPC at Scottsdale was an absolute nightmare to get built. That convinced me I didn't ever want to do that again."

If he were to build the Milt Engelke Country Club in Dallas, what would Texas A&M's Dr. Milt Engelke use for grasses?

"I would probably use what I call my DALZ 8514 on the tee boxes; my DALZ 8507 in fairways; my DALZ 8512 in roughs; and I'd put the Cato-Crenshaw combination bentgrasses (CNC) on the greens," Engelke said.

"In the deep roughs, I'd put Prairie buffalograss, so I'd have every one of my grasses on the course," he laughed. "I'd also put in quick couplers for an irrigation system — wall to wall. In other words, I wouldn't use an irrigation system. I've told a few architects: I think the biggest mistake they make is putting an irrigation system in around the greens. If they had to hand-water the greens, they'd be so much better off."



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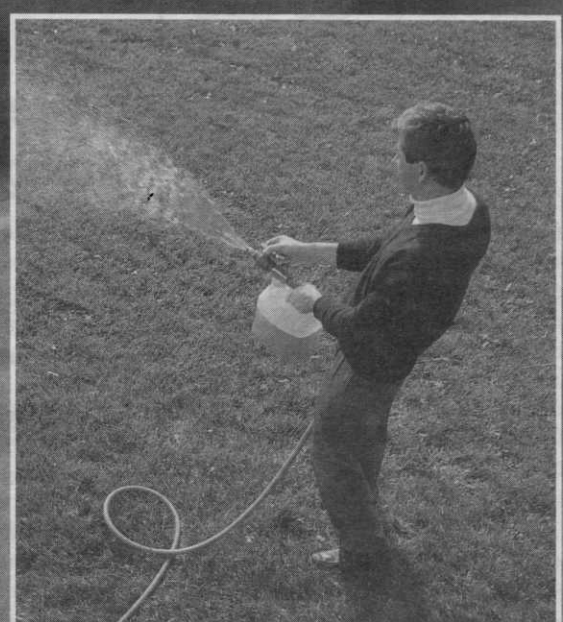
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