NICKLAUS, SOUTH OF THE BORDER

Jack Nicklaus' latest creation — Cabo del Sol in Los Cabos, Mexico — opened for play on May 15. The 18-hole course is located on the Baja Peninsula's southern tip. "This is the best piece of property I've ever seen," said Nicklaus, who routed seven holes along the Sea of Cortez. "I firmly believe these are the three finest finishing holes in all of golf." The 17th (above) is a 175-yard par 3, while the par-4 18th (below) plays 425 along the rugged coastline.

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Serving the public-access market, because that's where the action is

Golf Course Expo, Nov. 11-12, to focus on the golf industry's fastest-growing market

BY HAL PHILLIPS

Golf Course Expo will take place later this year. You probably have a lot of questions about it. Let's take them one at a time, shall we?

What: Golf Course Expo — An national trade exhibition and educational conference aimed at superintendents, managers, owners and developers in the public-access golf market: daily-fee, resort and municipal courses. Show registration is free.

Where: The Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Fla. — America's favorite vacation spot, business venue and home to some of the nation's top public-access golf courses (You've probably heard of the Magic Kingdom — some call the plethora of fine Disney courses the Magic Kingdom).

When: Friday and Saturday, Nov. 11 and 12 — Timely for you southern superintendents, who have finished overseeing but have yet to experience the winter rush; perfect for northern attendees, most of whom have closed their operations for the season. The weekend time slot is ideal for those of you who choose to bring your families to Orlando and stay the long, Veteran's Day weekend.

Who: Golf Course Expo News, the source for business information in the golf course industry, will manage the show. The three-track education conference — featuring Agronomy, Management and Development programs — is co-sponsored by Golf Course News and the National Golf Foundation.

Why: Golf Course Expo is free.

The private golf club market has been well served by industry trade shows over the years, but the same cannot be said for those of you in the public-access sector. Yet public golf is the largest, fastest-growing portion of the golf market. According to the NGF, there are 14,654 golf courses up and running in the United States, 9,733 of which are daily-fee, municipal or resort: public-access. That's two-thirds of the golf course stock, and the percentage is getting larger with each passing day.

How do we know this? Well, of the 1,360 golf courses opened between 1990 and 1995, 88 percent are public-access. The NGF also reports there are 571 courses currently in some stage of construction. Of these 571 projects, only 109 are scheduled to open as private clubs.

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More important, however, has been the onset and increasing popularity of upscale daily-fee courses, which offer private conditions at public prices. Developers see there is more money to be made in public-access golf. Financial institutions agree — that's why public-access projects were opening their doors to public play. Why? Memberships are dwindling as legislation has eliminated the ability to deduct dues and business meals from taxable income.

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