The European golf development market is not what you think

By Dr. Falk Billion

Five years ago, as the 1990s began, the Old World seemed to be a sleeping one in terms of golf course development. While in the New World, the National Golf Foundation was promoting nationwide targets like "one new golf course per day," nothing like that had been heard from across the Atlantic Ocean. Traveling golfers still told the same old story about the same classic courses all over the British Isles and parts of the continent, and just some of the American golf course architects discussed the design of new courses in European regions.

This impression is wrong! In the four years beginning in 1990, more than 1,111 new golf courses have opened all over Europe. This is a growth of nearly 52 percent compared to 1989. In the 90s, Europe has witnessed the opening of 278 new golf courses per year (which is not quite one new course per day, but in any case equals three quarters of a course per day). In respect to golf course developments, England leads the way with 242 new courses, followed by France with 127, Sweden with 109 new golf courses per year, and Germany with 92. In Europe as a whole, there were 214 new courses opened over the last four years.

This rapid golf course development clearly is concentrat-