USGA to address public-access concerns

By Mark Leslie

Orange County Convention Center
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A National Exhibition And Conference For Owners, Superintendents, Managers, And Developers Of Public-Access Golf Facilities

Golf Course Expo

Case study: Marketing advice that resulted in more revenue

By Mark Leslie

RANCASTOWN, N.H. — It's called guerrilla marketing, and Jeff Ojala says it works.

After the 1995 Golf Course News management and marketing conference, the predecessor to this fall's Golf Course Expo, Ojala "did some guerrilla marketing" at Torrey Pines Resort.

"Using the ideas we learned, we have increased our green-fee income 100 percent — and we're 40 miles from nowhere," he said.

"I got a lot out of the conference," said Ojala, Torrey Pines' general manager, adding the facility has more than tripled its income from memberships and green-fee income "will increase significantly."

Jones to keynote Day II of Golf Course Expo

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devoted to superintendents, managers and developers of public-access golf facilities. Following Palmer's keynote address at 9 a.m. Friday, Nov. 11, the trade show will run all day both days while concurrent educational sessions will be held in the afternoons covering maintenance and grounds while concurrent educational sessions will be held in the afternoons covering maintenance and grounds

While he is famous for such resort tracks as Princeville in Kauai, Hawaii, and the Links at Spanish Bay in Pebble Beach, Calif., Jones has made a major impact on public-access golf in recent years.

"And now," he said, "with our own money, I am a major partner in a group that is building a public daily-fee course at Eagle Point, a suburb of Medford, Ore. We broke ground on July 15.

This is not just words. I believe in it.

It's critical to be very smart when you're buying equipment, so that it matches the needs of your course.

— USGA's Patrick O'Brien

Course, and Don Tolson of Fox Hollow at Lakewood, Colo., will discuss maintaining quality turf in the face of high traffic.

And Pat McHugh, director of golf course maintenance and grounds for the five courses at Doral Resort & Country Club in Miami, will address staffing for success.

"Turf equipment, chemicals and fertilizers are very expensive," said the USGA's O'Brien. "It's critical to be very smart when you're buying equipment so that it matches the needs of your course. It is the same with pesticides and fertilizers, and it's critical to use them properly and in the most efficient manner. Even when you're maintaining a course on a shoestring, you like to have it weed-free because that's one of the major things golfers expect."

O'Brien, who consults at courses throughout the Southeast and the Caribbean, said he intends to give conference attendees a lot of "take-home lessons."

"Especially those who have only $150,000 to $200,000 a year to spend on a course, I can help them get the most bang for their buck," he said.

Matching equipment purchases to a course's maintenance needs are make-or-break decisions, said O'Brien. He told of a course with a maintenance budget less than $150,000 that had one fairway mower, a five-plex hydraulic unit.

"Unfortunately, they had Bermudagrass fairways and were maintaining 40 to 45 acres of them. They were only able to mow about twice a week because the mowers is so slow," he said.

"Though it is great for private clubs, that equipment was not well-suited for 'maintenance on a shoestring.' That club needed a seven- or nine- gang mower pulled by a tractor, so they could mow the fairways five times a week, essential for Bermudagrass." They were sold a bill of goods. They spent $40,000 for that piece of equipment and it was not for their situation. I see this sort of thing all the time."

ANDREW OJALA
Torrey Pines, Del Mar, Calif.

"We have turned this place around substantially, and we're very excited about its potential," he continued. Among his coups in the last year, Ojala:

• Pursued and signed on the Roland

Stafford Golf School, which was ending a relationship with a Vermont course.

Newspaper advertising has brought "overwhelming business" to the school, he said.

• Parlayed free television exposure, including a travelling and golf tips from

Stafford that air three or four times a week on WMUR-TV, Channel 9.

• Offered special golf outing packages.

• Developed close relationships with area sports media, giving free club memberships to all the privileges.

• Computerized the business operation, offering plastic member cards with charging privileges.

"We came away from that conference and got very aggressive," Ojala said. "I was able to network with a lot of great people and am excited about this year."

Golf Course Expo, which will be held Nov. 11 and 12 in Orlando, Fla., is the outgrowth of three years of marketing conferences Golf Course News has conducted. In addition to the Golf Course Expo trade show, the event will feature educational tracks in golf course management and marketing, development and maintenance.

The National Golf Foundation is co-sponsoring the development track, while the U.S. Golf Association Green Section has been instrumental in coordinating the maintenance track.

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