

USGA's Pace system can help your course cope with slow play

By DEAN KNUTH

Just about the time course management and golf committees had despaired of overcoming the slow play obstacle to running an efficient golf course, the U.S. Golf Association's (USGA)

Dean Knuth is senior director of handicapping, GHIN and Green Section Administration of the U.S. Golf Association. He developed the USGA Pace Rating system, as well as the USGA Course Rating and Slope Rating System.

Pace Rating System Manual has come along with a bookful of remedies. And they work.

For 10 real-life examples, consider the manual's case studies of courses which have speeded up play dramatically through a combination of course management and education. The courses, which include membership and daily-fee facilities, are successfully replac-

ing five hour rounds with rounds of 4-1/2 hours or less.

Obtain Your USGA Pace Rating and Time Pars

To a course, they began by determining an appropriate pace of play for a round. The

USGA's contribution in this area is a custom measure called "time par," the number of minutes it should take to play a given hole. Each time par on a course is

unique to the hole. It is calculated according to a formula, developed by the USGA, that takes into account the length and difficulty of the hole, and related factors, such as whether players normally walk or ride. The sum of 18 time pars equals the "pace rating," of the course, or the hours and minutes it should take to finish a round.

An advantage of the USGA formula is that it assumes play under "impeded" conditions, mean-

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Peter Blais,
associate
editor

Growth in the face-lift market hardly cosmetic

As person ages and the face sags. Same thing with a golf course.

Over time, irrigation systems decline, bunkers fill in, greens fail, noxious grasses invade, trees encroach on fairways. Eventually, a facelift is needed if the course is to continue attracting golfers.

"A lot of courses built between 1920 and 1950 are just worn out," said Tim Liddy, an Indiana architect and Pete Dye apprentice diligently trying to build his own practice. "They've paid their way and now things need updating, especially if they are going to keep pace with the newer courses being built down the street."

Age takes its toll on the best of courses. Wailea in Hawaii, Riviera Country Club in Los Angeles, Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, Grand Cypress in Orlando, Medinah Country Club near Chicago are a few of the classic layouts spruced up over the past two years.

The *Golf Course News Development Letter*, a paid-subscription publication tracking golf projects throughout the country, has reported on 1,422 golf projects during the past 26 months. Of those, 143 have been renovations. That's better than 10 percent. Nothing to sneeze at.

The cost of a renovation project varies greatly. A sampling of renovations underway or planned from the past few issues included:

- \$5 million for a new irrigation system and realignment of nine holes at the University of Oklahoma Golf Course in Norman.
- \$2.6 million for an ongoing remodel that closed Coffin Golf Course in Indianapolis for two years.
- \$1.5 million for course and building upgrades at Buffalo Hill Municipal Golf Course in Kalispell, Mont.
- \$1.2 million for an irrigation overhaul at GolfCorp-operated Diamond Bar (Calif.) Golf Club.
- \$1.2 million for improvements to New Reid and Snyder Park municipal courses in Springfield, Ohio.
- \$1 million to spruce up Oak Tree Golf Club in Edmond, Okla.
- \$600,000 for irrigation

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**PALMER ADDS HILBER,
PROMOTES JONES, SONNE**

ORLANDO, Fla. — Arnold Palmer Golf Management has named Bob Hilber vice president of operations. Hilber joined Palmer from PepsiCo, where he served in senior management capacities in the firm's Taco Bell division for 11 years. Palmer also promoted Daryl Jones to treasurer and moved Blake Sonne to senior vice president of marketing.

Blais comment

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upgrades at three South Bend, Ind., municipal layouts — Ebel, Studebaker and Erskine golf courses.

- \$400,000 for improvements to Eberhart-Petro Municipal Golf Course in Mishawaka, Ind.

- \$250,000 for irrigation work at American Golf Corporation-operated Goshen Plantation (Ga.) Golf Club.

That's an average renovation price of \$1.52 million, roughly the cost of a brand new, 18-hole "plain vanilla" course, according

to architect Michael Hurdzan. Not exactly chump change.

The glory in golf course architecture may be in designing a new course. But a great deal of satisfaction, and more than a few dollars, can be earned in course renovation. Just look at the famous architects plying their trade on existing courses — Pete Dye at Woodlands Country Club in Indianapolis; Jack Nicklaus at Castlewoods CC in Branon, Miss.; Arnold Palmer at Buffalo Hill; Gary Player at Raleigh (N.C.) CC; Robert Trent Jones Jr. at Wailea; Mark McCumber

at Sea Pines Ocean Course in Hilton Head, S.C.; Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw at Brook Hollow CC in Dallas; Rees Jones at Duke University GC in Durham, N.C.

Robert Lohmann may be the numerical leader with 20 different renovations in various stages of completion, according to *GCN Development Letter* figures.

"A lot of new clubs have been built here in the Midwest," said Lohmann of Crystal Lake, Ill. "Existing clubs needed to renovate their facilities to keep up. Many park districts have renovated or expanded their courses

because of the increased demand for public golf. And there are many public facilities that have just been beat up over the years. The land is paid for, the owners are pushing through 20,000 rounds per year and figure they can double that by rebuilding a few things."

Other multiple-renovation project designers include Ed Connor (6); Larry Flatt and Robert Cupp (5 apiece); Craig Schreiner and Robert T. Jones Jr. (4 each); Randy Heckenkemper, Clyde Johnston, Charles Ankrom, Dick Nugent and John Harbottle (3 apiece); and Rees Jones (2).

Still, renovations are where "young architects generally get to cut their teeth," as Liddy put it. "The better-known architects want to do new courses."

The problem for a young architect trying to establish himself and not turn away business is being able to say "NO" to an overzealous greens committee member or course owner who fancies himself an architect. The amateur architect can destroy a perfectly good design if given his way.

"The relationship between the greens chairman and architect is the key to any successful renovation," said Barry Palm, president of the Donald Ross Society, which has charged itself with preserving the integrity of the master architect's 600-plus golf course designs.

"The chairman has to be an autocrat. You can't renovate a course by committee. But there has to be a solid reciprocal respect between the greens chairman and architect. Ultimately the greens chairman must trust the judgment of the person he's retained to renovate his course."

Not allowing oneself to be bullied into a bad renovation decision is not only the architect's job but his duty, Liddy said.

"Any architect's goal should be to preserve the intent of the original designer, no matter what the greens committee says," the Dye understudy said. "I've found that an architect is often called in to fix something a board member has done."

Lohmann agreed.

"People are beginning to realize that if they don't get an architect who knows what he is doing, they are going to get a bad project," he said. "An architect needs to be able to say to the doctors, lawyers, business people on a board that what they want to do is wrong. An architect better do what is right for the game or he won't be in the business for long."

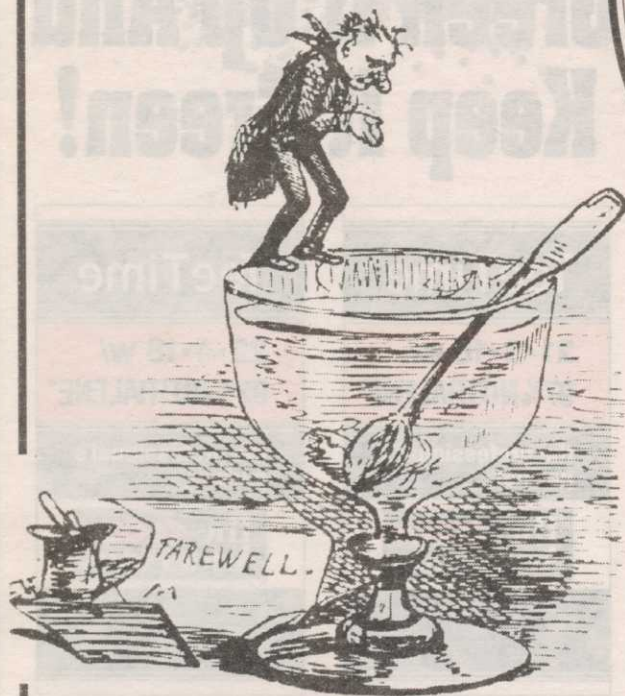
As the country's golf course inventory continues to age, the number of renovations will only increase.

"You could probably make a living just removing mature trees that interfere with play," Palm said. "Renovation work is becoming a cottage industry."

KEN THOMPSON

STONE HARBOR G.C.

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TOOK
THE PLUNGE
WHEN
SURF-SIDE
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