McBride, Muirfield Village earn players' approval

By HAL PHILLIPS

DUBLIN, Ohio — Before the start of the 1994 Memorial Tournament, superintendent Mike McBride consulted the National Weather Service, hoping for clear skies and a rare measure of reassurance. In each of the previous three years, during tournament week, the heavens had dumped untold gallons of water here on Muirfield Village Golf Club, site of the prestigious Memorial. But the 1994 forecast looked very promising, meaning a lack of precipitation.

"I overviewed the weather pattern and made a little wager with Jack [Nicklaus]: $10 bucks that it wouldn't rain that week," McBride explained. "Jack laughed and gave me 10:1 odds. "It wouldn't rain this week," McBride said. "I got a $100 bill from Jack."

A rain-free week was all McBride and his staff needed to impress the players, who voted Muirfield Village: 1994's Best Maintained Course on the PGA Tour in an exclusive survey of PGA players conducted by Golf Course News. Another Jack Nicklaus design — Castle Pines Golf Club in Castle Rock, Colo., site of The International — finished second in the voting, while Westchester Country Club in Rye, N.Y., host of the Westchester Classic, finished third.

"We try to keep the course as close to tournament conditions as we can every day," said the 40-year-old McBride, a native of nearby Worthington. "When you're dealing with 120 personalities, you're not going to please everybody. We do take recommendations and the feedback seriously. But if the guy shoots 66, let's face it: He loves the golf course. If he shoots 81, he might use the course as an excuse."

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Clute named Builder of the Year

Continued from page 71

years and by Landscapes Unlimited, Inc. of Lincoln, Neb., the past two. Selection of the winner was based on nominations from course architects, followed by surveys of the nominees' 1994 clients, who were asked to rate construction based on quality, budget, deadlines, personnel, and the end result.

Clute, Wadsworth and Landscapes received extraordinary marks again, as did Central Florida Turf, Inc. of Avon Park, Fla., Fairway Construction of Thousand Oaks, Calif., and Niebur Golf of Colorado Springs, Colo. Indeed, on a scale of 1-10, clients gave Clute an overall rating of 9.66.

"They don't come any better (than Clute)," said Bob Barrett, director of golf operations for all Drummond Co. golf courses, including Old Overton Club in Vestavia Hills, Ala., named Best New Private Course by Golf Digest in December. "His guys are so dedicated to getting it done right and have such a good feel for the earthmoving."

Clute & Associates was "very professional and did the work as planned, if not better," said John Redford, president of Vacation World and golf course manager at Thousand Hills Resort and Golf Club in Branson, Mo. "Paul has a tremendous amount of integrity and professionalism — a very honest, straightforward guy... And we worked very well together with them and the architect [Mike Reilly of Robert Cup Design]."

Clute's rise to the heights of golf construction began while studying at Indiana University where he got a job on one of Wadsworth's finishing crews. "The application screening was not too stringent for that job," he joked. He changed majors from the sciences to business at the University of Illinois' Chicago Circle campus and, he said, "I don't know if I'm out of school yet."

Upon graduation, Clute worked for a couple of companies in the early 1970s, and returned to Wadsworth in 1973, working his way through the ranks from equipment operator to foreman and into administrative duties. In 1980 he joined Jack Nicklaus Design and Construction Management as president of its operating arm, GolfForce. Then, in 1984, he started his own company.

Course construction in 1994 compared to 1965, or even 1975, is like night and day, Clute said. "It's no longer a walk in the park with a bag of seed over your shoulder. The demands are so much greater. Your on-site staff has to have much more experience, talent and capabilities because you're handling so many more people and so much more detail."

The level of detail we applied to the golf complex 20 years ago has probably expanded by four or five times in area. Where once it was 20 acres, now it's 80 or 100 acres."

Whereas 20 years ago, builders concentrated on greens and tees, and to a lesser extent the landing area and bunkering, "we now apply that detail to almost the whole golf course — meaning, irrigation, surface and sub-surface drainage, contouring, grass selection, sodding..." Clute said. "Twenty years ago, you accepted everything else as it was — both its grade and drainage. If there were naturally slow-draining wet spots, you lived with that. If water moved across the golf course from housing areas and made it less than desirable during the rainy months, you lived with that.

"Today, there is the tendency to spend the money to put it underground and carry it to a pond... so that the playing conditions are superior over a greater area for a higher number of months."

All this detail work translates into greater expense. A second factor in escalating construction costs, Clute said, is that "owners want to shrink the maturation period down to as short a time as possible. Fifteen or 20 years ago, people knew it would take five, six, seven years for the course to mature to a high degree. Now we're installing more sprinklers, drainage and sod, so the year a course opens it is more mature. That is because of the price golf is bringing and its importance to an operation. Plus owners are looking to generate revenue and compete with neighboring facilities that have been open 30 or 40 years."

Continued on page 86

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Golf Course News 1994 Awards

We'd Like To Remind You Of Our Roots.
American Colloid buys German firm

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, Ill. — American Colloid Co. has announced the acquisition of certain assets and intellectual property related to the operations of Wennigsen, Germany-based Piepho Abwassertechnik, a specialist in wastewater treatment technologies.

Piepho was the originator of the technology American Colloid and its Colloid Environmental Technologies Co. (CETCO) subsidiary used in developing CETCO's clay-based waste-water treatment chemical flocculants, now sold under the trade name RM-10.

"The German operation will be known as Colloid Abwassertechnik and will be managed through our Volklay Ltd. subsidiary located in Wallasey, England," said John Hughes, American Colloid president and chief executive officer.

Indeed, the new CARB emission standards have been welcomed by some in the industry, as they give manufacturers a glimpse of where the country is heading with regard to regulation. Performance has also been enhanced, said Doug Podevels, senior principal designer at The Toro Company’s Commercial Products Division.

"Long before these standards there were requests for better fuel efficiency," said Podevels. "So I think it’s positive. We’ve seen already that our products are more reliable and fuel consumption is down. We’ve seen it happen with our 3100 Greensmower. Customers like it better.

"People must understand, however, that you have to give the engine-manufacturer the opportunity to say, ‘Is this profitable?’ Engine manufacturers are working with EPA to determine what’s feasible. Do you test now like cars, on a regular basis? They’re trying to address it from a practical, technical aspect. And also it’s a better approach than what’s going on in California.”

Podevels noted that it can cost the manufacturer $40,000 to conduct an emissions run on a single engine model. Chemical manufacturers may scoff at that figure, especially compared with what it costs to register an herbicide or fungicide.

"People must understand, they give manufacturers a glimpse of what the future will be," said Podevels. "People must understand what’s going on in California.”

The CARB has addressed the golf car issue. No gas-powered golf cars will be sold in California following Jan. 1, 1997, though existing vehicles will be grandfathered until they fall apart or die.

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