

Relationships the key to cordial relations

“Watershed” may be a bit dramatic, but under the circumstances it’s a doubly appropriate description of January’s Environmental Summit, where representatives of the golf and environmental communities for the first time discussed their differences face to face.

Whereas in January’s *Golf Course News* we presented a golf-centric view of the Summit — through the eyes of attendees like architect Dr. Michael Hurdzan — we concentrated this month on perspectives emanating from the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), Friends of the Earth and Save the Bay, organizations which sent representatives to the Pebble Beach conference. I’m confident their views will interest you (see story, page 3).

Relationships were the most important ramifications of the recent Summit. Friends of the Earth, for example, should no longer evoke images of tie-dyed radicals strapping themselves to centenarian oaks. Instead, those who attended the conference will think of Courtney Cuff, a “friend” of the earth who happened to play golf for Wake Forest and is eager to further understandings reached on the Monterey Peninsula.

On the flip side, environmentalists on hand for the Summit can no longer honestly consider golf course superintendents as chemical dumpers obsessed with maintaining pristine conditions to the exclusion of natural habitats. Instead, they see Tim Hiers, the superintendent at Collier’s Reserve, a man clearly passionate about native plantings, recycling and ecosystem preservation.

“The environmental groups were very receptive to hearing about the positive aspects of golf and its relation to the environment,”



Hal Phillips,
editor

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Hugging the learning curve?

Are government agencies and environmental groups wising up?

We have good signs and bad. I feel like New England Patriots cornerback Maurice Hurst after a disastrous season opener last fall (1994) against Dan Marino and the Miami Dolphins. “First, [you ask] when will you stop it?” he said. “Then it’s can you stop it? Then it’s when is it gonna stop?”

Good ... bad ... good ... bad. Like a tennis game, you could get whiplash keeping score.

The good: At January’s Environmental Summit at Pebble Beach, the co-sponsoring National Wildlife Federation and a number of colleagues from such groups as the Sierra Club, Environmental Defense Fund, National Audubon Society and Friends of the Earth held positive discussions with representatives of the golf world.

The bad: Only weeks before, the National Wildlife Federation’s *Ranger Rick* magazine ran a feature story entitled “Rick and the Gang Visit a Beautiful Golf Course — and Find That Looks Can Fool You.”

The good: The Scottsdale, Ariz., Planning Commission has endorsed Pinnacle Peak Partners’ planned The Estancia golf community, which will include 340 acres of natural preserve.

The bad: A reporter for none other than the *New York Times*, writing about golf development in Asia, quoted Sreela Kolandai of Friends of the Earth Malaysia and a founder of the Global Anti-Golf Movement as saying: “Golf has become a serious environmental threat all across Asia. I call [golf]



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

Continued on opposite page

Letters

TAKING ISSUE WITH INTOLERANCE

To the editor:

In regards to the article in the February 1995 *Golf Course News*, “New Congress might result in mixed golf bag,” I found a number of troubling quotes about the new Congress being “good news for the golf course industry.”

Ms. Elizabeth Kirby-Hart quotes, “The new Congress will impact golf clubs for the better” and says “the laws and regulations we’ll be looking at should be far less onerous than before.” She goes on to cite the potentially damaging law under consideration by Congress to afford the same rights to gay Americans that is afforded the rest of society in the Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 1994. This law would amend the Federal civil rights law to protect individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation.

How being discriminatory toward one group of Americans in employment status will be better for golf clubs is a disturbing and puzzling statement. Webster’s New World Dictionary describes “onerous” as oppressive. I believe, that in this society, there is nothing more oppressive than discrimination against an individual or group based solely on race, creed, sex or sexual orientation.

Truly good news for the golf industry will come when people such as Ms. Kirby-Hart open their minds and broaden their horizons to include, not exclude, Americans with different ideas

and lifestyles than their own. Can’t we all get along!

Thomas M. Morris,
superintendent
Berkshire Hills CC
Pittsfield, Mass.

Ed. Hear, hear.

THANKS FOR RATING COVERAGE

To the editor:

My sincere appreciation to you for taking the time and space to discuss the subject of course ratings [*GCN* January, p. 1]. While the furor has subsided stemming from the demeaning comments Colonial Charters GC received in the 1994 *Places to Play* guide, we are awaiting the 1995 edition [November] to see how well *Golf Digest* “reviewed the methodology and looked at ways of refining the final product.”

Thanks again for the attention dedicated to this subject.

Richard Staughton,
superintendent
Colonial Charters GC,
Longs, S.C.

AIRING NEW IDEAS ON RUNOFF REDUCTION

To the editor:

Nice job with Skip Wade’s Cherry Valley article under Super Focus in the January issue.

On Feb. 4, I was invited to speak at Citizen’s Summit ’95 held at SUNY Maritime College in New York City (in the middle of the blizzard!). The conference was sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the Long Island Sound Watershed Alliance. The topic I was asked to speak on was “Reducing Polluted Runoff from Golf Courses.”

My presentation focused on the specialized cultural practices we

do for soil modification and improvement. These techniques include new deep aerification methods and thatch control. The net result of those IPM strategies are:

1. Loosen the soil profile, thereby reducing runoff.
2. Improve the soil microbiology for sustainable plant life.
3. Create a healthier turf and thereby reduce reliance on chemicals, fertilizers and water.

The presentation was well received. Hopefully, some of the “bad press” of the past was countered by a better understanding of what we do.

Patrick Lucas, CGCS
The Innis Arden Golf Club
Old Greenwich, Conn.

REMEMBER TO COUNT HUMANS AMONG EARTH’S SPECIES

To the editor:

In regard to the article (*GCN*, January) concerning the ecosystem research proposal being supported by Jim Snow, USGA, along with the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, National Wildlife Federation, Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation, and several other organizations and government agencies, I think this is a very positive move on behalf of all these individuals. It is this reader’s opinion and belief, while the environmentalists have the obligation and right to be concerned about environmental matters, we must not lose sight of all the earth’s species. Mankind and his environment is the most important! Our cities are growing at a rapid rate. We stack people into 20-story apartment buildings to live.

If not for parks and golf courses, most people would not have the chance to get out into

the open to enjoy grass, trees, birds and such. Golf courses create jobs and help or generally support themselves.

It has been our experience with working with DNR, Corps of Engineers and PCA, that while they have laws and rules to uphold, they still do what is best for all. The Green Section working with these governmental agencies should be able to make for a better environment.

Michael J. Pierce, president
Dakota Peat & Blenders
Grand Forks, N.D.

PATE SETS RECORD STRAIGHT

To the editor:

I am writing regarding your February issue discussing Paul Clute being named Builder of the Year. In the clip on the front page of this issue, you made reference to the award-winning Old Overton Golf Club in Vestavia Hills, Ala.

This course was indeed designed by Tom Fazio. However, this was a collaborative effort with Jerry Pate, who now has his own design firm, and should have been listed as a co-designer.

Jerry’s involvement in the project was extensive. During construction, Jerry lived in Birmingham, and with Fazio’s approval he re-routed the back nine. He was also responsible for many bunker locations and playing strategies of the holes.

Congratulations are in order to Paul Clute being named Builder of the Year and Tom Fazio for his contributions to make Old Overton such a success. However, Jerry Pate should also be given the credit he is due.

Scott Pate, vice president
Jerry Pate Golf Design Inc.
Pensacola, Fla.

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GOLF COURSE NEWS

MORE LETTERS,
SEE OPPOSITE PAGE

GCSAA head looks forward

By STEVE MONA

When Hal Phillips asked me to write about my first year as GCSAA's chief executive officer, my first thought was that it would be a great opportunity to look back and cite the association's accomplishments—our renewed commitment to member service, the creation of the career development, information, services and chapter relations departments, the debut of "Par for the Course" on ESPN, and so on. But my next thought was, "Why look back?" The past is merely a prologue. (Or, as the great Satchel Paige said, "Don't look back. Something might be gaining on you.")

So, instead of reviewing the past, let's focus on the future. This column should be of particular interest to non-GCSAA members who frequently ask themselves, "What's in it for me?"

Stephen F. Mona is executive director and chief executive officer of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.



Steve Mona

First, we hope to make 1995 a year of tremendous progress for the image of our profession. "Par for the Course" and the feature segments we are producing for ESPN are, of course, the anchor of this effort. We also plan to initiate the largest public relations campaign in the association's history. Our goal will be to provide superintendents with easy-to-use tools (such as posters, brochures, videos and fact sheets) to promote themselves and the profession at the same time. What "Par" accomplishes in the mass media, these new tools will accomplish at the grassroots level.

What's in it for you? Better communication with the employers, golfers, government and media who shape your daily jobs.

Second, 1995 will be a year when GCSAA continues to build stronger ties with our chapters. Virtually every program the association has can be more successful with the awareness and participation of the chapters. At the same time, the "national"

must be a more effective support system for our affiliates. Look for us to emphasize the importance of strong chapter relations at every possible turn this year. What's in it for you? Stronger, more effective local associations that help you meet the daily, often, local, challenges of your profession.

Finally, we plan to make 1995 a year in which GCSAA will emphasize the positive impact of golf on the environment. We plan to underscore golf's contributions to communities and to acknowledge superintendents as true environmental stewards. Look for GCSAA to communicate this message nationally, primarily through "Par for the Course" and to carry our environmental message to your local communities. What's in it for you? High-profile support of your environmental efforts and a commitment to telling the true story about golf and the environment.

This past year was remarkable — but the best is yet to come. This truly is the time to become part of an organization that is reaching new heights of service and success. What's in it for you? Professional development, opportunities, and, most of all, a national organization working every day in your best interests.

Leslie comment

Continued from previous page

courses] green graveyards because apart from the grass, these golf courses support no other form of life. No trees, no birds, no insects, no nothing."

Excuse me! "No trees, no birds, no insects, no nothing"? The reporter didn't even question this statement. A person would have to have absolutely none of their senses — including common sense — to believe this line.

Well, in this game called life — where golf course superintendents, managers and developers continually face environmental activists — we may see some light ahead. There are reports of more sensible people on the Far Side — what has been an abnormal group too closely resembling the violent *Earth First!* members.

Williamsburg (Va.) Environmental Group President Ron Boyd reports: "Four years ago we were taking golf course projects to the localities or federal government for permitting, and it was more of a fear of the unknown on their part. They [Corps of Engineers, EPA, state departments of natural resources, etc.] didn't know what was going to happen. They thought 'You're going to clear

off 125 acres? Oh my God, what about all this poison runoff? And, oh my God, oh my God...'

"But as they slowly have gotten educated and seen these projects in place, it's not as hard to get them [projects] through the process any more."

Regarding environmental organizations, Boyd said: "I see less of them being vehemently outspoken against projects. There is always concern, but not like there used to be. There used to be almost a blind rage against projects. You don't see that much any more."

"I think the information illustrating golf courses' positive effects on the environment is being disseminated better. Once people start looking into it, there's not much negative they can draw off of. Sometimes they dredge up events that happened eight or 10 years ago. But, that might as well be light-years ago."

This all looks good. We can only pray that right minds remain in control. There is no law that members of environmental groups will follow the leaders. The fact that the National Wildlife Federation was co-sponsoring a positive meeting with golf industry folks while at the same time feeding foolish drivel to the poor little *Ranger Rick* readers illustrates the point.

Letters

NGF MISREADING PERCEPTIONS

To the editor:

I noticed with interest a cover story in your January 1995 issue dealing with the recent NGF Golf Summit, making the lead statement that "Poor public image is the single largest hindrance to golf industry growth."

While there is some lingering perception that golf is the pastime of "rich, white males" (really only applicable within the private club sector today), this is far from the primary reason why golf as a whole might not be growing at a faster pace.

With two-thirds of the existing golf courses across the country open to the public; with most daily-fee schedules falling within the \$14 to \$20 range (before resident/senior-type discounts), anyone wishing to "get at" the game of golf can play regularly for a few hundred dollars a year in fees. A set of used starter's clubs can generally be found at nominal cost, or bought new at one-time expense of about \$150.

Furthermore, an examination of the approximately 9,000 public golf courses across the country (as compared to 4,500 private club courses) will clearly indicate a true "melting pot" of player types who are in the vast majority within the game — all races, ages, sizes, abilities, backgrounds, wealth, etc. It has been a long time since golf could be accurately defined as a game primarily for wealthy whites.

Concerning environmental issues, guidelines are well defined today. Generally, once a project elects to comply, the environment is no longer an issue and the project will move on — provided there is sufficient net usable land remaining. Environmental issues basically do not stop golf course development projects today.

Surprisingly, the Summit identified "player development" as one of three "overarching problems" in golf. Why? What is wrong with settling for some natural player volume across the country (like ev-

ery other participant sport) — be this 15 million or 30 million players? Why does there have to be a constant heavy "push" to develop more golfers? The only answer is to satisfy the self-serving purposes of those who grow financially when the game grows; i.e. manufacturers, developers, operators, golf organizations and the media.

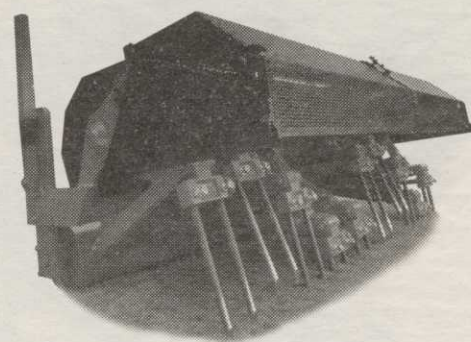
Natural marketing to bring more players to the game, instruction programs for beginners — fine. But to label player development as one of the three "overarching problems" in golf is a mischaracterization.

Because of the inherent value of the game of golf, I personally feel half America would play golf, given legitimate opportunity. What prevents this? I suggest: 1) the lack of fundamental instruction throughout the game, especially within the predominant public sector; 2) the lack of effective practice facilities; and 3) the lack of a sufficient number of golf courses.

The NGF is looking to exacerbate the problem now as it seeks to raise \$2 million (first year only, with more to come) to fund a public-relations campaign intended to correct golf's poor (elitist) image — an issue that is really a "red herring." Of course, any public-relations firm will gladly accept the assignment and off everyone will go. When they are finished spending all this money, the same basic problems facing golf today will still be there.

The reality is that golf presently lacks informed national leadership and, therefore, appropriate vision. National golf organizations (NGF, PGA, USGA, the three Tours), while well intended, are so occupied with addressing their own agendas they see only the "trees" and not the shape of the "forest." Golf's merit will ultimately prevail, with the game growing to approach its natural level via what is now an inefficient process that, I expect, will gradually be refined.

Jim McLoughlin
The McLoughlin Group
Pleasantville, N.Y.



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