Point-counterpoint: Brauer & Griffiths

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upscale daily-fee. I think we’ll hit a wall [of those courses] before long. Most of the older golf courses are saturated, and I think we’re starting to price people out of golf.

“The upscale golf course phenomenon has been great for the industry. But that translates to $35 to $50 green fees, and that is out of reach for a lot of people.”

“My high-end budgets [of the past] have become my low-end [budgets],” said Brauer. “Clients’ like-to-haves have been transformed into gotta-haves. Irrigation costs have doubled and we’ve added more curbing, more cart paths, sod, wider clearings and the grassing that goes with it... And drainage costs have gone from $50,000 to $250,000.”

“Greens construction and irrigation system prices have skyrocketed,” Griffiths added.

But where can costs be cut, and, if so, will that harm the developer in the end? Brauer and Griffiths disagree about the difference between the reality of the $1.7 million and a $3.2 million golf course and what economic impact it has on those two imaginary courses.

Saying that in the last five or six years his firm has designed only one golf course that cost under $3 million, Griffiths added: “I don’t think the sacrifice in quality of golf is as significant as we make it out to be between a $1.7 million and a $3 million course.”

CABS AND CART PATHS

But Griffiths’ prototype $1.7 million course is built without cart paths, and Brauer countered: “Whenever I’ve built a course without full paths, they’ve been added later. If I hear anything from past clients, two years later they say they should have put in full paths. The market demands cart paths. And those paths pay for themselves in a couple of years.”

“Not since the 1990s have we recommended cart paths,” Griffiths said. “It’s a dollar-driven issue. But, again, it adds to the green fee.

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Dye Int’l designs Desert Pines GC

LAS VEGAS, Nev. — Ground has been broken on the new $12 million Perry Dye-designed Desert Pines Golf Course on land formerly known as Nature Park.

Cynthia Dye McCarey of Dye Designs International will landscape the golf course. McAgy will help create a pine forest on the course featuring hundreds of specimen pine trees ranging from 10 to 35 feet in height.

The 100-acre course is scheduled to be completed by December. It will be 6,800 yards long and feature nine holes on water. There will also be a lighted driving range, a state-of-the-art golf academy and restaurant/banquet facilities. The course will have large greens, short green-to-tee walks, and special forward tees for juniors, ladies and seniors.

Griffiths’ $1.7 M Method unveiled

Denis Griffiths spelled out his method for building a $1.7 million course. These guidelines, he said, will not suit all situations and most often will be in less densely populated areas where less expensive, average weather conditions support turfgrass growth and annual play is not expected to exceed 25,000 rounds.

The guidelines follow:

• Select a buildable site with minimal limitations and ample acreage suitable to golf.
• Find property that is not completely wooded to reduce clearing costs.
• Lay out the course to take maximum advantage of the site characteristics and minimize disturbance.
• Secondary clearing can be done by the maintenance staff during off season as the course matures.
• Minimize earthwork, top soil and erosion-control requirements by fitting the course to the terrain and using existing contours for the majority of the fairways.
• Use a combination of drainage techniques, including positive surface drainage, more frequent storm occurrence data for pipe sizing, grass-lined water courses, farm swales and sheet drainage.
• Locate greens in areas conducive to growing turf and provide positive drainage positive surfaces. Select the type green construction that best fits the budget and course program using materials that are readily available and cost-effective.
• Do not compromise shaping on features, in that way creating a product similar to upscale, resort and private facilities.
• Limit sand bunker construction, using grass bunkers, with the opportunity to convert some to sand later.
• Use the best available on-site top soi to plate positive surface-drained tees. Do not limit the area or number of tees.
• Reduce turf areas if possible without affecting playability. Do not modify grassing specifications to save cost by extending grow-in.
• Use locally available sod with flexibility in type and purity.

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Dye Int’l designs Desert Pines GC