A little optimism wouldn't kill us

When I joined Golf Course News in early 1992, one of the first stories I wrote concerned the record number of courses that had opened for play the previous year. Three hundred and fifty one, to be exact. Frankly, I had expected a great deal of flag-waving from the various industry sources. I mean, who could in more and more places in these modern days, pros recognize the previous year. Three hundred and fifty courses that had opened for play P "is" necessary, I thought, and the people responsible for the maintenance complex before we built the PGA golf professionals' golf shop.

Director of Operations Marty Kavanaugh. The maintenance complex is always an afterthought. But we built the maintenance complex before we built the PGA golf professionals' golf shop.

Pointing to Turf Operations Manager Rick Walthall, who was before we opened the maintenance complex before we built the PGA golf professionals' golf shop. Kavanaugh said, "I'm afraid the Golf Course Superintendents' Association of America is only a facade to this fact, too."

Explaining that at The Reserve each person is responsible for the "PGA experience," Kavanaugh added: "We recognize that in most golf operations, golf professionals and superintendents don't have compatible goals. Golf pros are compensated on income and rounds played. Superintendents are compensated on quality of the golf course. Here, they are compensated on the PGA experience and the ability of the club to make money. "So, the goals are very, very compatible. And, when the golf course is closed, you'll know it has to be closed.

From joining the facility in the Audubon Signature Program to overseeing construction of a magnificent maintenance complex that is a model for environmental protection, Wise is as much a type of golf green configurations that are the same people that will so newer and easier method of ob-

Continued on opposite page

Letters

PRAISE FOR GOLF COURSE EXPO

To the editor:

It was a pleasure to meet you at the 1995 Golf Course Expo in Orlando. I have come to rely heavily on your publication to keep abreast of the golf industry, and have found it a very useful source for products and services that my company needs to be competitive in today's mar-

ket. Please keep up the good work with the magazine.

I was extremely pleased with Golf Course Expo. The topics covered in the seminars were very informative, and the quality of the speakers was excellent. I took two of my staff members with me, and they could not cover all of the things we wanted to hear. I would highly recommend this event to others in the golf course industry. Both the Dye family and Mr. Robert Dedman were fantastic keynote speakers, and the entire atmosphere of the event was conducive to exchange of information and interaction with others in the business.

Thanks again for the excellent work. I am looking forward to receiving your magazine in the future.

Del Ratcliffe
President
Ratcliffe Golf Services, Inc.

IS THAT LEADERSHIP?

To the editor:

I was truly like to congratulate you on your October "Members, General Managers: Summer of Their Discontent?" [Leslie commentary, page 8]

You made some very interesting comments. It is unfortunate that the American golfing public and those possessing leadership roles have such minimal understanding of golf course management-related issues.

Unfortunately for the golf course superintendent, those same members, green chairman and general managers who are so quick to terminate someone, are the same people that will so readily accept all the credit when things are going well and the maintenance complex before we built the PGA golf professionals' golf shop.

The USGA Green Section's Jim Moore has coined a new term: "Hydromagnetism." His definition? "The sprinkler closest to the control box is most likely aimed at you."

Moore, director of the Mid-Continental Region, also has this observation: "Whenever you have an area of disagreement that will be

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New PGA product noted for its resourcefulness

I can live for two months on a good compliment. — Mark Twain

Pros and superintendents. Superintendents and pros. There were days and golf courses where the twain (get it?) never met — unless they were the same person. But in more and more places in these modern days, pros recognize the importance of the superintendent to the survival of their golf club.

Nowhere is this better exemplified than at PGA Golf Club at the Reserve in Port St. Lucie, Fla., where PGA Golf Properties has opened its first home course for club professionals as well as the public (see story page 1).

Listen to this; isn't this refreshing? "We are very proud of the dollars we expended on the maintenance complex," said Senior Director of Operations Marty Kavanaugh.

The maintenance complex is always an afterthought. But we built the maintenance complex before we built the PGA golf professionals' golf shop.

Pointing to Turf Operations Manager Rick Walthall, who was at the peak of the conference, Kavanaugh said: "This [The Reserve] is really a partnership with the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. The GCSSA can take pride in this facility, too."

Explaining that at The Reserve each person is responsible for the "PGA experience," Kavanaugh added: "We recognize that in most golf operations, golf professionals and superintendents don't have compatible goals. Golf pros are compensated on income and rounds played. Superintendents are compensated on quality of the golf course. Here, they are compensated on the PGA experience and the ability of the club to make money.

"So, the goals are very, very compatible. And, when the golf course is closed, you'll know it has to be closed."

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Continued on page 14
Management companies have helped more than they’ve hurt

BY ROGER MAXWELL

In the early 1970s the golf industry was witness to the creation of primarily two management companies — American Golf, and ClubCorp of America (CCA) — each of which moved in uniquely different paths in their quest to grow their portfolio of golf management properties. Of course, as we know them, each is highly successful and each plays a major role in our industry today.

In the mid- to late-1980s our industry saw numerous new groups enter the arena seeking opportunities. Much of this surge of new players in the management business came as a result of the National Golf Foundation’s (NGF) “State of the Game” report. It cited a need to develop one new golf course per day until the year 2000, in order to keep up with frequent player demands, as estimated by the NGF.

At one point in 1989-90 it was documented that some 30 golf management companies were actively seeking facilities to manage. Indeed, it was a crowded playing field. Then came the early 1990s, when the nation’s economy slid, much due to the savings-and-loan debacle and the downturn in real-estate values. The result was an inability of developers, corporations, etc., to locate the financing necessary to develop new facilities. Even the most seasoned corporations and golf-savvy groups were unable to secure financing for public golf facilities, not to mention upper-end golf facilities.

This all changed as we moved into the mid-1990s with the emergence of a handful of groups, to include the original pioneers in the golf management area aggressively competing. At the same time, there was a shake-up of management companies, with some fall-out and consolidation, and with the two original pioneers that began it all in the 1970s gaining strength in numbers and in their management talent.

Today, we find what must be American Golf, CCA, Cobblestone and Brassie Golf as the major players in terms of numbers of facilities either owned or managed. With these follow a host of players, including Hyatt, Marriott, Hilton, TPC, KCK, etc. Ownership vs. Management seems to be the norm today as compared to earlier years. “Cash” being “King” clearly identifies the major players.

I believe the advent of today’s golf management companies to have been extremely positive on both the game and for those who make their living in the golf industry. They have provided a strong sense of security for young golf professionals and grounds superintendents. They have, in most cases, provided an infusion of capital improvements to facilities that were in need of improvements. They have installed a strong sense of business direction to an otherwise cottage industry.

Through clustering of multiple facilities within one metropolitan area, golfers have benefited in terms of their cost to enjoy the game. I also firmly believe that the golf professionals have been enhanced through their involvement with management groups and corporate ownership of facilities, as likewise can be said of golf superintendents. No question, the traditional roles of both individuals have been radically altered, causing many onlookers to become critics.

If I were to agree that there were any shortcomings with respect to corporate involvement in golf, it would be that the support structure evident in corporate golf tends to diminish one’s “creative spirit” and power to learn all aspects of their respective roles.

Corporate ownership of golf facilities will continue to grow in dramatic proportions. I believe pure management companies not operating under “real-estate investment trusts” will exist and provide a service to many clubs, yet not become any more dominant than they are today.

The golf industry and those involved have benefited because of management companies and corporate golf ownership. Their continued involvement is positive and should be encouraged by all golf organizations and associates.

Phillips comment

Continued from previous page

low-ball prognostications of past years. They admitted the market was strong, but...

...Some areas of the country are seriously overbuilt. Besides, did you know that nearly a third of avid golfers agree that fertilizers and other chemicals used on golf courses pollute lakes and streams?

This time last year, I stubbornly refused to publish an actual story on the record 381 (!?) courses that opened during 1994. Why bother? Instead, Golf Course News ran a chart that spelled it all out in black and white, (we did throw in some color to spice things up).

This year, after a two-year hiatus, I couldn’t resist writing another installment in the “Poor-mouthing Golf’s Growth” series (see page 1). Despite the christening of more than 400 courses — an all-time record, for Pete’s sake — the general industry outlook remains one of studied practicality. Putting the damper on things this year is a recent study showing that rounds are flat.

“If we keep building courses at this rate and rounds don’t increase,” the pundits warn, “the whole thing could collapse of its own weight!” If that should happen, the industry would be lucky to open 250 blah blah blah...” Where did these people come from, the tennis industry?

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