Rounds are up! No, they're flat

Before you get all worked up, let me reconcile what appears to be a contradiction here in the pages of Golf Course News. I know what you're thinking: 'That simply isn't possible!' Well, you're right.

On the front page this month we published a story regarding an increase in golfer participation and rounds played, according to a just-released National Golf Foundation report. Yet on page 34 of this issue, we published a 'man-on-the-street' set of responses to the following question: "Assuming rounds and participation levels will remain relatively flat over the next 10 years, how will you compete for market share in your area?"

Rounds and golfers did increase during 1995 — comforting news following a 1994 decrease in both categories. However, rounds played and participation have remained flat for the better part of five years. Certainly, they have not kept pace with the golf course stock, which has jumped by nearly 15 percent since 1990.

This is why we posed our rather pessimistic question to management company executives, who have seen this industry go down in value and demand result in frenzied competition for the daily-fee golf round. If course openings continue at their record-setting pace — and judging from the number of facilities under construction, there's no reason to believe they won't — it will only get more competitive.

By the way, we plan to pose similarly compelling questions to management company representatives on a monthly basis. If you have any suggested queries, contact us via e-mail at hphilip@biddeford.com, or fax to 207-846-0657.

It had to happen sometime: A major shoe manufacturer has finally hooked up with a maker of spike alternatives. Softspikes and Reebok International will team to provide the golfing consumer with a ready-to-wear spikeless shoe.

Letters

NTEP FUNDING RAISES QUESTIONS

To the editor:

Thanks for printing my letter concerning the proposed cancelation of the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This letter is generated by hundreds of turfgrass professionals, and it is supported by USDA officials supporting NTEP. We are very appreciative of the support of so many in the turfgrass industry...see, follow-up story on page 15.

Your editorial brought up an important point concerning federal funding of programs important to "special interest groups." What programs should the federal government fund? Isn't the general public telling their congressional representatives that we need less and more efficient government? Initially, I struggled with these same questions. Concerning funding of NTEP, the following information is important:

1. The USDA provides NTEP with less than 10 percent ($600,000) of its total budget. The remainder is funded by entry fees charged to companies or individuals that test grasses through NTEP. A significant portion of this money is given back to the university scientists (in the form of research grants or contracts) who test grasses for NTEP.
2. The funding by USDA for Continued on page 41