Winter hangover lingerers lingers in Des Moines
Crown damage, desiccation rampant

By Mark Leslie
Superintendents from Minnesota and Michigan to Iowa and Illinois were up against the wall this spring. Their courses buried under snow and ice. And the little they had to work with was killed by low temperatures. They then had the task of removing snow and ice from the greens. "Instead of having March, April, May, we're having March, March, March," said Bruce Williams of Bob O'Link Golf Club in Highland Park, Ill., president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA). "Harsh winter and cold wind are endemic from Iowa and areas like that." When we first started greening up in late April—which is very late for us—all the high spots came out green and all the low spots were dead stone-cold dormant," said Dick Stuntz of Alvamar Country Club in Lawrence, Kan., attributing damage to a snow-melt that froze again. "Guys with rye grass fairly ways lost it. For those of us with zoysiagrass, the loss isn't large but it will be a terribly slow recovery." While Jerry Faubel of Saginaw (Mich.) Country Club was "very fortunate and escaped damage" because he added drainage in key areas last year, the former GCSAA president said: "Courses throughout the Midwest are still in limbo."

Jacksonville restoration still in limbo

By Hal Phillips
JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — An extremely complicated turf war has developed here concerning property that is used to be a golf course, and may be again. Officials at the Florida Communities Trust (FCT) in Tallahassee will decide this month whether the city of Jacksonville will retain funds to restore a golf course on a controversial urban parcel known as Blue Cypress. Once a privately owned golf facility called University Golf & Country Club, the Blue Cypress land was

Survey: Benefits of the rise

By Terry Buchen
Since this decade began, I have been taking a random survey of superintendents regarding the fringe benefits they receive. I have some interesting results to report. The first question I usually ask is whether they benefit, in both wages and fringe benefits, from the most recent job change. The answer is an overwhelming "yes". Most superintendents believe they are underpaid and the only way to improve themselves professionally is to make a job change for more money and benefits. Everyone willing to share the "before"/"after" comparison of their most old/new jobs enhanced their total package significantly. The average tenure of a superintendent prior to the 1980s was 10 to 12 years. Today a superintendents will stay 4 to 5 years until a better opportunity.
Jacksonville melee pits Audubon groups, gov’t against one another

Continued from page 1

Jacksonville purchased the property in 1993 using funds from FCT — a government agency charged with buying environmentally sensitive parcels for purposes of preservation.

The original management plan called for nine holes, a driving range, soccer fields and hiking trails. But the city has amended the plan to include 18 holes.

City Councilor John Crescimbeni, who apparently bled the operation nearly to death. Faced with private concern, Ralph Simmons, who subsequently sold to another entity can legally make a profit and, for a variety of reasons, we want to amend the management plan.

The city of Jacksonville purchased Blue Cypress for $2.9 million, $1.3 million of which came from a tax-exempt $230 million dollar bond issue. As Crescimbeni explained, there are significant rules governing the use of any thing purchased with tax-exempt bond money. For example, no entity can legally make a profit at Blue Cypress because it was purchased with these special funds.

"If we screw it up, we jeopardize the entire bond issue," said Crescimbeni. "We actually thought this was a greater hurdle than going back to the FCT. If you can't satisfy the IRS, then there's no sense in going to Tallahassee and bothering the FCT."

Enter Jacksonville-based Riverside Golf Group, the management company run by ex-tour pro and ABC golf analyst Steve Melnyk. Riverside, which suggested the city commit to the ACSS Signature Program, has been involved in the Blue Cypress situation for some time. Indeed, the firm's intentions to

The city agreed, when the FCT gave them the money, that this would be a passive park with hiking trails. But the city has amended the proposal. I just feel it's ridiculous to propose one thing, then insist on the opposite following the purchase."

Supporters of the golf course claim the city, which needed FCT funds to buy the parcel, changed the management plan primarily because it didn’t have the money to develop Blue Cypress into a nature preserve. Crescimbeni explained the city no longer has the means to renovate the clubhouse, build four soccer fields and create a viable storm run-off system. He also noted that three city golf courses have closed in four years, displacing a bevy of golfing citizens.

One of those defunct golf courses, the Dunes Golf and Country Club, has been transformed into a park and recreation facility, mitigating the city's need for more parkland at Blue Cypress, urged Crescimbeni.

"The FCT has no problem with nine holes, which was part of our original management plan," the city councilor explained. "The FCT has a formal amendment option and, for a variety of reasons, we want to amend the management plan."

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Continued on next page
To many, our advice has been that it is been opined. Continued from page 10

On surrounding real-estate development (if applicable) and, if information is available, return on investment analysis.

While I realize that our results to date may be perceived as diminishing the value of "non-signature" architects, this has not been our experience. In fact, the only way to formulate such a conclusion is on a site- or market-specific basis.

We have been asked the question by several clients as to whether a "signature" architect is worth the expense. To many, our advice has been that it is not.

The results of our study show only averages, only information from a group of architects (not one specific signature architect) and only in the markets studied.

While our study attempts to take a look at the results from different markets (some destination resorts and some primary residential markets), other markets may show different indications.

The purpose of the study is to provoke well thought out decisions on the part of developers, and to illustrate that such a decision is one that can be made objectively through research and analysis.

Another issue we have not considered is the definition of a "signature" architect.

We have tried to identify those perceived as such by the market, but it seems to me that this changes constantly. Are Greg Norman or Ben Crenshaw now "signature" designers because of their recent successes on and off the golf course? Should Mike Hurdzan, or Jay Morrish, or Tom Doak be considered "signature" because they are well known and respected within the golf industry? I don't know the answer to these questions and only a large survey of the golfing public could answer that.

Your comments to Hal are of great interest to me as I am sure this topic and study will progress and evolve over many years to come.

As a consultant and appraiser I would love to have an instant answer to the signature architect question for my clients.

As a golfer (and Golf Digest panelist) I care only about the quality of the golf experience created.

Maybe someday we could do a survey on the relative financial performances of courses by individual architects.

However, that, too, would be distorted because of the effect of decisions made by the developers and managers of those facilities. Please feel free to call me with any additional comments or questions, or just to "rap" a bit.

By the way, I played and enjoyed Stonewall and hope that if you're in the area sometime you'll call and we can tee it up. Unfortunately, since Stonewall is private and Fazio's Hartefeld National nearby is daily-fee, a financial comparison would be misleading.

Laurence A. Hirsh MAI, SGA President, Golf Property Analysts Harrisburg, Pa.