Course maintenance trends coming full circle?

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Purse with me the book, "Par for Golf Courses," published in 1917 and authored by U.S. Department of Agriculture agronomist (a real word) Charles V. Piper and agronomist Russell A. Oakley. Some 89 years ago they wrote:

• We believe that if we were forced to use for all purposes only one form of fertilizer, we would take compost. Nothing that we have done has given as good results as top dressing with compost; apparently it can be used with good results at almost any time of the year. Flies of compost on different parts of a course are real safeguards against many of the dangers that may arise, and the truly remarkable results that a light top dressing will accomplish are astounding.

• "As a dressing for turf, a good compost can be prepared by piling sod in alternative layers with manure, leaves and leaf mold."

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Joanna's comment
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is now on the leading edge of environmental responsibility in this country. Think about that for a minute. How many industries have done what we did? In short, the principles put us way ahead of the curve.

Frankly, the successful principles effort should have garnered more national media attention. It's a great story of an entire industry working cooperatively and proactively to protect the environment. But, hey, as the old newsroom saying goes, "Good news is no news." The non-golf media are still far more interested in our industry's one run-of-the-mill web site with graphics, links to oodles of other golf sites. This will be the complete package — true forum of ideas and opinions. Look for it.

It's interesting to note that course management companies, not the architects themselves, have taken issue with a particular golf hole's trade dress. While the owners of Pebble Beach, Harbour Town and Pinehurst have objected to the duplication of their golf holes at Houston's Tour 18 Golf Club (see story page 37), there's no way to ask, say, Donald Ross whether he approves of developers replicating his designs. Jack Neville, the designer of Pebble Beach who passed away in 1978, cannot be reached for comment, either. However, Ed Seay, whose Bay Hill design (with Arnold Palmer), was duplicated at Houston's Tour 18, says it's all a matter of perspective.

"Now, I can see an owner getting upset," Seay opines. "If someone has paid a very large price for uniqueness, for exclusivity, they have a reasonable right for that to be honored. But I think if a designer's upset with it, they're a little insecure. I would consider it a compliment. Don't you want people to enjoy your work?"

Phillips comment
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