Golf is healthy, and here's why

When Ben Crenshaw called it "required reading," that was enough for me. And truly, the first book in the Tillie Trilogie is a treat. Tillie is A.W. Tiltinghalh, the iconoclastic and brilliant designer of such masterpieces as San Francisco Golf Club and Winged Foot. And the book is "The Course Beautiful." Fittingly, it is published by Baltusrol members Bob Trebus and brothers Richard and Stuart Wolfe. When researching information for Baltusrol's centennial, they compiled a library on Tiltinghalh — a wealth of information that has translated into three books. "The Course Beautiful" will be followed in 1997 by "Ruminiscences of the Links," about golf in America in the early days and "Gleanings from the Wayside." Since Tillie's travels from East to West.

Tillinghalh was a prolific writer — and very funny," said Robert Wolfe, who lives in Florham Park, N.J. "He has some terrific stories, like his times with Old Tom Morris at St Andrews Golf Club in Scotland."

"The Course Beautiful," Richard Wolfe added, "is essentially all Tillie's best essays on golf course design and maintenance and his thoughts on what makes a championship course."

TreeWolf Productions, an enterprise of the Baltusrol trio, published 10,000 copies of "The Course Beautiful." They sold out fast. Here we have Tillie, the dean of American-born golf course architects, on golfers who hate playing out of dunes: "No doubt many of the hazard-shirking fraternity would declare that playing a wayward ball from such places was entirely too difficult."

What utter nonsense! "There were and are shots that will do it; another generation knew how to play them, and it is not altogether pleasant to think that golfers of today are going soft. Possibly a bit more of a string in the rod of golf chastisement in these, our modern times, would render it more of an achievement to break par so habitually."

On The Turn: "I was out in 39, but it took me 50 to come home."

The Black Course at Bethpage State Park, another A.W. Tiltinghalh design.

Leslie study, not exactly scientific, refutes "Golf-is-sinking" mentality

Can I make a case here? While the folks at Forbes magazine and the National Golf Foundation duke it out (opposite page), I did a little microcosmic study of my high school classmates and unearthed a startling fact. If replicated countrywide, this fact would send investors and entrepreneurs scurrying to dump their dough into golf projects. A whopping 40 percent of the men in my Class of 1966 are golfers. That is, when asked their "hobbies and interests," they independently wrote down "golf."

That was with no arm-twisting from my old golf bud Barry Hober. No one was whispering in their ears, offering free subscriptions to Golf Course News or discount rounds of golf at Sugarloaf. No one urged them on with Johnny Carson-like chip-shot swings.

I realize this is anecdotal evidence, but 40 percent is twice as many as the NGF reports in its latest participation survey of males aged 40-49. An anomaly? Perhaps, but the figure could be higher, still, than 40 percent, because many of the jocks in my class did not respond to the survey.

I called my old pal Jeff Waring, now a stockbroker in Bangor, Maine, and asked him about this. He attended Williams College and Academy his last three years, but he was our summertime buddy and our class claimed him as ours (something like Chappaquiddick claiming Teddy Kennedy). Anyhow, Jeff explained: "Our class was different from other classes. Most of the athletes were in the top academic division and were active in everything. Usually a lot of them came from the lower division. That same group is playing golf. Also, a lot of them are professional people and they, as a whole, are the ones playing golf."

Jeff's explanation would, indeed, belie my findings of having less clout that I thought. But Jeff, I think, is like a lot of guys my age. He quit golf for a number of years — through college and his early career climb — then took it up when he reached his 40s. When did he resume? "When my father gave me my some lessons last August and he liked it."

Listen, my research may be anecdotal. But if nothing else, Mr. ...
B R U T U S, Mich. — Construction is underway on Hidden River Golf & Casting Club here, situated on bluffs overlooking a mile of the Maple River, a pristine trout stream. The 240-acre site will accommodate an 18-hole public golf course, designed by Design 3, along with a log clubhouse fly-fishing lodge and 12 residential units placed along the riverbanks.

Careful planning has been done with input from Trout Unlimited, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council and Michigan's Natural Heritage Program. Design 3's W. Bruce Matthews has wound the 7,220-yard layout along Maple River, through a pine plantation, hardwood forest and open grassland. The bentgrass tees, greens and fairways blend into the surrounding old pine stumps, river and cedars.

Some highlights include the par-4 12th hole traversing a 30-foot ravine to a green nestled in soft maples. The 7th hole, a 600-yard par-5, bisects a five-acre pond and the 9th green is placed next to the Maple River 175 yards from the elevated tees. Five sets of tees make the layout range from 4,800 to 7,220 yards.

The environmental quality of the site and Maple River will be improved by integrating buffer zones and retention basins which direct surface water away from the river. Water quality will improve by adding sand filters to the river in collaboration with Trout Unlimited. Wetlands and ponds in the riverbanks were left intact to retain water temperature and protect endangered plant species.

Beaver, deer and other upland birds and animals roam the site.

Design 3 project mixes golf, casting

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Leslie comment

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Brewer, Maine, and turn a coin or two profit — no sweat.

Now to my classmates: Hey, guys, where were you when I needed you — back in 1963 or '64? Huh? We had some threesomes you could have filled out nicely. Gee...

Some things are absolutely bewildering. Like my friend Jeff, if you have an explanation for these, please write me a note.

Go figure: A golfer was kicked off the membership roll at Riviera Country Club because he spoke publicly about the troubling course conditions. Yet O.J. Simpson is still an associate member there. (The ex-member has taken Riviera ownership to court.)

Go figure: Golfers enjoy two-putting (as opposed to three-putting) on smooth greens, but they demand greens that Stimp at 10 or 11 and that demand Tour-like proficiency.

Go figure: Some superintendents contend that most of their time is consumed by personnel management and paperwork, but "management" almost universally continues to be disdained in turfgrass schools. (See story, page 13.)

Hurdzan busy

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championship Keystone Ranch course designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr.

Back East, Hurdzan has been hired to design the third championship-caliber 18-hole golf course at Pinewild Country Club of Pinehurst, N.C. Pinewild is in the sandhills of North Carolina and considered to be one of the finer golf facilities in the Southeast.

The 2,100-acre facility already features the 18-hole par-72 Magnolia Course designed by Gene Hamm, the 18-hole Holly Course designed by Gary Player, a nine-hole par-three Azalea Course and a three-hole Challenge Course used for practice.

"It's a professional honor to be selected to design a golf course in Pinehurst, the winter home of North American golf," said Hurdzan.