Amid flag-waving, a couple caveats give industry pause

It's always an education to report on the previous year's course openings (see story page 1), as reactions never seem to match up with the data — good or bad. The 442 facilities unveiled during 1996 constitute the second highest total in history, trailing only 1995's record total of 468. However, several people I interviewed for this month's story could hardly believe the 434 figure was accurate. Of course, I assured them the National Golf Foundation (NGF) numbers were reliable — I mean, a course either opens or it doesn't. If anything, the number is low, as certain new course owners surely failed to inform the NGF of their activities.

In any case, several architects I interviewed for the story asked how many courses are currently under construction. When I answered, "more than 800," they were somewhat incredulous.

"Well, that's a healthy number," said one. "But it's hard to believe when I have construction firms calling me looking for jobs."

Another said: "I just don't believe that number. If it's that busy, why are construction people writing off my work? Also, there are a lot of architects out there who are really struggling. I guess the market is better for those of us who have confidence in our talents. But the up-and-coming guys are having a real tough time."

Most of the architects interviewed for this story admitted they, too, had fielded calls from course builders eager for work. They also agreed that touring professionals dabbling in work. When it comes to the contention that golf courses are crucial to airport projects, as birds have been known to dangerously fowl up jet engines. Indeed, a Federal Aviation Administration employee testified at a hearing that a golf course proposed or near airport properties (see page 59).

Everyone at Jacobsen was unusual for the Mazama Invitational, an annual charity fund-raiser that attracted more than 70 golfers and raised a good deal of cash for the Montessori School. Nearby neighborhoods and compatriot photojournalists came from as far away as Maine to visit Bob and play Whispering Rattlesnakes.

Bill Smith, an LPGA star of the late 1980s, who as an amateur won the U.S., British, French and Mexican Amateurs, visited Whispering Rattlesnakes, became fast friends with Bob and took the title of teaching pro for the course. How many courses can match that catch?

All the while, Bob has mowed every second or third day and otherwise cared for the course. He had a 1973 Toro walk-behind greens mower. He gained agronomic knowledge. And, nearly from the start, he learned he would "superintend" these nine greens than play them. Indeed, the time it took caring for them often precluded him playing them.

Well, Whispering Rattlesnakes is silent. All but two holes are closed. But those two to teach those two to teach beginning and intermediate golfers and returning the rest of the land to native habitat. (The island green hole is now a Japanese meditation garden, very sparsely planted with a false creek flowing through it).

The people of Methow Valley are in mourning, as witnessed by the January cover story in the local Okanogan Ruralite entitled: "So Long, Whispering Rattlesnakes." I recall a tale or two from Bob about these nine "children." And so I mourn, too. I wish this time were not over for Bob Spiwak.

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Letters

To the editor:

Everyone at Jacobsen was truly entertained by the recent Green Bay Packer/Carolina Panther NFC Championship game. Everyone except the folks in Green Bay Packer/Carolina Panthers fandom.

In the story, a developer notes that course placement is crucial to airport projects, as birds have been known to dangerously fowl up jet engines. Indeed, a Federal Aviation Administration employee testified at a hearing that a golf course proposed or near airport properties (see page 59).

Ron Dodson, the president and force behind Audubon International, will chuckle when he reads Barry Mothes' interesting trend story on the proliferation of golf courses on or near airport properties (see page 37).

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CLEAT MANUFACTURER ADDRESSES TRADEMARK ISSUE

On behalf of Softspikes®, Inc., I want to thank you for the continued coverage Golf Course News has given to the spikeless movement and, in particular, to Softspikes, Inc. We are proud of our contributions to help make golf a better game, and we appreciate your efforts to educate the golf industry about this major story.

I did want to bring to your attention the fact that we are concerned about the use of our trademark, "Softspikes®" as a generic term (i.e., "soft spikes" or "softspikes").

Softspikes, Inc. pioneered the category of plastic cleats and we remain the leading brand in that category. We manufacture plastic cleats, not "soft spikes." To help your readers better understand the difference between our products and those of our competitors, I ask that Golf Course News only use our trademark to refer to our brand of cleats. By example, you might say "Softspikes® brand plastic cleats," "Softspikes® plastic cleats" or "Softspikes® cleats" in any story or mention of our products.

You should refrain from using soft spikes, softspikes or soft spikes when referring to the classification of products or when referring to any of our competitors' products. The classification is plastic cleats. I hope this helps clarify the correct use of our trademark and how it should be used when it concerns our company's products.

Kelly Elbin

Softspikes, Inc.

Rockville, Md.

Ed. — We prefer and endeavor to use "spikeless alternative" or "plastic cleats" when describing our products. However, when quoting sources in stories, trademark protections often go the way of kleenex and refrigerators — the price paid by market pioneers.

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often catches flak from other more-traditional Audubon organizations. Well, here’s third-party corroboration that golf courses attract birds and enhance the local habitat, not detract from it.

Superintendents would do well to pick up a copy of the NGF’s “U.S. Golf Facility Employee Compensation Study.” There are three editions: Daily-Fee, Municipal and Private.

These studies compare salaries of supers, general managers, head professionals and directors of golf, to name just a few. They’re invaluable tools for superintendents putting a budget together, fighting for fair compensation, or looking around for another job perhaps.

I found it interesting that superintendents are routinely the second-highest paid employee at most golf operations, behind the director of golf. That’s right: Supers nearly always out-earn the head professional. Maybe that’s common knowledge, but it came as a pleasant surprise to me.

For a copy of the study which best reflects your situation, call the NGF at 561-744-6006.

San Francisco-based Charlton Research, the firm which a few years ago conducted the RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment) Public Opinion Survey, has completed a study exploring public opinion regarding environmental issues. Two tidbits from this survey struck a chord with me.

1) According to the Charlton study, virtually every American considers him or herself an environmentalist. And while we believe it is every person’s “individual responsibility’ to do his or her part in protecting the habitat, citizens have some confidence that environmental issues are being solved while others, like crime and welfare, are getting worse. Further, Americans acknowledge — if grudgingly — that government is most responsible for this upswing in environmental protection.

2) Scientific data supporting the safety of this chemical or that disposal process are viewed with suspicion. The Charlton test group was asked, “Can the accuracy of science be determined by the organization which conducts the study?” Sixty percent answered that science can be bought. Wow.

Ten children of MetGCSA members were named recipients of the 1996 Bill Caputi Scholarship Awards, totaling $7,000. They are:

- Cassie Alonzi of Iona College, the daughter of Kim and Bob Alonzi, superintendent at Winged Foot Golf Club.
- Dana Alonzi of Elizabethtown College, daughter of Kim and Bob Alonzi.
- Robert Carriere of Penn State, the son of Rosemary and Bill Carriere of James Carriere & Sons, Inc.
- Chris Flynn of SUNY-Cobleskill, the son of Brae Burn Country Club superintendent Dennis Flynn and his wife, Cindy.
- Benjamin Fulwider of Colgate University, son of Natalie and J.C. Fulwider, superintendent at Century Country Club.
- Kelly Kennedy of York College of Pennsylvania, daughter of Kathy and Joe Kennedy, super at Green Brook CC.
- Benjamin Maddocks of Trinity College, son of Ewanok Country Club superintendent Ted Maddocks and his wife, Adele.
- Evan Maddocks of Vanderbilt University, son of Ted and Adele Maddocks.
- Christina Pakkala of Penn State University, daughter of Woodway Country Club superintendent Larry Pakkala and wife Carole.
- Jennifer Rice of Lafayette College, daughter of Pauline and John Streeter, superintendent at Woodbridge Country Club.

MetGCSA awards 10 Caputi scholarships

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