Are sponsorships missing the mark?

When I arrived at Golf Course News in 1992, there were relatively few companies shelling out the major bucks to financially support golf industry events. Nowadays, you can’t swing a dead cat without hitting a corporate sponsorship. Witness Yamaha’s backing of the 1997 Energizer Senior Tour Championship (story page 59). Of course, the pink rabbit will become the “sponsored by” sponsor, meaning TV guys bucks to financially support golf industry Are sponsorships people will maintain their “title” sponsorship while Yamaha followed not quite so hard on the heels of The Scott Company’s up/salvage the perennially ailing Quad City Classic — which remain: Do these sponsorships actually help sales? Are they worth the money? Is the U.S. map you published purporting to show “how many spikes in each state.”

Letters

To the editor:

I read with great interest the article by Hal Phillips in your April 1997 edition titled, “Alternative spike industry getting complicated.” In particular, I reviewed the U.S. map you published purporting to show “how many courses have banned metal spikes in each state.”

On the map you show 28 Colorado golf courses banning metal spikes. You are only off by a factor of four! During March 1997, the Colorado Golf Association contacted all the golf facilities in Colorado and asked what their policy would be for the 1997 season (we started posting scores for handicap purposes on March 13; thus our “season” has begun). There are 105 facilities (representing 114 regulation or executive-length courses) that told us their policy for this season is “spikeless” (67 public facilities, 29 private clubs, 5 resorts and 2 military installations) out of a total of 194 golf facilities in the state (representing 207 courses).

As far as I know, Colorado is one of the states leading the “spikeless” revolution, certainly in terms of the percentage of courses that have banned traditional spikes. Any way you add up the numbers, more than half of the courses in Colorado are spikeless for 1997!

Warren Simmons
Executive Director
Colorado Golf Association

Sleeping Bear reissues Thomas masterpiece

Sleeping Bear reissues Thomas masterpiece

By MARK LESLIE

C HESL EA, Mich. — He may have died 65 years ago, but his hat’s still off to George C. Thomas Jr., and to Sleeping Bear Press, who had the grit and determination to pursue, and then reprint, the “original parts” of Thomas’ famous 1927 classic, Golf Architecture in America — Its Strategy and Construction. From the dust jacket through the 342 pages of this great publication, it is like the original as possible. And it is worth the buying for anyone interested in golf and course design (see GCN Bookshelf on pages 54-55).

No doubt Thomas, a multimillionaire, subsidized this book.

BOOK REVIEW

Color plates, double-stamped front cover, high-gloss paper for perfect reproduction of more than 80 photographs and 60 sketches... it must have been a labor of love.

Here was a golf course design genius who, before writing this book, humbly pursued input from the other pioneers of his time. John Shapland, Alister Mackenzie, Donald Ross, H. Chandler Egan, A.W. Tillinghast, Hugh Wilson, George Crump and William Bell.

He dropped his ego and the book is a culmination of all the other architects’ thoughts, though it is Thomas’ genius that makes it,” said publisher Brian Lewis. “It clearly is the best golf course architecture book ever done and it is incredibly relevant today.”

Here we have this master’s feelings on the craft of course design. Here he shares his canny understanding of wind, water, grass, drainage, types of soil, seedbed preparation, all of the factors in golf course design and construction. We may think we know modern pieces of knowledge. There are many jewels in this crown. Yet, with all the fascinating talk of smooth, fading lines and of flowing, graceful curves, etc., my favorite Thomas Tidbit is

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New York citing solid-waste reducers with governor's awards program

Over 1.7 million cubic meters of material were moved in the three years it took to construct the beautiful Tatsuno Classic Golf Club.

A popular Japanese children's song about dragonflies originated in the nearby city of Tatsuno — inspiring the golf club's logo.

Golfers who hit one off-line may have to choose between a penalty or a chance encounter with a bamboo viper.

Superintendent Hiroshi Eto maintains two separate bentgrass greens for each of Tatsuno's 18 holes, to help reduce stress during the summer.

Players who choose to walk get a periodic lift from escalators placed at some of the course's steepest locations.

Phillips comment

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course" side of the golf business.

There are tournament-style sponsorships like Yamaha's and Deere's. These can be effective for the folks at Deere because, of course, they make turf equipment. However, Deere also makes consumer products, so there's a [CAUTION: cheesy marketing word to follow] "synergy" there. Does this synergy exist for Scotts? Yes. Does its exist for Yamaha, maker of golf cars and... motorcycles? Hard to say.

Then there are testimonial-type sponsorships, whereby a manufacturer will pay a resort to become the official supplier of [insert product category here]. Ransomes has been particularly active in this area, signing up St. Andrews and Pebble Beach. Of course, superintendents at these courses aren't obligated to use Ransomes products wall to wall, but the manufacturer can use the [here comes another one] "branding" associated with the resort to promote its own products.

We can't forget the trade show-oriented sponsorship like those on display at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) show, where a manufacturer can sponsor just about anything — from the GCSAA Tournament (Toro) to Japanese and Spanish translation services (Ironite). In my mind, the effectiveness of this particular sponsorship relies heavily on the event. I know Toro, for example, creates mongo good will among superintendents with its tourney involvement. Can the same be said for American Cyanamid and Club Car, who team up to sponsor the Innovative Superintendent breakfasts? Hard to say.

When it comes to good will, I say it's hard to match the sponsorships that take place on the local chapter level, whereby companies pitch in to make possible all manner of activities: tournaments, conferences, research grants, newsletters, etc. Because chapters are usually small and organized through grass-roots efforts, manufacturers are able to make consistently positive, more personalized impressions with their sponsorships of chapter events.

It's called getting bang — tangible bang — for your buck.

Superintendent Hiroshi Eto maintains two separate bentgrass greens for each of Tatsuno's 18 holes, to help reduce stress during the summer.

their reduction and recycling achievements, as well as their overall environmental record, the economic benefits of their overall programs, the extent of employee participation and benefits to the community and environment.

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Players who choose to walk get a periodic lift from escalators placed at some of the course's steepest locations.