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 is guaranteed these corporations that this sort of exposure is the determination to sponsor the Senior Tour's Tradition.

In any case, Yamaha's move is no doubt an expensive one and follows hard on John Deere's April decision to sponsor/prop up the U.S. map you published purposed 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

Ed. — As was indicated in the April issue, the source which provided the number of spikeless courses nationwide was Soft-spikes, Inc., Betheldea, Maine.

Sleeping Bear reissues Thomas masterpiece

C
HELSEA, 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 preserve, and then reprint, the original parts of Thomas' famous 1927 classic, GolfArchitecture in America — Its Strategy and Construction. From the dust jacket through the 342 pages of this groundbreaking publication, it is as 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 multilingual, liberalized, soused book

BOOK REVIEW

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

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

"He dropped his ego and the task 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, seeded preparation, all of the factors in golf course design and construction. We may think are only modern pieces of knowledge.

There are many jewels in this crown. Yet, with all the fascinating talk of smooth, faking lines and of flowing, graceful curves, etc., my favorite Thomas Tidbit is..."
Leslie comment
Continued from page 14

"I had death threats. I had to change my clothes in the car. I had to drive my automobile during the day and couldn't find a place to stay at night," Black said.

Tiger doesn't have those problems. "His pressure," Black said, "is staying in good health and standing up under the pressure to step in and play. He's got to be Tiger Woods, not Jackie Robinson. Everybody has their own time zone. This is a different time zone."

If we were all truly "color-blind" in our thinking, the whole debate of Tiger's "responsibilities to his race" would be moot. And, yes, it should be. As Black pointed out, the enthusiasm, loyalty and dedication Tiger has to the game make it possible for anyone of any age to respect him. The golf industry? Let's just watch and enjoy the ride that is stirring the American public.

Traditional, from whence comest thee? Do you think having all greens roll at the same speed is an idea favored by inimitable golf course architect George C. Thomas Jr., whose book Golf Architecture in America (see review, page 14) is considered a classic? Think again. Thomas viewed green speed in a way that flies in the face of today's demand for consistency.

"Yes, the greens should, undoubtedly, have great variety," Thomas wrote. "What interest or sport if they were all flat — all of the same speed; what chance for the real putting touch, and, more important, the ability to judge their speed, their rolls and slopes, so as properly to apply the skillful touch?"

Referring to "an old authority" who favored different greens having different grasses in order to change the speed as the golfer went from hole to hole, Thomas said: "The thought of the old writer is not ill-timed at this late date."

Meanwhile, was Thomas ahead of his time concerning tree-thinning? "While it is expensive to take out woods and build the course where the forest stood, nevertheless it has been done successfully many times," he wrote. "The greatest danger in such work is that of the shade given to the green, which often secures little sun; but this may be overcome by additional tree thinning nearby, which must be done before seeding, by the use of grasses suitable to shade, and by under drainage to the green, because shaded greens hold moisture too long in all but somewhat sandy soils."

Who knows Thomas' favorite course, but... "If one could have a course with sand dunes, with water hazards both as streams and as lakes, with fairways through virgin forests, with long, rolling contours, high plateaus, lovely little valleys to play through and to cross as hazards, one would have the superlative and almost ideal golf country. Such is Pine Valley, laid out by the master hand of that sterling sportsman, George Crump. Every true golfer loves Pine Valley."

And in defense of course architects, Thomas warned land planners that one very common error is to place the clubhouse on the highest point of the property. This, he said, "is often at a corner, making it very difficult to start and finish the course... Much criticism aimed at finishing holes is the fault of the clubhouse location rather than that of the golf architect."

Alice Dye shed interesting light on the success of her husband in the world of golf course design [see story, page 39]. We asked her what it has been like to team up with Pete all these years.

"We started the business together. But I had other duties and couldn't travel as much with two small children. For very personal financial reasons — like being sued or insured — it was better to go under one name and to promote Pete, which I did. I did become a member of the ASGCA [American Society of Golf Course Architects] and play in a lot of tournaments — a lot of promotional work besides working with him on sites.

"The LPGA didn't even get formed until 1950... But amateur golf was big, big, big, and every time I won a city or state title the
Blais comment  
Continued from page 15  
When you and your company’s name are among the leaders in new course openings over the next few years — based on the number of planned projects reported in the GCN Development Letter during the 14-month span — include California (45), Massachusetts (19), New York (18), Florida (16) Texas (14), New Jersey (12) and Arizona (11). If knowing about new course development and yet-to-be-signed contracts is important to your business, then take a good look at the GCN Development Letter subscription offer many of you will receive in May. If the offer doesn’t show up in your mailbox, then call us at 207-846-0600 and we’ll gladly mail or fax along a copy for you to review.

Listen, I’m really not trying to rain on this Tiger Woods’ parade. But, it’s been four days now since Tiger’s march through Augusta. I’ve hung around a lot of youth hockey players and Little Leaguers since then. And I can honestly say I haven’t heard a single one of them mention Tiger’s name.

The only time I’ve heard this year’s Masters champ discussed by anyone born after 1979 has been on television, when a microphone has been placed before the youth and a reporter asked, “So what do you think of Tiger?”

Now granted, I live in Maine where golf isn’t exactly a statewide passion. The mud is flowing and golf is still just a gleam in most Mainers’ eyes this drizzly April 17 morning. Our family doesn’t belong to a golf club, so we’re not spending a lot of time around the clubhouse waiting for the ground to dry out and talking with other golfing families.

But still.

Leslie comment  
Continued from previous page  
headlines were 2 inches tall in the papers. The publicity was really something, and I can honestly say I haven’t heard a single one of them mention Tiger’s name.

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Is this Tiger Mania for real? Is his name being yelled out at recess or discussed in the high school cafeteria the way students talk about Michael Jordan, Brett Favre, Ken Griffey and Mario Lemieux? Are kids lining up putting or driving imaginary golf balls 330 yards in front of their bedroom mirrors? Or are they still nailing 10-footers into their laundry baskets with rolled up socks and screaming “Jordan from the corner”?

I hope Tiger’s name is there somewhere. It could mean a lot for the game, not to mention those who want to build courses, fill tee sheets and sell golf equipment.

But I wonder: Is Tiger Mania a golf industry/media creation, or is it really the start of a junior golf boom? Time will tell.

Leslie comment  
Continued from previous page  
when they back up to line up a putt they feel they are on sort of a warning track.

“When the original green at Sawgrass sloped toward the water, I said, ‘You can’t do that. If there is a wind behind them, they’ll never finish the tournament.’

“Are the pesticides you use safe?”

“Are the pesticides that professionals use stronger and more toxic?”

“When is it safe for my children and pets to return to an area after a pesticide application?”

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