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 bucks to financially support golf industry sponsorships.

In any case, Yamaha’s move is no doubt an expensive one and follows hard on the heels of John Deere’s April decision to sponsor/prop up/salvage the perennially ailing Quad City Classic — which followed not quite so hard on the heels of The Scott Company’s determination to sponsor the Senior Tour’s Tradition.

You can rest assured a battery of demographic whiz kids has guaranteed these corporations that this sort of exposure is the stuff of sales legend. Nonetheless, I believe central questions remain: Do these sponsorships actually help sales? Are superintendents or course owners actually swayed by these high-profile imagettes? I’m not convinced.

There are several levels of sponsorships now at play on the

Letters

SPIKELESS ADDENDUM

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. Yours 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 144 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).

So 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. (Bethesda, Md.).

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 input from the other pioneers of his time. John Shipton/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 are only 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...