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 up/salvage the perennially ailing Quad City Classic — which high-profile image grabs?

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/salvage the perennially ailing Quad City Classic — which followed not quite so hard on the heels of The Scott Company’s determinate cancellation of the Senior Tour’s Tradition.

You can rest assured a battery of demographic white 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 images?

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 portraying “how many courses have banned metal spikes in each state.”

On the map you show 28 Colorado golf courses banning metal spikes. You’re 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).

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 Softspikes Inc., Bethel, Maine.

Sleeping Bear reissues Thomas masterpiece

C H E L S E A, 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 of the 1920s, Sleeping Bear Press has systematically rescued the original pages of the book from the shelves of public libraries, and now the book is being offered, in an attractive, 64-page soft cover, for the very reasonable price of $10.00. It is available in bookstores or by mail order from Sleeping Bear Press, 2414 Vermont Avenue, Yarmouth, ME 04096; 207-846-0609; fax: 913-842-4304.

By MARK LESLIE

BOOK REVIEW

Color plates, double-stamped front cover, high-gloss paper for perfect reproduction of more than 80 photographs and 60 drawings. It is 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 fascinat-
Thomas on design
Continued from page 14

a trick taught to him by Willie Tuckie Jr. concerning laying out a golf course on a contour map. In Thomas' words: "Your map is of course, contoured to scale, and you cut out of blotting paper miniature become of the greatest value to the game, acting in crowded districts, which are very grades, the course is approaching impracticability..."

find that by hinging these little fairways at are not too many. Certainly, a fine test of give the utmost pleasure, as well as fine tee hole course have the sun at their first having your map on a board. You will find that by hinging these little fairways on your contour map with thumb tacks, first having your map on a board. You will find that by hinging these little fairways at or about the 200-yard mark, you can make them follow the contours on the map as doglegs or straight holes.

"You can play with them just as if they were picture puzzle units; and making them of different lengths, all to scale, with their width corresponding to that of fairways from 65 to 80 yards wide, the one shotters unhinged and the three-shot holes hinged twice, you will find them of the utmost help."

Read this and you have to love Thomas. Was he prophetic? Hear this: "It is most important for the future of golf in this country that every aid should be given to the building and upkeep of municipal courses, because such will eventually become of the greatest value to the game, and from them we may expect to produce many of our future great players."

Was he a rule-breaker? "To my mind, could be easily installed at many clubs, at hotels, and even for private grounds, and give the utmost pleasure, as well as fine practice, for the short game." Was he humble? Speaking of the concentration of municipal golfers ("There was no nonsense as 'Please move your shadow off the line of my putt,' or 'Stand still, caddie, while I play this shot'"), he said: "I admired those golfers; I realized they were far above me as sportsmen and golfers."

Here are some thoughts on:
• Nature vs. man: "...the truly Ideal course must have natural hazards on a large scale for superlative golf. The puny strivings of the architect do not quench our thirst for the ultimate..."
• Walking: "Broadingly speaking, where it is necessary to climb more than two steep hills and more than four medium grades, the course is approaching impracticability..."

• The sun. "The tract to be purchased..."

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