IN BRIEF

CLARK, N.J. — Three Union County golf courses have joined the fast-growing list of facilities to ban metal spikes. Golfers here at Oak Ridge, Ash Brook in Scotch Plains and Galloping Hill in Kenilworth now require players to wear non-metal spikes alternatives on the courses. With newly restored greens at Ash Brook and Galloping Hill, the county decided to adopt a policy that is now shared by more than 1,200 private and public golf courses throughout the country.

AMSTERDAM, N.Y. — Officials here at the 18-hole municipal Amsterdam Golf Course relied on volunteer community help this spring to clean up the course and prepare it for play. And they priced it up with a creative incentive. Volunteers who chipped in to rake and pick up a winter’s worth of leaves and fallen branches for at least three hours were given a free greens fee; value between $14 and $18. Similar volunteer cleanups have been held in the past, but this is the first year an incentive was offered to attract more participants. “It probably saved a week or so of work for three or four guys,” said superintendent Richard Holmsby. “It was a big help for us.”

Upper Midwest market growing unabated

Wolverine state leads nation in course openings four years running: How much is too much?

BY PETER BLAIS

They are five of the coldest, wettest states in the country, not exactly ideal conditions for golf course development.

And yet, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana and Wisconsin — which the National Golf Foundation (NGF) collectively refers to as the East North Central region — accounted for almost one-fourth (23 percent) of the 1996 new course openings, according to the NGF’s most recent Golf Facilities in the United States report. Each state can be found in the NGF’s Top 10 list of new course openings.


“There is concern about saturation of golf in Michigan,” said John Dodge, president of the Michigan Golf Course Owners Association, whose state topped the chart for the fourth consecutive year with 34 openings in 1996. “We already have one of the highest participation rates in the country [17 percent], so bringing new golfers into the market is difficult compared to somewhere like Alabama [7 percent] where they have the demographic potential to attract more people.”

Two distinct golf markets exist in Michigan, urban golf in the southern cities and resort golf, mainly in the northern part of the state, Dodge said.

“Studies show there may be room for a few more courses in urban areas, like Detroit, because of the population,” Dodge said. “There are an awful lot of courses opening up north, but it’s mainly a tourist area with a short golf season and no convenient air flights. The state recently doubled its promotion budget for golf, realizing we’ve been losing many of our best customer areas like Ohio, Minnesota, Illinois and Indiana to Southern resorts.

“Michigan is supposed to open something like 30 courses annually for the next three years. As owners, we have to do something to create more golfers to fill them.”

Michigan’s southern neighbors are generally more optimistic about the market for new courses.

Continued on page 70

GROOM YOUR COURSE FOR COMPETITIVE SUCCESS.

Good news: Public-access golf is the future of the game.

Bad news: your competition is growing as a result.

They’re getting tougher. Breathing down your neck.

It’s no longer enough to simply maintain your operation. These days, you need aggressive marketing and management strategies to make your course stand out.

If you want to get — and keep — your competitive edge, make plans now to attend Public Golf Forum ’97.

Sponsored by Golf Course News, this national conference is tailored specifically to the needs of owners and managers of Public-access golf courses who are feeling the pinch of the crowded market.

Attend Public Golf Forum ’97 if you want to:
• Add the kind of value and prestige to your course that will let you increase your green fees — and your clientele.
• Find new products, equipment and technology to help you cut costs, maximize efficiency, and maintain quality throughout your operation.
• Learn how to position your course successfully against new and aggressive competition.
• Use market-sawy strategies to broaden your customer base, target new demographics, and increase your rounds.
• Ensure an emphasis on customer service.
• Plan and strategies for results, make better business management decisions, and advance your own career.

To register or for more information:

Call 1-800-441-6982
Or visit the Public Golf Forum website today for the latest updates:
www.golfcoursenews.com
Tel: 207-846-0600
Fax: 207-846-0657
Public Golf Forum ’97
106 Lafayette St. P.O. Box 995
Yarmouth, ME 04096

October 27 & 28, 1997
Oakbrook Hills Hotel and Resort • Oakbrook Hills, Illinois

Meet Us in the Heart of Public Golf Territory — Oakbrook Hills, Illinois — for Two Full Days of In-Depth Seminars

Three Educational Tracks:
• Marketing & Management • Maintenance • Development

This conference is for owners, developers, superintendents and managers, so bring your entire team. Cost for first registration: $495. Each additional registration, only $249. Includes FREE Admission to Public Golf Forum ’97 Vendor Exhibits.

Sponsored by Golf Course News

Don’t just survive! THRIVE in this dynamic marketplace. Find out all you need to groom your operation for success at Public Golf Forum ’97.