Everybody's talking junior golf

When I first set sail for my trip around the golfing world — itinerary for eight or so articles in previous columns — I was dead sure I'd return with a file full of trend stories to vividly detail the "state of the industry" in the countries of Europe and Asia. What I found was quite surprising.

At Fairways '98 in Munich and Golf Asia in Singapore, two top conferences where shows for the global market, the underlying theme was junior golf and how to attract more kids to the game. I was almost certain that the talk in Munich would be about the solid growth of golf in Germany, the proposed "mini boom" coming in Greece or the fallout of Textron's purchase likely not spent much time at their local, family-owned public courses. Probably not many, anyway. A.S. Khamis, managing director of ASK Golf Management Sdn Bhd, is about to open and manage Malaysia's first public golf course. Scheduled to open at that end of May, the course will be located in the Klang Valley near the International Airport in Kuala Lumpur and will host Malaysia's first full-time golf academy. The key to golf's future in Indonesia, said Bob Horan, general manager at Klub Golf Bagoi Banyu, is aggressive marketing and the development of youth golfers. Peter Goh, general manger of Laguna National Golf & Country Club in Singapore echoed Horan's sentiments, commenting that Singapore needs to improve its facilities for junior players that can attract new members, including children. He said that the "junior golf program" in Singapore will also have to capitalize on junior golf and public courses. Here I was, ready for a country-by-country analysis of the golf market in Asia, started to sound like a broken record.

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Stop Global Whining!

Warning! No Whining! We've heard enough. Enough of what, you ask? I've got a list a scroll long, but I'll keep it to a choice few.

Listen, if you think your personal circumstances are bad, look around. Lost River, San Marcos, a brand spanking new golf course where superintendent Scott Nair watched, helpless, as the Santa Ynez River went berserk, changed course and washed away his 3rd green and fairway. Or look at Pebble Beach's Mark Michaud, who walked out onto the course one day to find the access road to golf cart parks and maintenance vehicles washed away, along with about 20 feet of subsurface. Or look at the many superintendents in Massachusetts where the Ice Storm of the Century snapped; cracked and broke gazillions of trees, leaving a carnage that reminded one of London after the air raids.

Now do you want to Whine?

OK. Then look at the superintendents in Florida who have lost their jobs — not trees, but livelihoods — because they could not control the weather. They couldn't command the clouds to part and let some water onto their turfgrass so that it would grow. And an executive committee here, or an owner there, determined the dead grass was the superintendent's fault.

A reporter of mine once was a paraplegic. While in college, he had fallen from a tree, and since then had used two crutches to get around. Yet he was always pleasant beyond belief. I was close to him and to the man that I could ask him how he remained in such high spirits. "Whenever I get down," he said, "I think of the person that I am a quadraplegic." So, now will you please Stop Global Whining? Here's a short list of who else I want to stop Whining:

• The Richmond, Va., city officials who put off the Richmond First Tee Program, which was donating the $2 million to build a kids' course) until it had to move onward with neighboring Chesterfield County — and then got angry that the Foundation didn't wait around for them. You folks will be so-o lucky if the First Tee folks do come back and build a second course with you.

• The PGA Tour officials lamenting, and appealing, the court's ruling in the Casey Martin case. Hey, the guy's a great golfer who can't walk. How many handicapped people will ever have the talent to earn a spot on the Tour? One in a million? A billion? Show some heart and let him ride.

• Sierra Clubbies, who disparage professional golf course superintendents, color the truth and outright lie to advance their agenda. You folks are in bad taste.

• Mike Eisen, who can keep his New Age grunge about Mother Earth, Father Sun and the Nerd Queen in his own closet, thank you. Strike one, people!

• The Global Warmheads, who haven't got a clue. Show me the science, for goodness sake! No, you won't, because it doesn't exist. And yet you've deceived the majority of the world into thinking global warming is a proven fact. Last Oct. 27 anchorman Peter Jennings claimed, "The overwhelming majority or scientists now agree climate change is being caused by man."

Oh? Did you think to ask the experts in the field? Sixty-eight percent of state climatologists feel global warming is not occurring. Again, I say, show me the science.

Letters

Thank you for Mark Leslie's very perceptive commentary in the March issue. Based on many recent articles in other publications, one might think that, all of a sudden, and over the past few years, golf has become "opening up to women protestations of golf s plutocrats, their local, family-owned public courses. Probably not many, anyway. A.S. Khamis, managing director of ASK Golf Management Sdn Bhd, is about to open and manage Malaysia's first public golf course. Scheduled to open at that end of May, the course will be located in the Klang Valley near the International Airport in Kuala Lumpur and will host Malaysia's first full-time golf academy.

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