Canadian golf management gets environmentally proactive

BY MARK A. SCENNA

BURLINGTON, Ontario, Canada — In today's world, perception drives our society's opinion. Consequently, due to the lack of environmental initiatives, the golf course management industry has faltered. It is no surprise that the public does not often equate the golf industry as environmentally proactive. Public-opinion polls suggest finely manicured turf is the result of an abundant use of pesticides and nutrients, unnatural to their surroundings.

This public perception can and has driven some government policies and regulations, some of which have created unnecessary burdens on the industry. The industry's developing and adopting standard environmental operating practices can go a long way in demonstrating to governments that it knows how to manage itself relative to environmental preservation.

Additionally, it assists members who may not be aware of current practices and procedures. Finally, if properly promoted, development of standard procedures can demonstrate the industry's commitment to environmental preservation to the public, steering government policies in accordance with industry initiatives.

I am very pleased to report that the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association (CGSA) has recognized the benefits of developing a standardized set of environmental operation guidelines and has addressed them by creating an Environmental Management Resource Manual.

The primary objective is to create a directory of information that helps CGSA members (particularly course superintendents and assistant superintendents) address environmental management issues. In particular, the manual is to be created to ensure day-to-day operations comply with municipal, provincial and federal legislation, as well as current industry standards.

Additionally, the manual is being created to demonstrate industrywide due-diligence efforts that protect and enhance the image of the golf course management industry.

Most importantly, the Environmental Management Resource Manual is	Continued on page 78

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Ladies and gentlemen, golf's First Spokesman, Bill Clinton

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I at a great idea for your New Year consideration: When Bill Clinton steps down as president, hire him as the spokesman for the golf industry. Hey, no sneers and jokes, please. Hear me out! Here's a guy — better still, a golfer — who has maintained public support, even stayed out of jail, in the midst of all this chaos. So, just think what he could do working for an ethical, clean sport like golf.

I mean, our head of state has managed to keep his job despite Filegate, Watergate, Travelgate, Troopergate and Indonesiagate, as well as Jennifer Flowers and Paula Jones. He has survived, Jocelyn Elders, Dick Morris, Web Hubbell, Craig Livingstone and Hazel O'Leary. For crying out loud, he has attained 60-percent approval ratings despite Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and name-your-blunder; despite terrorists, drug dealers and spies being guests at the White House; despite his promise of a middle-income tax cut followed by a retroactive tax increase.

Heck, he even stayed aloft after it was revealed he and Hilary claimed tax deductions for used underwear they had given away. Who better, I ask, than the man who will be The World's Most Famous Golfer (outside Michael Jordan, that is) — the ultimate spin-doctor-cum-golfer — to represent golf?

Beyond their innate bent toward high ethics, never again would anyone in the industry need to be concerned about, say, some sort of environmental accident, charge of elitism or any other politically incorrectness.

Speaking of gaining good standing within the community, how about those folks at Belgrade Lakes Golf Club (BLGC)?

When an association of Belgrade Lakes residents needed another $25,000 to save a mountain property and prevent its development, BLGC dropped the money in the can. It was more than a gesture, said managing partner Kyle Evans.

Beyond the ethics, never again would anyone in the industry need to be concerned about, say, some sort of environmental accident, charge of elitism or any other politically incorrectness.

Golf course architect Rick Jacobson had an interesting take on whether there are enough good golf course builders to handle the boom in development. Featured in this month's Q&A (see page 47), Jacobson said:

"There is a concern at our end with the proliferation of new development. I guess, our rallying cry to developers would be: Consumer Beware!"

Not only from the construction standpoint, but the design standpoint. Half the world's 50 million golfers are here in the U.S. and they are all armchair architects. People in every related field to golf course architecture are hanging out a shingle saying they are architects.

We've seen some unbelievable designs that were ready to proceed that had trouble written all over them.
“Masters”
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This note of confidence from one for whom long holes have no terrors, we are for the present content to rest our case.”

Also, we hear the claim that today’s golfers — especially Americans — are winnies. If so by 1956 standards, how would they have fared in 1935 when Tillinghast wrote: “No doubt, many of the hazard-shirking fraternity would declare that playing a wayward ball from such places was entirely too difficult. What utter nonsense! There were and are shots that will do it; another generation knew how to play them, and it is not altogether pleasant to think that golfers of today are going softly. Possibly a bit more sting in the rod of golf chastisement in these, or modern times, would render it more of an achievement to break par so habitually.”

Obviously, Tilly thought the golfers of his day were thin-skinned about playing the ball as it lies, compared to their colleagues of the past.

His thoughts are echoed by Tom Doak, who may have penned my favorite quote in the book. In his Play It as It Lies, Doak said: “Modern American golf design is modeled on the same principles as our ailing criminal justice system: We build more water hazards [prisons], but they only house the disadvantaged, while the elite receive suspended sentences.”

So self-respecting retrospectively would leave out the great Dr. Alister MacKenzie. Here, MacKenzie wrote in the January 1934 edition of Golfing Magazine that any artificial lake should have a clear bottom so that balls can be recovered. “There is no thrill in driving over an ugly hazard,” he said. To make his point he recalled many years ago “seeing a peepery Major at Shrewsbury in Yorkshire, England, top three balls into an extremely muddy pond. The ugliness of the hazard and his bad play irritated him so much that he threw his club after his ball, then he threw his whole bag in and when his small caddie began to laugh he chuckled him in, too!” And no self-respecting collection would be without an introspective description of St. Andrews and its place in the world of golf. This one comes from Robert Hunter, who at times assisted MacKenzie and H. Chandler Egan in design, as it appeared in The American Golfer in January 1927:

“Where else in the world do we find a course to which all great players journey and where all ages and abilities meet and all praise with equal fervor? What other course can we all name which defies the champions and yet delights toting old age? What other course can be played with a putter — the Swilken Burn being, in that case, the only serious obstacle — and at the same time be spoken of, by those qualified to speak, as the best course in the world...

“Every time I visit St. Andrews my love and admiration for it increase. I should rather play that course for the rest of my life than any other I know. I should never grow weary of it; nor should I ever conquer it; and every round would whet my appetite to tackle it again on the morrow.”

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Texts will incorporate the CGSA mission statement into practice. That is, the CGSA is a society committed to excellence in golf course management and environmental responsibility through the continuing professional development of its members.

A “user-friendly” theme will focus on interpreting environmental law into laymen’s terms, while clearly outlining requirements of what must and should be done to be in compliance. Due to the sheer amount of information gathered, teaching aids such as “Did You Know . . .” and “Plain English, Eh!” are used to make an easy-to-read format. In addition to a glossary, numerous “CGSA” scenarios will be brought forward, as well as professional insight from industry leaders, such as golf course architects, engineers and turf advisors. In other words, the Environmental Management Resource Manual will be something the membership will use.

The manual is to be divided up into nine parts:

Section 1 — Introduction (purpose, how to use the manual)
Section 2 — An Explanation of Regulatory Requirements (i.e. municipal, provincial and federal)
Section 3 — Important Steps To Avoid Being Investigated
Section 4 — Maintenance Facility Operations (including permit and licensing requirements, to fuel storage)
Section 5 — Course Renovation and Redesign (includes permit requirements, to erosion control)
Section 6 — Environmental Monitoring (including pesticide and fertilizer nutrients)
Section 7 — IPM
Section 8 — Environmental Enhancement Projects (i.e. Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program and the Golf Course...