Help a new market into the game

Now that much of Golf Nation is focusing on helping more inner-city youths and others in America gain access the game, I suggest aiming at a whole other segment of society: liberals. Liberals can be a valuable, educational experience.

Field days are actually fun

I must admit, I wasn’t sure what I was in for when I was making my flight arrangements for Portland, Ore., to attend 1998’s batch of field days. But what I found after six days in the Corvallis Valley is that I’m now a whole hell of a lot more knowledgeable on the foundation of any good golf course — grass. For those of you who are unfamiliar with these yearly happenings — there can be many of you — field days are ways for grass seed companies to share their latest research findings and grass varieties with distributors, retailers and superintendents. Most field days start with opening remarks from company presidents, guest speakers and research technicians that plot the company’s current position and future plans. Following these remarks, and lots of coffee, attendees are lead around the test trials of the company’s various grass varieties to check in on the progress.

It was this field trial section that I questioned at the outset. Being my first time to the fields, I wasn’t sure what I would gain out of looking down toward my shoes at five or six varieties of tall fescue. But what I failed to factor in was that while I was, in fact, staring down at my shoes, there would be a voice booming out of a speaker that would actually explain to me what I was seeing and what I should look for in the different varieties.

Overall, what I thought would be of no help to me at all ended up being a valuable, educational experience. A pat on the back should go to the seed companies that hold these days, I realize that they’re designed as marketing events, yet they really are the charter of an educational kind that they end up serving a dual purpose — a pleasant surprise.

While I’m busy passing out the back slaps, a special thanks to the folks at American Golf Corp.’s Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club, OB Sports’ Langdon Farms Golf Club and The Reserve, as well as the staff at Trysting Tree Golf Club. Pumpkin Ridge, Langdon and The Reserve truly epitomize the “country club for a day” concept, while Trysting Tree showed us what a good youth program can do to help push affordable, accessible public golf forward.

Teeing off before my group at Trysting Tree were two boys not older than 14. My playing partner, a local who plays the course two or three times a week, suggested that I watch how well the boys move their game along. He proceeded to tell me that before kids play the course they are put through an extensive program that teaches the kids the written and unwritten rules of the game. For SS, he said, kids come out and spend the whole day.

LETTER FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Western ways in the East

By JOHN FARLEY

BORACAY ISLAND, The Philippines — An average day in the Philippines starts out like any State-side day. Up at 5 a.m. and lacing the boots while throwing back a bowl of corn flakes and a cup of Joe. Then a quick commute to the office that requires headlights. Unlock the shop, start the coffee pot and post that day’s maintenance activities on the schedule board. This is the point where parallels end. From 5:30 on, a different part of the world comes to life.

The Philippines is not unlike its many struggling Asian neighbors. Many of the countries in Southeast Asia have been affected by foreign occupations, dictatorships and war. The Philippines was hit with all three and their affects have taken toll.

Mark, you have written editorials that I felt were right on target. None, however, were as appropriate as “Resist and refuse to double under.” The golf industry is producing the product that millions of people want ... and nobody should feel guilty about that. Uninformed activists have an easy target with “lush, green, pest-free” golf courses. After all, who needs them, right?

Paul Harvey is responsible for helping many millions of Americans form their opinions on many issues over the years. In this regard, he needs to be responsible for influencing the public with facts, not fancy. Thanks again.

Rom Gagne, Regal Chemical Co.