COLUMBUS, Ohio — Operating on the philosophy that it is more profitable to reduce expenses through innovation than by cheapening the product, a growing number of golf course projects are installing or remodeling putting greens with a new drainage technique.

The key ingredient is a flat, perforated corrugated plastic pipe called AdvanEDGE, made by Advanced Drainage Systems, Inc. (ADS) here. Developed in 1988 as an edge drain to be installed vertically alongside highways, AdvanEDGE reportedly has about twice the soil contact area of 4-inch round pipe, and will collect and drain water almost twice as quickly.

In the early 1990s, football stadiums began laying the pipe horizontally under the playing turf and found that this accelerated water collection from heavy rainfalls. The concept has since spread to other recreational areas, and now golf courses.

Atlantis City takes aggressive golf tack

By JOHN TORSIELLO

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Atlantic City is known for its casinos, the Miss America Beauty Pageant and saltwater taffy. If the Greater Atlantic City Golf Association (GACGA) gets its way, the city and surrounding area will be known also for its golf courses.

The association is in the midst of an effort to attract golfers and grab a higher profile for its eight members: Sand Barrens, Harbor Pines, Blue Heron, Cape May National and Mays Landing golf clubs, Brigantine Golf Links, Great Bay Resort and Country Club, and Seaview Resort. The group is aggressively marketing stay-and-play packages, some in consort with casinos and hotels in the area. While a few casinos have bought into golf as a selling point, the owners of most of the city’s gambling establishments have yet to embrace the game as a means to lengthen the time visitors stick around the city.

The reason? An old fear that anything which takes gamblers out of the gaming rooms is bad for business. Despite the reluctance of some casino owners, GACGA

Continued on page 47

Flat pipe a money-saver in greens construction

By COLLEEN GORMAN

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Operating on the philosophy that it is more profitable to reduce expenses through innovation than by cheapening the product, a growing number of golf course projects are installing or remodeling putting greens with a new drainage technique.

The key ingredient is a flat, perforated corrugated plastic pipe called AdvanEDGE, made by Advanced Drainage Systems, Inc. (ADS) here. Developed in 1988 as an edge drain to be installed vertically alongside highways, AdvanEDGE reportedly has about twice the soil contact area of 4-inch round pipe, and will collect and drain water almost twice as quickly.

In the early 1990s, football stadiums began laying the pipe horizontally under the playing turf and found that this accelerated water collection from heavy rainfalls. The concept has since spread to other recreational areas, and now golf courses.

Continued on page 46
Atlantic City

Continued from page 43

President Teddy O'Keefe says the marketing effort is working. Golf package bookings for the association's courses tripled in 1997 over the previous year, she said. While visitors' length of stay was two days involving three rounds of golf before the marketing push, that has increased from three days and four rounds a stay. "We've been doing this for three years and we said it wouldn't be until this year before we saw results," said O'Keefe. "We have a great opportunity ahead of us. Five years ago we couldn't have done this. But there have been three new courses built (Sand Barrens, Blue Heron and Harbor Pines) in the last couple of years and upgrades at the other courses."

She continued, "We've had help from some of the casinos and the non-casino hotels, and the convention center people are all for promoting golf. They see it as a carrot to hold in front of people to get them to book rooms. With most of the casinos, it's been a difficult job getting the message across... They've been slow to get on board."

The nation's major gambling destination, Las Vegas, has seen golf becoming part of its recreational image the past couple of years. Some 10 new courses have been built in the desert in recent years, bringing the total to 30, and more are under construction or on the drawing board. While Vegas casino owners weren't initially eager to have gamblers trade tokens for 7-irons, they have come to realize that golf, along with shopping, dining, tennis and water sports, is a way to keep customers around for a week or more, said Rob Powers, public relations director for the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

"The mindset of the casino operators has changed 180 degrees in the past 10 years," he said. "Where once it was heresy to encourage anything other than gambling, customers out of the casino, now we see ourselves as a full-service resort destination. And golf is an integral part of the equation."

Powers said golfers are just the type of free-spending customers casinos are looking for. "Golf, of course, provides good demographics," he said. "Golfers fit right in. They usually like to gamble and spend money and that's the type of person the casinos want."

While the colder climate may prevent Atlantic City from ever rivaling Las Vegas as a golf destination, the area nonetheless has a sound group of courses to attract players. Blue Heron Pines and Harbor Pines were designed by Stephen Kay. A second course is planned for Blue Heron. Sand Barrens was opened last year and architect Dana Fry attempted to create what he termed "a public Pine Valley," with tree-lined fairways, vast scrub bunkers and huge undulating greens.

Seaview Resort has two courses tucked into its 670 wooded acres bordering Reeds Bay. The Donald Ross Bay Course hugs the shoreline and offers superb views of the Atlantic City skyline. It will host the Ladies Professional Golf Association's ShopRite Classic this year.

Brigantine Golf Links was patterned after the great Scottish courses, Mays Landing is nestled in the pinelands outside of the city, and Greate Bay Resort, designed by Willie Parks in the 1920s and redesigned by George Fazio in 1978, is located on 160 acres overlooking Egg Harbor.

Cape May National has received plaudits for its blend of golf and nature. It is built around a 50-acre nature preserve where egrets lounge in ponds and breezes blow across tall grasses. "We've been working hard to get the word out that we have quality golf here," said O'Keefe. "We have been advertising and circulating an eight-page newsletter. We have an agreement with Spirit Airlines to place our mailings in the seat pockets of their planes. With Hilton recently buying Atlantic City Country Club and [Mirage Hotel and Shadow Creek Golf Course owner] Steve Winn looking around, there's no doubt that golf will become even a bigger part of the Atlantic City experience."

"It takes time and we don't have a magic wand. But we will be a part of the city's future," O'Keefe promised.