Ten years of delivering the news, connecting a community

This isn’t just any new year for Golf Course News. As we flip the calendar we’re marking our 10th full year in operation — 10 years of delivering the news of the golf course industry.

That’s a solid chunk of time. And in that time GCN has become more than just an information source, we’ve become an integral part of the industry itself.

Next month, when the industry hits the GCSSA show floor in Orlando, FL, we’ll be bumping into superintendents, golf course architects and turf product managers who are not only story subjects and news sources but vital links to keeping the information flowing and the golf course community interconnected.

Forgive me for coming off sounding warm and fuzzy, but with that many years in the business, it’s hard not to make a few friends along the way. For those of you who have been there along the way, I’d like to say, “Thank you.”

Although I haven’t been here for the full ride, I would personally like to thank two guys who have, Managing Editor Mark Leslie and Associate Editor Peter Blais. Chances are, you know them both. These guys got GCN off the ground and continue to make GCN the golf course industry’s first source for business news.

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We started our Reaching Out section about a year ago when The First Tee kicked off. In this section we search for developments and established courses that are bending a knee to help kids get into the game. This month we feature a ‘year in review’ piece from The First Tee’s Ted Leivekie (page 1) and a package of Reaching Out stories starting on page 39.

I’d like to draw your attention to the story on page 53 about the folks at Willowbrook Golf Course close to my hometown. Tim Stawowy is one of those guys who hates to sit around and watch the snow fly. Instead, he turns his golf course — a solid 9-hole course he courses my second round of golf at the age of 10 — into a ski slope. Not only did I hone my golf skills on his greens, but I learned how to ski on his snow. Tim and his crew reach out all year round.

**The ‘bunny slope’ course reconsidered**

Michael Hurdzan's proposal for “bunny slope” courses must meet the criteria of sensible business plans. Looking to build these courses on virgin land may not be sensible. There are plenty of lower-quality courses in my area that seem to serve the high-handicapper. Older, outdated courses naturally fill his perceived void.

To go through the expenses of acquiring land, permitting, engineering, and building these types of facilities seems unreasonable. Amensty, Michael Hurdzan deciary the number of people promoting themselves as architects who may not be qualified when he has promoted John Cook as a designer on some of his projects. What qualifies John Cook to be a designer? Hurdzan needs to see that he is sending the wrong messages by promoting Tour stars as designers, thus degrading our profession. I see the bigger problem being the design professionals, engineers, landscape architects, even contractors, who promote their golf design services as another means for garnering fees to meet cash flow.

Oftentimes, I have seen these companies hire someone who may have spent a couple years in construction, or working for an architect. Bottom line, these professional firms are hungry for ways to generate fees, and see the golf boom as another type of development they can scavenge for fees as expert consultant.

I worked under a pro/architect arrangement, and it was a farce. The active pros, in particular, do not have the necessary time to devote to this profession. And when have this profession out of supposed interest in design, when, in fact, they see it as another way to make money on their name.

Basically, they want to see you build; there are some people well, qualified, big-name architects that have never prepared a set of plans, and many who do not work from plans. They qualified themselves by devoting their entire time and energies to the profession. Something the vast majority of golf pros, like John Cook, have never done.

Hurdzan, again missing the point, attacks inexperienced contractors as driving up construction costs. What drives up construction costs are the following: big-name architects who ‘design in the field’ requiring several change orders because they only have a sketchy idea where the design of the hole is headed even though the contractor is on-site constructing it and several other holes; big-name architects who will build courses anywhere under any site conditions, no matter the costs; big-name architects who have a reputation for being egotistical, who make several changes in the field even after having approved a course of action the month before, who visit the site infrequently, leaving important decisions to staff, often overriding their decisions requiring field changes. This is what drives up construction costs.

— Kelly Blake Moran

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