

GCN, print media and the World Wide Web



Michael Levans,
editor

In my humble opinion, *Golf Course News* has been the best news content provider in the golf course industry for the past 10 years. And if I have anything to do with it, *GCN* will be the top news provider for the next 100. You have my word on it.

Print media will not go the way of the rotary phone. It, too, is here to stay despite the predictions of the early Web innovators who had us tossing all things paper into the incinerator along with our 33 rpm record collections — which I've spent a fortune trying to rebuild on CD.

A newspaper, a magazine, these are things we as editors create. Some even say they're art. You start with nothing, a blank slate, and by the end of the month the editors and production staff has created something you can hold, feel and place conveniently on a coffee table to be read at some point in the future.

When the brush strokes, or key strokes in this case, are complete, content and ideas are assembled. If the reader chooses to read that reader could possibly alter how the he thinks, feels or acts. Newspapers and magazines exist in the present when you are in the act of reading, but they continue to exist, stacked behind your desk or in that pile on the floor — the pile of good intentions. It's a lot like that painting you bought at the art festival last summer. You can utilize it now, or keep it around for later viewing at your convenience.

Print is here to stay.

What the Web presents is a whole other way of presenting content and ideas. This content exists now, this very moment. It can be read and digested and, of course, be printed out. In most cases you lose the art of newspaper and magazine layout, the tool used by editors to assign a certain value to different stories, but you have the information you need to assemble in the way you choose.

In a Web world, you are the editor. You call the shots and assign value. And the world we've created for ourselves, a world wear a beeper follows you on vacation and your telephone rings when you're in line at the cleaners, you have little energy left to graze through news stories that don't have a direct effect on your job or your general interest.

What's best is when the two mediums complement each other, work together to deliver a total information package.

With this in mind, *GCN* recently joined forces with *Golfsolutions.com*, a place where superintendents can set up a home page, check their local weather chat with other superiors, get the lowdown on regional meetings, order products and equipment and even get the latest news — powered by *Golf Course News*.

If you've been questioning the Web or even a little intimidated by it, I suggest you check out the site and come to your own conclusions about the Web and its uses.

- Speaking of new technologies, I had a blast reporting on the Terresolve's soy-oil (see page 39) and Metallic Power's zinc/air fuel cell (see cover) stories this month. Rare are the times that you find an innovation in one industry that's destined to stir others. Soy engine oils and batteries that run on zinc pellets — great ideas with huge barriers to hurdle. Yet these are the stories that stick out in our minds and eventually form the future. It will be fun to chart the progress as both of these companies attempt to gain acceptance.

- I've heard superintendents mention it over and over, but I never thought I'd hear it first hand. My fiancée joined me as I viewed the MCI Classic at Harbor Town Golf Links — a course that I played countless times on vacations as a youth, a course that's near and dear to my heart. As Payne Stewart addressed a ball on the grueling and beautiful 16th, she said, "That course isn't as green as Augusta." I explained and told her that I still loved her.

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Turning cigarettes into golf clubs: a stroke of genius

A stroke of genius: Turning a smelly, cancer-causing, room-polluting substance — tobacco — into the benefactor of something refreshing, timeless and downright wholesome.

The genius: Minnesota's governor before Jesse Ventura took office: Arne Carlson.

The act of genius: Using states' tobacco company settlements to fund new First Tee projects, which make the game more available to beginning golfers, especially youths.

With various groups around the country digging deep into their personal pockets to finance youth programs and facilities, the tobacco windfall is a welcome one that should be sought in every state.

Republican governors have introduced the most innovative ideas in the country the last six or eight years, so it was no surprise to learn that Carlson appropriated \$3.1 million of Minnesota's tobacco settlement bonanza to fund four to seven First Tee projects around the state.

Since most states have earmarked their "tobacco dollars" for youth or education programs, The First Tee appears to be a perfect fit.

"Tobacco dollars are great," First Tee Executive Director Tod Leiweke told the American Society of Golf Course Architects last month. "Why shouldn't First Tee step up for those dollars?"

Indeed, according to First Tee Director of Resources Len Stachitis, "We're working on that. We've turned our attention to statewide initiatives."

In Kentucky, the governor has already signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to put First Tee facilities in eight state parks in which the state is either building or renovating golf courses.

In Illinois, the governor's staff is talking about 13 First Tee sites.

And in both Tennessee and Texas, officials are in the beginning stages of developing statewide initiatives.

The funding source varies, said Stachitis, adding: "In Kentucky a lot of the monies come from the education and tourism budgets. But tobacco money is a source we are going to vigorously pursue."

Any problems with that pursuit? None, except that "every other nonprofit organization on the face of the earth" is chasing that money as well, Stachitis said.

Reasons for optimism? "We think that with the wholesome values golf promotes, we are a worthy recipient," he added.

Multiply seven projects times 50 states and, voilà, you have 350 facilities. Sounds fine.

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Harkening back to the early 1900s when a young Francis Ouimet won the U.S. Open in 1913 and won the hearts of Americans, golf course architect and historian Geoffrey Cornish told his colleagues that the ensuing golf boom lasted from the end of World War I until the Great Depression. Then — in their own generations — came Arnold Palmer and then Tiger Woods.

"The next Francis Ouimet, Arnold Palmer, Tiger Woods is perhaps a kid in your neighborhood," Cornish said. "Encourage whoever and whenever you can."

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Other Cornishisms:

- "A golf architect who hasn't studied the links is like a divinity student who hasn't studied the Bible."
- "There have never been so many young dynamic architects as today." (Cornish said that in 1939 only 41 course architects were working in North America. Today there are more than 400.)

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One member of Country Club of Charleston said of the famous 11th hole: "It's the only par-3 hole I've ever played that I don't wait for the foursome in front of me to get off the green."

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So, the Stimpmeter Epidemic (related to the Augusta National Syndrome) continues unabated. The latest evidence: A green committee chairman was seen with his own Stimpmeter in hand, checking green speeds on his course.

Where will it end? I can see it now. The year is 2002 and Bernhard Langer, instead of just plumb-bobbing, pulls his trusty Stimpmeter from his bag before determining the direction and force of his putt...



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

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