New cry: Hang up and drive!

I magine, if you will (with me and Rod Serling), a land beyond sight and sound... Golfers on a golf course actually scurrying along...hitting the ball as soon as they get to it, with no closest-to-regulations... not plumb-bobbing each putt for a full 60 seconds... not romping through the woods looking endlessly for a lost ball while the next foursome waits... Look closely with me. Do you see in the woods — yes, there — a sniper up in a tree?

OK, I know it’s not reality. But I wonder if any superintendent, grounds crew member, or general manager — watching play creep along on their course — ever envisioned a sniper every few holes. Slow down too much and those snipers will “urge” golfers along with a potshot. Knowing that a B-B (not a bullet, please) to the backside might ail them if they stayed too long over a shot, might take care of the slow-play problem, don’t you think?

But it also might discourage repeat play as well. So people try this way and that way to speed up slow play — a growing nemesis to the industry. National Golf Foundation studies confirm that slow play is among the great distresses of golfers.

And now an instrument that has been quite outside of golf has invaded fairways and added to slow play: cellular phones. What to do? The sniper on your 2nd fairway could blast it out of the hands of the offending golfer. But if you’re not into that remedy, how about a simple “No Cell Phones” sign, like the universal circle with the slash through it?

Draw a little cell phone drawing in the middle of the circle and the message is clear: This golf course is for golf, not telephone conferences. Tell the golfers: “Go ahead, take your phone with you, but just for emergencies — like your partner having a heart attack, or your expectant wife calling when she goes into labor. Otherwise, cell calls are forbidden!”

We realize slow play is a mammoth problem — too much, perhaps, to conquer all at once. But this would be a quick and easy way to remove this particular nail in the coffin.

So let’s hear the cry from every golf course: “Hang up and drive!”

Meeting the challenges of golf course development

By FRANK J. GETCHELL and WILLIAM K. BECKMAN

Whether you personally agree with Mark Twain’s view of golf as “a good walk spoiled,” or count yourself among the growing number of avid golfers for whom there is nothing finer than playing 18 holes on a sunny day, one thing is certain: developing a golf course is more challenging than ever. The approval process is becoming lengthier as regulatory agencies and the public require more detailed assurances that a new golf course will not adversely impact surface and groundwater systems and the environment overall. But developers can minimize delays and other problems by addressing water and other environmental issues early in the planning process.

One of the major issues is water allocation and public acceptance of the proposed diversion. In the past, if water were drawn from a surface-water source, planning boards typically were not concerned about potential adverse impact on groundwater, and vice versa. But as awareness has grown of the complex nature of hydrologic systems, developers today must evaluate the potential impact of a new golf course on the quantity and quality of both surface and groundwater — whatever their source.

As a result, it may take one to two years to obtain a water-allocation permit, depending on what state the course is located in. This schedule can be extended due to local planning board approvals, which may be contingent upon receipt of a state permit.

WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The availability of an adequate supply of potable water for a golf course is of minimal concern in most regions. Instead, irrigation water supply and water resource management are key concerns. Even after the turf-growing period, water consumption for golf course irrigation is significant. Peak irrigation demand tends to coincide with the peak period for community water supply use, and, in the season when aquifer recharge and surface water flow are at their minimum.

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Manuscript received: May 16, 1999

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