



New cry: Hang up and drive!

Imagine, 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!



Mark Leslie
editor

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 await 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!"

Carolina turf groups help distressed

Hurricane Floyd is gone but not forgotten in the Carolinas. Many courses closed, some for almost a month, due to the winds and subsequent rains (see story, page 1). But as tough as that was for the golf industry, it pales next to the suffering of individual Carolinians who lost relatives, friends and personal property.

Two of the Carolinas' major golf organizations realized the personal difficulties faced by those working in the area's golf industry and rushed to their assistance.

In late September, the 2,100-member Turfgrass Council of North Carolina and the 1,300-member Carolina Golf Course Superintendents Association jointly funded a \$50,000 humanitarian aid fund to cover personal losses suffered by their members and their members' employees. The two groups indicated they will seek additional contributions from their members.

Those eligible for assistance include golf course superintendents and their staffs. The direct grants are limited to \$1,000 per person.

"The people who were affected the most just haven't had time to let us know what's going on," said Turfgrass Council Director Gene Maples, when asked how many people were expected to take advantage of the program. "We need to know."

Those needing assistance can obtain the one-page application form by calling the Turfgrass Council of North Carolina at 910-695-1333, or the Carolina Golf Course Superintendents Association at 800-476-4272.

"We don't see ourselves offering aid to businesses themselves," Maples said. "But I have received offers from a number of volunteers saying they would go wherever and do whatever is required at someone's home or golf course."

As for the area's golf courses, Maples said there had been no reports of catastrophic destruction to golf course turf. Most of the flood waters were rising rather than rushing, meaning little erosion was taking place. The flooding has also deposited little silt or mud, Maples added. That left long-term submersion of turfgrass as the major concern of golf course operators.

"People have called to find out how long their grass will live underwater," Maples said. "Generally that's not a problem with bentgrass or Bermudagrass. Centipedegrass is a whole other story, although there is little centipedegrass on golf courses."

Most of the flood damage occurred in the eastern third of North Carolina, Maples said. "It covered at least a dozen counties," he added, "running through the Rocky Mount area, Smithfield, Goldsboro, Clinton, down to Wilmington and points east."

"Anything east of Interstate 95 from Myrtle Beach, S.C., north through all of North Carolina is an ecological disaster," said Carolina GCSA Director Chuck Borman.



Peter Blais
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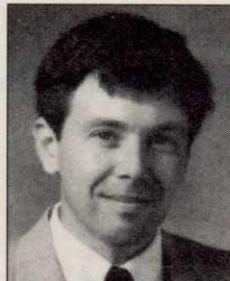
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Meeting the challenges of golf course development

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



Frank Getchell



William Beckman

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, as well, and the season when aquifer recharge and surface water flow are at their minimum.

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Frank J. Getchell and William K. Beckman are vice presidents of Leggette, Brashears & Graham, a water resources and environmental services consulting firm that has worked on many golf course projects. The firm's offices are in Ramsey, N.J., and Trumbull, Ct.

Meeting challenges of golf development

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This impact on local water resources and off-site usage must be addressed in siting irrigation wells. In certain instances, water may be pumped from wells into a surface water body, from which it is distributed through the irrigation system. Elsewhere, it may be feasible to pump water directly to the irrigation system.

Where hydraulically feasible, the latter tends to be the best option because the temperature of the ground water (52-56 degrees Fahrenheit) is optimum for turf, and there is no evaporation loss associated with the use of a pond.

Many developers are using effluent for irrigation. But this is not necessarily the "free" resource it appears. First, the site must be near enough to a treatment plant to make it practical economically. And the potential impacts of diverting gray water that may have been discharged into a local river or provided as recharge to a local aquifer must be assessed.

Another groundwater resource issue revolves around the fact that typically more than 80 percent of the water used for irrigation is consumed by evaporation and transpiration. Not much percolates back to the aquifer.

Developers also may be required to site and install monitor wells to track the impact of chemicals on the local groundwater and surface-water resources. Concern about this issue often is one of the first to be expressed by nearby residents and water purveyors.

These issues are faced not only in developing new golf courses, but in permitting for existing courses wishing to switch from using surface water to groundwater sources. Technological advances — from turfgrasses to chemicals — can all work to minimize the impacts on water resources.

FROM WETLANDS TO TRAFFIC

Sensitivity to wetlands has increased. Almost any type of large-scale land development will most likely have some kind of wetland. It often is difficult to avoid those features. Developers are required to identify wetlands, assess where the impacts will occur, and spell out ways to reduce the impacts. If this is not possible, they may be required to create additional wetlands to offset those that will be affected.

Sanitary waste disposal is another key issue. Often a golf course is to be sited in an area not served by sanitary sewers, and this requires design and approval of an on-site septic system. If the development consists only of a golf course, the design and approval for an onsite septic system differs little from that for the average residence. If the course has a lot of amenities, then a large waste disposal system will be needed.

Officials are becoming increasingly careful to ensure that the design protects both the environment and public health. They often require a groundwater professional's assessment of the potential impact on the local aquifer and mandate an engineer's supervision during construction to avoid later failures in the system.

There is also heightened concern about stormwater management and the impacts on local water resources. Local and state requirements have become more strict, and officials are taking increasing care to ensure streams and neighboring properties are not impacted either during construction, when soils and sediments can be a problem, or after completion, when turf management chemicals are in use and paved areas increase the stormwater

run-off and reduce ground-water recharge.

Permits and approvals on the local (i.e., planning and zoning, wetlands), state and federal (i.e., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) levels each require an application and supporting documentation that addresses all of these topics and more, some major, others relatively "minor," including fuel storage, grading and landscaping, lighting for parking lots and roads (i.e., "light pollution"), hours of operation, parking and traffic.

HOW TO SMOOTH THE PROCESS

The process of obtaining permits and approvals for development is becoming lengthier, more detailed and more expen-

sive. Today, applications usually are many pages and require a substantial amount of supporting documentation.

Permitting and approval can be more effective with early involvement of both engineering professionals and regulators.

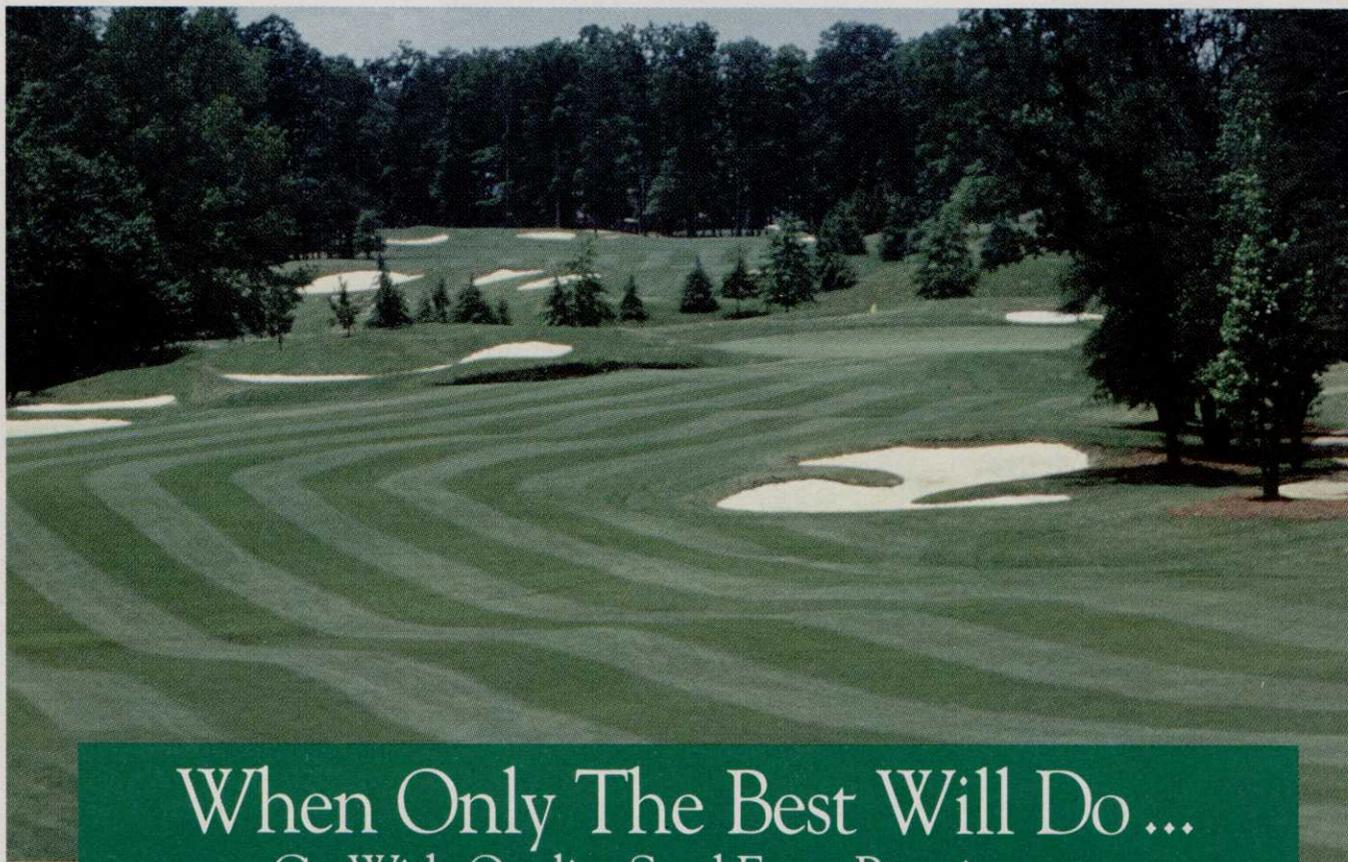
Participate in meetings with agencies before submitting applications to answer questions, and incorporate their concerns into the planning process to the extent possible.

This approach will help minimize questions and delays during the ap-

proval process itself. Be sure that permit and approval applications are complete and easy to understand by the permitting agencies — that they are clearly written well indexed and cross referenced.

Finally, be realistic about the time involved in the process: some questions are inevitable in any case, and any changes in plans after submittal of applications will create delays.

Planning and follow-up will not always guarantee a smooth shot down the center of the fairway, but it can minimize the amount of time spent hacking around in the rough, or worse yet, stuck in a sand trap.



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