

## The golf course image: names and logos play a role

Part 1 of a 3-part series on managing the process of creating and nurturing a golf course's visual image, signage, course details and printed graphics.

#### By FORREST RICHARDSON

One of the most overlooked and very often forgotten ingredients of a golf course is an appropriate attention to detail to name the course and create a memorable visual image. This is a shame when one considers that a name, scorecard, and perhaps an embroidered shirt is really all a golfer is left with following their visit. Sure, we provide memories, but memories pile up in a golfer's mind. Very often it is the memorabilia we send home with guests that will spark a particularly favorable thought and perhaps lead to a repeat visit or referral.

I am particularly sensitive to this topic. My responsibilities as a golf course architect put me in the situation where we are more times than not the "first to arrive on the scene" of a new course site. From this point in time we begin the process of helping our client to effectively spend millions of dollars to transform the land into a wonderful experience. Yet, in many cases, after much time and effort has been devoted to causes great and grand, the essential details of coming up with and implementing a course's image is all but ignored. These very important elements are relegated to afterthoughts. This approach reminds me of the notion that it is almost always in the details that our

Using every opportunity to further the message.

perceptions are affected — both positively and negatively. I recall great res-

taurants where it was a mere detail that

reduced the experience to that of a common meal. And, conversely, I am sure we

can all recall stumbling into the most

creative of retail shops where a positive feeling was intensified through a com-

mon thread of attention to detail and a

a visual image for golf courses is much

more aligned to the privately owned, daily-

fee or resort course than it is to 100-

percent private clubs and military layouts. However, even private facilities can

benefit from a well orchestrated image

where pride is instilled to members and

employees alike. And, while new courses

are most apt to consider the entire realm of experience, naming and image design,

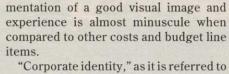
older courses should certainly not over-

look the potential. In any economy,

whether robust or flat, the cost associ-

Admittedly, the whole idea of creating

good sense of design and style.



"Corporate identity," as it is referred to outside of golf, knows no boundaries. It transcends virtually every layer of an organization and becomes a connection between virtually everything an organization objectively sets out to accomplish. It is the visual "front" put out for the public to see. People who run corporations — including golf courses — come and go. Management style changes with the tide. What may one day be a focus, can be replaced next year by an entirely new focus. But an image usually stays around for much longer time periods.

Essentially, a good "corporate image" for a golf course is constructed of the very same basic components that are found in any well-thought-out "brand." In the case of a golf course, however, there are nuances which should be addressed. In this first installment on image matters, I have outlined the three areas of course image which form the foundation of a comprehensive course image program.

#### THE EXPERIENCE

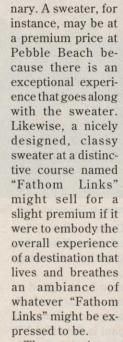
Before trying to come up with a name or image, I suggest a simple exercise to help get at the heart of the matter. For new courses, the objective is to define, in words, a concise narrative of what this golf course would be saying if it could speak. For existing courses, the goal is only subtlely different: we might ask, in-

stead, what the course should be saying. The result is description of the unique experience that this particular course will yield to all who visit and play there.

There has been a lot written lately about our "experience economy." In summary, the idea is that the world economy is currently moving from a "service"

economy" into one in which it is no longer adequate for companies — including golf courses — to simply offer a service.

There is more money and profit to be made when business operations package an entire "experience" to consumers. A good example is Nike Town, where it is now possible to see a demonstration basketball game, meet famous athletes, buy a Coke, stroll through an exhibit of rare baseball cards and pick up the latest pair of running shoes — all in the space of a single store location, on any given Saturday. The next step is for Nike Town to charge admission in addition to charging for each product guests might buy during their visit. Since admission - green fees - is already an integral part of the golf course industry, golf courses are far and away better positioned to make the jump from a service economy to that of an experience economy. The net result, if done well, is expressed through the simple advantage of being able to charge more than if the experience were ordi-



The experience should be defined at the very beginning.

It should involve your golf course architect, clubhouse architect, executive

management, marketing and graphic design professionals.

All experiences can be articulated; avoid the notion that "things will come together." This is a cop-out.

Golf is theater and the course is your stage; defining the experience opens the door to a world of good design and creative decisions.

### THE NAME

"It's all in a name," the saying goes. And, like it or not, this is all too often true. The name of a golf course should express something about the place. It should be in harmony with the design and speak volumes about what lies ahead.

A name should be distinctive.

When possible, it should be based on history and authenticity.

Consideration should be given to how it will sound when someone answers the telephone; and how it will look in print.

Take into account other names and how they all work together. Courses may carry a name different from a community or resort; a clubhouse can have a name of its own; holes and features can be named to reinforce an overall experience.

Consult with a registered patent attorney. Corporate attorneys are generally not equipped to handle trademark issues.

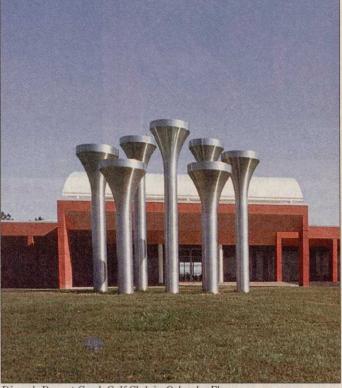
Golf course names are trademarks and worth protecting if created properly; a patent attorney can check names before you move forward and provide advice on how to register names and eventual designs.

Avoid using contests to come up with names or images. They produce results that are largely based on uninformed impressions. It is far better to use a team approach made up of your design and management consultants.

If the process allows it, work on names and images simultaneously to produce the best results.

## THE VISUAL IMAGE

Once a name is chosen, or up for consideration, it can be incorporated with a visual image. Many names come to mind;



Disney's Bonnet Creek Golf Club in Orlando, Fla.

logos, crests, trademarks, symbols, logotypes, etc. Generally, the same "rules" apply for golf courses as they do for the design of any "logo" — there are none.

The best visual images are finely tuned for the specific project they are supposed to represent. While designers might employ certain approaches, there are no hard and fast formulas for creating an overall image.

A visual image needs to address the topics already covered and should reinforce the experience you are trying to create. It should be designed to express the essence of the golf course. A course image is a very powerful device. It will serve as an icon for the course before a guest ever even has an opportunity to visit (such as in advertisements or web sites), and it will carry the weight of an entire golf course many years following a visit. The trend in golf course play among our newest and largest customer base those between 20 and 40 years of age — is to play golf at "new" courses they haven't visited before. This means more people will golf while traveling, both on business and pleasure. It also translates into regional golf outings lasting from dawn to dusk. The visual image for golf courses must be as distinct and memorable as the courses themselves.

Think outside of the box.

Hire a professional designer or design

Make sure you know who will actually do the work.

Make sure this person knows something about golf (or forever hold your

Avoid believing that a visual image can come together on its own; forcing a particular image into a name and then allowing the balance to be "thrown" together by various members of your staff is not a good idea and rarely works.

Organize the design process by starting with a schematic design, but make sure you include enough time and budget to allow the designer to show a taste of

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## ated with the planning, design and imple-34 September 1999



## Walters signs Schmidt-Curley for Las Vegas design

LAS VEGAS — Schmidt-Curley Design of Scottsdale, Ariz., has been signed to design a new course on the Las Vegas Strip. The Walters Group, developers and operators of five courses in Las Vegas, including Desert Pines and Royal Links, selected Schmidt-Curley Design for its latest facility located be-

tween The Strip and Interstate 15, just across the street from the new Mandalay Bay Resort.

The par-72, 7,018-yard course will be surrounded by land-scaped mounds and features 2,000 palm trees. Construction is scheduled to begin this fall.

Schmidt-Curley has a number of designs under construction, in-

cluding the 36-hole Landmark Golf Club, site of The Skins Game for the next five years. Other designs under construction include the 36-hole home of the Southern California Section of the PGA in Beaumont, Calif.; Sunrise Colony courses at both Las Vegas (Siena) and Houston (Royal Oaks with Fred Couples); Talega in San Clemente

and Santa Fe Valley in Rancho Santa Fe (both with Fred Couples); Landmark Golf's Oak Quarry outside Ontario, Calif.; and Marriott's latest high-end facility in Palm Desert, Calif. (with Nick Faldo).

Recently opened is Goose Creek Golf Club, outside of Ontario. Construction has been completed on The Palms, a membership club next to PGA WEST in La Quinta, Calif..

#### WESTERN GOLF TRACK OPENS IN CAUF.

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz.— Western Golf Properties' clubhouse construction is near completion at The Meadows Del Mar Golf Club in San Diego, Calif. The 18-hole course was designed by Tom Fazio and opened Aug. 28.

## Player enters Chinese market

By ANDREW OVERBECK

SINGAPORE — The Gary Player Group has hooked up with Hong Kong-based Leisure Resources International (LRI) in order to expand its golf academy and golf center concepts throughout Northern Asia and other large Southeast Asian cities.

"We are looking for partners who are building brand new facilities, as well as those looking to improve existing sites," said Erica Hodge, general manager for Gary Player Management Services. "We plan to initially focus the golf center concept on Northern Asia, particularly greater China."

A Gary Player Golf Center is a complete golf practice facility incorporating both a teaching academy and a driving range, and ideally practice greens and golf holes.

Although the Gary Player Group is starting a new company, Gary Player Management China, it signed on with LRI in order to gain regional expertise. "The partnership with LRI is key to our expansion into China. They have extensive contacts and experience in Hong Kong and China," said Hodge.

Gary Player Management China is in negotiations for a variety of projects in Hong Kong and China.

## Signage

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how the image will be used.

When looking at a visual image, take everything into account: color, typefaces, ability to be reproduced 1/4-inch in height (or less, such as on a golf ball), potential signage options, etc.

Avoid "dictating" design specifics such as sign types; let this be an option, but keep an open

Always look ahead and try to get your team to envision what should be and what can be.

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