Architect Bill Love takes environmental honors

Q&A

The Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association (TOCA) has named Bill Love the winner of its Environmental Communicator of the Year Award. The presentation took place at TOCA's annual meeting, held recently in Boston.

TOCA is an association of editors, writers, public relations practitioners and others involved in green industry communications. The group honored Love for his work as primary writer and editor of a publication dealing with environmental sensitivity in golf course design and development.

The four-color book — "An Environmental Approach to Golf Course Development" — consists mainly of illustrated case studies of courses built with special challenges in such issues as shoreline protection, historical preservation, wildlife habitat, and water quality. It was published last year by the American Society of Golf Course Architects. Love's first version, with the same title, appeared in 1992.

Golf Course News: What’s the significance of your book in light of today's regulatory atmosphere?

Bill Love

President of W.R. Love Golf Course Architecture, in College Park, Md., Love has designed about 25 courses. Since 1990, he has chaired the Environmental Committee of the ASGCA. Editor Jay Finegan caught up with him at the TOCA meeting.

Love: All golf course architects have to be attuned to environmental issues, because they crop up on every single project that we do now. To design a course in ignorance of environmental concerns is just shooting yourself in the foot. If the regulatory review process doesn't catch up with you, then the inefficiency of the golf course will. If you're building in conditioning problems or operational problems, then the superintendent has to

Garl's Wooden Sticks set for opening face-off in Canada

By Peter Blais

UXBRIDGE, Ontario, Canada — A handful of National Hockey League players is among the owners of an upscale daily-fee course that held its grand opening May 1 roughly 45 minutes northeast of Toronto.

Wooden Sticks Golf Club — named after the hockey equipment — is a Ron Garl design.

Twelve of the 18 holes, Garl said, have been "inspired" by some of the world's best-known layouts, including St. Andrews, Pine Valley and Augusta National.

"It is a true member-for-a-day course," Garl said of the facility. "It costs $175 to play, but that includes your golf, cart, range balls, food and drink — everything but alcohol."

Among the National Hockey Leaguers involved in the course are Gary Roberts of the Carolina Hurricanes, Joe Nieuwendyk of the Dallas Stars, and former Hurricane Steve Rice. Other investors, Garl said, include local Toro and E-Z-GO distributor Turf Care Canada. Greg Seeman and Alan Chud are the managing partners.

Construction began in January 1998. The course held a soft opening last summer with about 2,000 rounds played before winter. "We spent a long time looking for the right site," Garl said. "We caught a good winter and had good soils

New Colorado layout aims for rustic flavor

By Dennis Lyon

AURORA, Colo. — Murphy Creek, the city of Aurora's latest addition, will open this July. The 7,457-yard course, with multiple tees, was designed by Ken Kavanaugh of Tucson, Ariz.

Kavanaugh and the project team's goal was to provide a golf experience that surrounds the player with great golf and nostalgia. The clubhouse complex creates the feel of the old family farm from the 1920s. The steel-wheeled antique farm implements scattered throughout the course, for instance, remind the golfer of the hard times the eastern plains experienced in the 1920s.

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vegetating the site with understory material to promote habitat and to supply visual quality. We’ve also taken a lot of areas out of maintenance. We’ve reduced the amount of irrigated and highly maintained turfgrass. In order to make that successful, we have this ascetic layering of the course, where you have the highly maintained areas – the playing areas – and then you go into the more native types of grasses, and then into the larger plant material, which not only looks good but also requires practically no maintenance. It’s not maintenance-free, but it’s very low.

GCN: Can the right kind of course design revitalize the animal population?

Love: Part of what we do in the analysis phase is study the types of wildlife that existed on the site prior to the project, or what wildlife is suitable or desirable for that area. If the site had been mismanaged in the past, sometimes the wildlife isn’t there. Very often we’ll get a site and it’s not a virgin stand of timber. This particular site in Richmond [Hunting Hawk] had been cut over for timber, and it had a mono-stand of pines left on it when they got done. Part of our program is to bring back some hardwoods. We know that by reintroducing certain types of plant material and things like hedgerows and forest-edge conditions, we can introduce a much wider spectrum of wildlife habitat and enhance the site from that standpoint.

GCN: New golf courses are opening at a record level in the United States – about 500 a year. But the number of golfers has hit a plateau at about 26 million. Two questions: Can this rate be sustained, and how do you bring in more players?

Love: Everything we see in our side of the industry indicates that the growth of the game is still there. When you talk about the number of players leveling off, you also need to look at how much pent-up demand there was. How many times have you had to wait two hours for a tee time, or you couldn’t even get one because it was too crowded? I think there’s a lot of that out there now, so many of the courses being developed are sort of catching up to that demand. I don’t see how, with the popularity of the game as it is today, the number of golfers won’t increase – especially if we’re able to provide more affordable golf. That’s a very key thing.

GCN: And how do you make it more affordable?

Love: Well, it gets back into design. I don’t want to make it sound like everything begins with design, but it sort of does. The overhead cost of maintenance and other operating costs – if you can drive them down, you can charge a lower green fee. When you design a course so the operating costs are lower, you can survive a lower fee, and thus be attractive to a greater number of people.

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to work with.”

Gateman Milloy of Kitchener, Ontario, which built nearby Devil’s Pulpit and Devil’s Paintbrush, was the construction firm.

Greens, tees and fairways are planted in bentgrass, with a mixture of bluegrass, fescues and ryegrass in the roughs.

“There was a stream flowing through the property we had to work with,” Garl said, when asked about environmental concerns during construction. “There is a well that pumps into the lake.”

While the developers had to go through the environmental review process to obtain permits, Garl said: “One of the refreshing things about Canada [environmental agencies] is that they are tough, like everywhere, but the people are more concerned and interested [about the site] than most places. They listen to you. They want to know why you’re doing this, how you’re doing it, and is it the best way. They want to know if you’re doing the best thing for the environment, not just meeting the law.

“It’s not a case of ‘We’re going to show you how tough we can be on you,’” or ‘We’ll slow you down as much as we can.’ They want to do the best they can for that piece of property.”

June 2000