Dye takes technology, developers to task

BY DEREK RICE

In the last year, the debate over technology in golf has intensified, with the American Society of Golf Course Architects calling for more regulation of golf equipment in order to keep golf course length and by extension costs, from spiraling out of control.

Pete Dye has seen a lot of changes in his more than 40 years designing courses, including technology. Never one to temper his opinions, during a panel discussion at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America conference in Atlanta, Dye appealed to the USGA and other organizations to take a more heavy-handed approach to regulating technologies.

"[The industry] needs to get together and try to stop the golf ball for the great players," Dye said. "This hitting a golf ball 400 yards is ridiculous. You can't make ball today goes one inch farther than the ball they made 50 years ago," he said. "So Martha Burk ought to be yelling at the golf ball manufacturers that they're discriminating against and I would have my fair share of those. So I didn't worry and it has come through."

While most of the year is booked already, Garcia said Ryangolf will probably take on a couple more projects this summer. Barnes said established relationships with owners, architects and developers, as in any business, are the X-factor that often figures into the hiring decision for a builder.

"It's good to have those relationships, and I don't begrudge anybody who can get them," he said.

Weathering the construction slowdown

BY DEREK RICE

With golf course construction declining, some builders are finding it hard to get enough work to keep their staffs busy, but in the case of at least two builders, 2003 is shaping up to be busier than 2002.

Lithia, Fla.-based Quality Grass- 

Ryangolf Inc., located in Deerfield Beach, Fla., said while the slowdown will have an effect on a lot of builders, his company will be busier than last year, mainly because of the quality of clients it works with.

"Going forward, we are fortunate to have a clientele that's immune to the economy, to be honest with you," he said. "I knew there would be a certain number of projects that they would be starting, and I wouldn't worry and it has come through."

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Sunday River, Harris Golf close land, sales deal

BY DEREK RICE

NEWRY, Maine—As expected, Sunday River Ski Resort and Harris Golf finalized their purchase and sales agreement last month, paving the way for construction on the planned 18-hole Robert Trent Jones Jr. course to begin.

At press time, closing on the deal was expected to take place in early May.

The only thing standing in the way now is the weather, which continued to be unseasonably cold well into March. However, that shouldn't delay the course, as construction is slated to begin this summer with a summer 2004 opening date planned.

Harris Golf currently owns and operates two golf courses, Bath Country Club and Boothbay Country Club, as well as Harris Golf Shop in South Portland. The group includes brothers Jeff and Jason Harris, as well as their father, Dick Harris, a Maine golf icon who was principal in the development of Falmouth Country Club nearly 20 years ago.

Jeff Harris said the company is looking forward to building the course because of both the designer and the scenic location.

"The opportunity to build a Robert Trent Jones Jr. course at Sunday River is one that we couldn't pass up," he said.

The course will become the second Jones course in Maine, giving the state a distinction among...
Architect Ron Farris said Sutton Bay is the crown jewel among the courses set to open in South Dakota this year. "Sutton Bay is just a beautiful golf course," Farris said. "It sits on what used to be a 30,000-acre ranch, so they won't have any development anywhere around them." The development of quality golf courses in South Dakota may lead to a greater influx of tourists, Farris said, but there is no formal plan underway to draw them. He said he hopes golf will complement two of the state's already strong tourist attractions: Mount Rushmore and pheasant hunting. "I was always surprised that golf was not as promoted. Granted, people don't look at South Dakota and think, 'What a weather Mecca,'" Farris said. "We have a tremendous amount of pheasant hunting that takes place here. People fly in from all over just to come pheasant hunting here, so Sutton Bay will have a hand in that." "There's also three million people who come out here to visit Mount Rushmore every year," he added. "Red Rock is about 15 minutes away. I just don't think people have really marketed it." While the private Sutton Bay will offer hunting, fishing and a sporting clay course based out of its lodge accommodations, Red Rock will offer $27 green fees, which Farris described as a steal. "There's something for everybody here," he said.

Sunday River course
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its neighboring New England states. Jones designed the course at Sugarloaf/USA, which is also owned by Sunday River's parent company, American Skiing Co. In a statement, Jones expressed his pleasure that the course would go forward. "I am so pleased to hear that the Sunday River golf course is going to be completed. In the initial design phase we were delighted to find that the terrain was terrific and well-suited for golf with a lot of similarities between the land and nearby Sugarloaf Golf Course," Jones said. "I know this will be a great golf course with fairways that are a little wider, more forgiving and player-friendly. We think it's a great venue and look forward to the first round."

Harris Golf will oversee construction at the course, while Ty Butler in Jones' Charlotte, N.C., office will make occasional visits to the course during the development. Golf Course News will continue to follow this project as it progresses in future issues.

Dye blasts changes in design, technology
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against all those women who play the golf courses every Tuesday morning." Dye also said many golf course developers start off on the wrong foot when building golf courses. According to Dye, too many owners and developers try to cut costs by not hiring a superintendent until after construction and sometimes grow-in are complete. Dye said ideally, a superintendent should be on-site long before groundbreaking. "Hell, they should be there before I get there," he said. "The developers who start these things, they don't have any knowledge about what they're doing. They always think they can save $3.75 by letting the contractor run around out there, screwing up the golf course. Then they wait until after we're gone and bring the poor guy in there blind and he's trying to fix all the mistakes. You can sympathize with them a little bit because they don't know."

However, Dye said he wouldn't refuse a job simply because the developer hadn't hired a superintendent before construction. "I go in and say, 'Look, you should have a golf course superintendent,'" Dye said. "He can fire me anytime he wants to, and a lot of them have." If a contractor won't hire a superintendent during construction, Dye said he hopes they will do so before grow-in at the very least. "I can't ever understand why they want a golf course contractor to grow in a golf course. That's about the damnedest thing I've ever listened to," he said. "I think the superintendent should take charge and grow in every golf course. It's crazy to have a guy running a bulldozer one day and the next day cutting the greens. But it happens all the time." O

one area where Dye differs from many architects in is in contracts. He said while he realizes he should have one for every job, he never signs one. "I should have a contract when I design a golf course for people, but I've always found that no matter whether I have a contract, the owner has a hell of a lot more money and a lot more lawyers than I do. So I don't have a contract," Dye said. "He can fire me anytime he wants to, and a lot of them have." When it comes to bunker placement in his designs, Dye said his philosophy has changed over the years, mainly because he has designed so many CPC and other tournament courses. Today's players, he said, have more or less perfected their bunker play. "I used to put all my bunkers real tight to the greens, but they can get in there and pop it up, no problem," he said. "So now I'm trying to make the bunkers where the ball will kick farther away and make a longer bunker shot to the green."