Vendors applaud joint show

By ANDREW OVERBECK and DEREK RICE

The decision by the GCSAA and the NGCOA to combine their annual trade shows continues to meet with wide approval from all in the golf industry. If reaction from vendors is any indication, the first Golf Industry Show, set for Orange County in 2003, will provide the vibrancy both shows have lacked in recent years.

The obvious benefit to vendors is cost savings. Attending one show instead of two not only costs less, but also takes less time.

This is especially true for companies like Club Car that hit multiple shows to market their product to all players in the industry.

"[Attending four shows in five weeks] really stresses the organization from head to toe — getting product around, getting touched on every aspect of golf operations including financing, golf shop operations, food and beverage management, labor laws and environmental activism."

I am very pleased with the turnout we have this year, especially considering that attendance at the other two industry trade shows (PGA Merchandise Show and GCSAA Conference and Show) was down. I think that the realization of the importance of cooperation among all of the golf industry has really come through here this year," NGCOA executive director Mike Hughes said.

That sense of cooperation came through in the opening session, as Phil Trailing, president and CEO of Club Car, stated the simple facts.

"For us to be successful, the golf course owners need to be successful. That is why we are strongly committed to this organization and the goals of increasing the bottom line for everyone," Trailing said.

Two of the more pressing issues for the economics of the game of golf, available financing and the lagging number of rounds played, were dealt with in a very open manner.

It is no secret that many of the major funding sources for the golf industry have dried up in the past year and the remaining sources are taking a much harder look at the economics of golf.

"Golf is a difficult business because there are so many moving parts to it. It is not like building a commercial building and leasing floor space. With so many variables it is clear that golf doesn't provide the profitability of other commercial investments."

Vandalism has centered on supporters of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union Local 30, with whom KSL has been in negotiations.

The damage, according to PGA Tour representatives, was mostly cosmetic. However, Mike Shea, senior PGA Tour rules official, told the San Diego Union Tribune that there was the potential for more damage down the road.

"Our biggest fear is that depressions might develop. If that happens we might have to do some topdressing if needed," Shea said.