

Idea file

Cross-country skiing provides new profits

Turning a golf course into a cross-country skiing area during winter months is not new in the Northeast and Midwest, but few have probably developed its potential like the management of Lake Doster Golf Club in Plainwell, Mich.

The 18-hole daily fee course, which also has a lounge and restaurant, has carved out 20 miles of well-marked trails. These areas are mowed in the fall and compacted with one of the winter's first heavy snows. And the golf pro shop has been turned into a cross-country ski shop for the winter.

During the first December weekend when there was a heavy snowfall, 200 persons used the trails. General manager Joseph Langkamp said ski sales more than doubled the amount anticipated by club officials.

Don't set greens fees based on competition

A study of 70 daily fee golf courses in Michigan showed that owners and operators based their greens fees primarily on the amount charged by their local competition, according to researchers at Michigan State University's agricultural business department. The findings were a surprise to Dr. Lewis Moncrief, who coordinated the study.

The professor said he doesn't believe the greens fee rate makes a difference in attracting customers unless it is significantly higher or lower. He believes the sand, water, and length — that is, the make-up of each course — is considered much more than saving a couple of dollars.

Dr. Moncrief also thought this approach is not a sound business practice. "There seemed to be very little consideration of the costs of business expenses (when setting greens fees)," he said. "My view of a business analysis is that you look at the costs and charge accordingly."

Get information, ideas from your accountant

Now that it's getting nearer to the federal income tax deadline, take a few moments to ask your accountant some financial questions about the upcoming season. What is your need for funds this year? Review your cash statements and assess any unexpected fluctuation in sales, inventory, and interest rates. Check into leasing a certain piece of equipment instead of buying.

Also, find out if you need certified financial statements. Unless they are required by lenders or investors, these can be an unnecessary expense.

Booklet helps club eliminate slow play

Combating slow play has always been a nuisance that few golf course officials seem able to eradicate, but those at Beacon Woods Golf Club in New Port Richey, Fla., say they have made significant progress by mailing out a booklet to members called *The Four-Hour-Round of Golf*.

The 8-page booklet points out 24 ways that each golfer can save time without hurrying around the course. The booklet emphasizes that players should "think ahead" while walking toward their ball on each shot.

"If your average is 6 on each hole and you waste 30 seconds on each shot, you now have wasted 3 minutes per hole, but for an 18-hole round it totals 54 minutes or almost an hour," the booklet reads. Golf Director Ron Daughenbaugh, who compiled the list of tips, says a part-time marshal was employed at the course shortly after the booklet went out to remind players to speed up.

Don't allow guests to sign for members

The National Club Association says clubs should avoid allowing guests to sign a member's name when paying for "chits," such as caddies fees, even if the member isn't too happy with club officials.

The NCA says an Internal Revenue Service auditor has checked the signatures of nonmembers and checks signed by a member at one club and may declare this expense nonmember business. The activity could also be viewed as an attempt to defraud the government, according to NCA officials.

Daily fee owner mixes golf, bocce

Gene Yavorski has some extra land next to his golf course in tiny Diamond, Ohio, and used it during autumn to experiment with Gate-R-Bowl, a game he invented that combines bocce with golf.

The game is played by rolling bocce-type balls through a series of flag gates on each of the nine "holes." The course totals 2,172 yards, with five par sixes, three par fives, and one par four. Yavorski is charging \$1 per round and believes the game will become popular since it requires no equipment or series of lessons to learn.

Those interested in finding out more about the game can contact Yavorski at the Dogwood Golf Course, 2977 Newton Falls Rd., Diamond, OH 44412.