

News

TRADE SHOWS

Headquarters master plan unveiled; buying activity highlights PGA show

Seen at the PGA Show (clockwise from lower left): President Padgett, developer Ecclestone, and Executive Secretary Cox admire new resort master plan; golf architect Tom Fazio explains location of the 81 golf holes; Lee Co.'s Charles Van Dyne and Bob Hornung at the GMDA breakfast meeting; GOLF BUSINESS founders Joe and Herb Graffis greeted visitors at the magazine's booth (photo courtesy Florida Golfweek); pro shop buyers got down to business at softgoods displays.

A major highlight of the 25th annual Merchandise Show put on by the Professional Golfers' Association of America actually took place away from the exhibits of playing equipment, apparel, and golf miscellany. While the nation's golf professionals roamed the exhibit area of Disney World's Contemporary Tower and the display rooms in the Contemporary North, a small group of men met with the press on the 15th floor of the Tower.

Developer E. Llwyd Ecclestone presented detailed plans for his 2,300-acre residential-recreational complex to be built in West Palm Beach that would include the PGA's new headquarters, championship golf courses, and other facilities.

The community would include

6,000 housing units surrounding 81 holes, and three of the golf courses would be used for professional tournaments and by vacationers. Homes surrounding the complex would be valued between \$45,000 and \$75,000, although one cluster would include homes worth about \$250,000. Plans also call for 325,000 square feet to be used as an office park, 360,000 square feet for light manufacturing plants, and 150,000 square feet for specialty shops.

PGA Executive Secretary Mark Cox told GOLF BUSINESS that officers have hired the architectural firm of Schwabb and Twitty, the same firm which designed the master plan, to draw up plans for the headquarters building. Cox said he did not know the estimated cost or size of the building, but

preliminary plans estimated the space at 50,000 square feet. Cox said the building would be paid for with funds contributed by PGA pros during their first 5 years of membership.

Although Ecclestone hopes to have the housing, two golf courses, and the convention center completed by 1980, it is uncertain where the PGA Merchandise Show would be held. David Patillo, marketing manager for the project, said the group is considering using an outdoor tent, and possibly an inflatable building which he said is often used for large gatherings in Europe.

Ecclestone also said that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials in Miami Beach have assured him he will be granted a permit to build the project, which



lies in some areas considered wetlands.

He conceded privately, however, he fears the project could get bogged down if approval must be obtained by federal officials in Washington, D.C.

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At recent PGA Merchandise Shows, the big question seems to have been not "What's new?" as much as "How's business?", reflecting the somewhat uncertain state of the golf business. Fortunately, once one strips away the public relations hype and discounts the salemen's bravado, the answer in Disney World this year was "Pretty good."

The upswing in business seemed to be especially true at the show for those companies exhibiting softgoods lines. One Munsingwear representative told GOLF BUSINESS that he had sold 32 percent more golfwear than at last year's PGA show.

On the first day of exhibits, AMF Ben Hogan Co. seemed to be showing the general direction of the market by previewing the first line of ladies golf apparel in its history. According to Chuck Malitz, Hogan product manager for golf apparel, the line introduced at the show is just a "capsule collection of things to come" later this summer. The women's wear emphasizes what Malitz called the "traditional Hogan look of quality of classic elegance," represented by soft colors and luxurious fabrics.

Most of the softgoods exhibits were continuously crowded, and most companies said they were writing more business than last year — although Charles Van Dyne of H. D. Lee Co. thought that individual orders were not as large.

Most pros seemed well prepared for the PGA show and knew essentially what they were there for. Quin Sullivan, director of golf at the Springfield (Va.) Golf and Country Club, said, "I come here with a buying plan, so I know what we need and what we don't. I'll buy mostly softgoods.

"There are so many different kinds of golf clubs that people are getting confused."

Jim Roberts, head pro at Willow Springs Country Club in Wilson, N.C., told us, "I've done most of my buying already, but I did buy some softgoods. I come here looking for fill-in or third-line goods to be delivered in May."

Roberts commented on the length of time he had had to wait for service in the exhibit area of one large softgoods distributor. He felt that pros at the show were buying

about 75 percent softgoods and 25 percent equipment.

A PGA/Victor salesman said that he had written more business than at the previous year's show, but that more of it was hardgoods than softgoods. "The pros saw that November/December looked okay and decided to come to the show and order more clubs."

The show definitely was not wanting for equipment on display, including some new developments. Wilson, for example, had a room-within-a-room devoted solely to its new Reflex iron, which boasts a narrow slot behind the face to give a "trampoline" effect for longer distance.

Northwestern showcased the new Power-Kick shaft which is offered on its top eight or ten lines of clubs. Although developed by Northwestern, the shaft is made in England by Accles & Pollack. With its single large step about halfway down its length, the shaft looks somewhat strange — but is said to deliver distance without losing "head-feel."

There were other things to see at the PGA show besides pro shop merchandise, however. The major golf car companies exhibited their latest models, and three new cars were introduced: by Bogue, Davis 500, and Yamaha. The Bogue car is quite different from its predecessor; the one at the PGA display was just a prototype, but showed the main design features: a fiberglass body mounted on a fiberglass tubular frame, energy-absorbing bumpers, and overall simplicity of design. General Manager Brion Sabbatino told GOLF BUSINESS that Bogue hoped to have a complete working car ready for the GCSAA show in February.

Yamaha, of course, is well known for motorcycles and snowmobiles. Its golf car engine is actually a much-detuned version of a snowmobile powerplant; it's a two-cycle, single-cylinder engine with automatic oil injection, CDI electronic ignition, and "quiet-tuned" exhaust system. Product Manager Ron Frazier was busy at the show setting up distributorships for the Japanese-made Yamaha golf car, which he said would be ready for U.S. delivery in "late spring."

Merchandise Show Director Thomas Boyle said he was "pleasantly surprised" by the turnout for the show, considering the extremely bad weather in the north the weekend the show opened. Overall attendance was 9,611 — up more than 200 from last year — including 2,500+ golf

professionals. Asked for an overall impression of this year's show, Boyle replied, "I think we had a happier group of exhibitors and a happier group of visitors than ever before. We had no major complaints from anyone."

The 1979 PGA Merchandise Show will be held at Disney World under the same arrangements as the past few years, according to Boyle. The association signed a contract with the Disney organization at the end of this year's show, but the two groups are "still negotiating" terms for the 1980 show.

AMATEUR GOLF

USGA withdraws prize money rule

Responding to widespread protests from the Professional Golfers' Association, its members, amateur golf associations, and others, the United States Golf Association decided at its 84th Annual Meeting in San Francisco to "withdraw and reconsider" a portion of its revised Policy on Gambling with the observation that it was "widely misunderstood and misconstrued."

The portion being reconsidered is a new item 3 in the third paragraph of the Policy on page 75 of The Rules of Golf which allows an amateur to win up to \$350 in an event in which the golfers play for money they alone contribute.

Although the USGA contended that the revision was intended merely to clarify the distinction between playing for prize money, which violates the amateur code, and private wagering, which doesn't, it was widely construed as opening the door to cash prizes for amateurs and thereby dulling the sharp line which has divided amateur and professional golf. The PGA and its members felt this would undermine golf shop revenue from the traditional merchandise and trophy prizes for amateur events.

There was also the concern that the revised policy would lead to the organization of amateur golf events or tours with cash prizes, although an unpublicized new portion of the Policy specifically disapproves of amateur events which are organized to create cash prizes.

In fact, an amateur "tour" was organized and advertised in Florida, but had to be cancelled after the USGA's action on January 28. It was "The Nation's First AFC (Amateurs For Cash) Golf Tour"

organized by Dean Refram; former PGA Tour player who won the National Team Championship with Jim Colbert in 1976.

The "Tour" was to consist of an 18-hole tournament every Friday, beginning February 10, and offering \$4,000 in cash prizes from \$350 down to \$50 for both gross and net winners. Entry fee was to be \$40, plus \$50 in yearly dues. The event was scheduled for Saddlebrook Country Club, Wesley Chapel, Fla., of which Refram is proprietor.

Refram was reported to be considering suing the USGA to recover several thousand dollars he spent in advertising and promoting the "Tour."

The USGA stated that during the reconsideration of the withdrawn item 3 of the Policy on Gambling it will reaffirm that appropriate amateur prizes are merchandise and trophies worth not more than \$350 (up from \$250), and will further reaffirm its determination to "maintain the distinction between the amateur and the professional golfer—a distinction which is critical to the continuing vitality of the game of golf."

Its main problem during the reconsideration appears to be how to write a rule to cover, and be limited to, an event where the primary purpose is playing the game for its own sake, with the money pool only incidental to add to the enjoyment—a form of private wagering which would not affect amateur status.

Most club events, with prizes coming from entry fees, would seem to qualify for cash awards and could present a problem for the professional at some clubs, unless a clear rule is written. It was suggested by Tom Meeks of the USGA staff that rulings on cash awards be obtained in specific situations as did a Minnesota club in 1965.

The USGA gave a ruling at that time which seems to present a problem in the current situation and may have to be revised or withdrawn in the reconsideration. The USGA approved the awarding of cash prizes to winners of the club's two-man team leagues.

PGA President Donald E. Padgett, who appeared before the USGA's Executive Committee to present his organization's protest against the revised Policy on Gambling, told GOLF BUSINESS that the PGA—as well as amateurs and most people interested in the game—was pleased with the USGA's action, while recognizing