Rounds up for first half of '04
The National Golf Foundation (NGF) reports in its Quarterly Rounds Played Report that rounds were up 2.5 percent for the first six months of 2004 when compared to the same time last year.

Rounds increased .9 percent in the second quarter and 6.9 percent in the first quarter. April was the strongest month nationwide with an increase of 4.9 percent, while May and June were slightly down. The nearly 1 percent gain for the quarter compares to a nearly 3 percent loss in 2003 from 2002.

This report marks the third consecutive quarter that rounds have increased over the previous year. NGF estimates that about one-third of rounds in the United States occur in each of the second and third quarters, so the next quarter will have a significant impact on whether the six-month gains will continue.

How did Hudson Hills ever get built?
It takes a special occasion to upstage a former president, but that was the case when the Mark Mungeam-designed Hudson Hills Golf Course, in Newcastle, N.Y., celebrated its grand opening in late May.

Bill Clinton, a resident of neighboring Chappaqua, was on hand to cut the ribbon, but the layout itself — a daily-fee design on 150 acres of rolling terrain — was definitely the star attraction. The last time a public course debuted here in tony Westchester County, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was midway through his second term.

Westchester has always been a golf mecca — for the privileged. There are 59 private clubs there. How exactly were 150 acres in the heart of America's most lucrative real estate market made available for the county's first public golf course in 66 years?

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George Hamilton Died as He Lived — With Grace

PENN STATE PROFESSOR SUCCUMBS TO CANCER AT 43

By Frank H. Andorka Jr., Managing Editor

George Hamilton’s impact on the industry could be measured by many different criteria, but no singular measure of success could ever fully explain the effect he had on so many people’s lives — including mine — over the years.

I first experienced George, an assistant professor of turfgrass management at Penn State University, who died in July at 43 after a yearlong battle with pancreatic cancer, at the 1999 Penn State Golf Turf Conference when he was a senior lecturer. I joined Golfdom a mere three months before and was still trying to get my bearings in the industry. I asked him for his advice about what I should be listening for next.

I needn’t have feared rejection or scorn, of course (indeed, I sincerely doubt George was capable of those emotions). Instead, he shook my hand warmly after I introduced myself and seemed genuinely concerned that I not feel left out of the conference’s proceedings. I never forgot George’s generosity of spirit, and it never left him, either — not even in the face of the biggest battle of his life this past year.

I appreciated the comfort he felt in his own skin, his ever-present optimism and his essential humanity. That’s why the news of George’s death hits me particularly hard — I was so sure that by sheer force of his personality and will that he would win this battle, too.

The industry will be a poorer place without him.

A longer version of this piece can be seen at www.golfdom.com in the July 15 edition of the Golfdom Insider newsletter.

Candid Camera and a Hole-in-One

A Cleveland entrepreneur came up with a great idea that led to a great hole-in-one contest at a great Cleveland golf course.

First, the golf course is called Manakiki Golf Course, a classic Donald Ross design located in the Cleveland suburb of Willoughby Hills.

Second, the entrepreneur, Mike Burkons, developed a cool hole-in-one monitoring system that is vital to the contest. Through Burkons’ extensive knowledge of outdoor surveillance cameras, the course was able to set up a system that eliminates the need for human monitors and the organizational challenge of arranging such a contest.

Third, the contest, which began in late July, runs through this season. Every paying golfer will be awarded $1,000 if he or she makes a hole in one on Manakiki’s No. 7. Every golfer is given a ticket from the cashier upon paying for their rounds. When golfers reach No. 7, they insert their tickets into the kiosk at the tee. Once a ticket is read and validated, the surveillance camera monitors a golfer’s first shot to see if he or she makes a hole-in-one.

Golfers can also purchase $1 to $5 upgrades to increase the value of the prize (if they make holes-in-one) when paying for their rounds. For instance, a $4 upgrade brings $7500 in cash and a $1,000 gift certificate for golf at Manakiki.

Also, for every $1 upgrade, 10 cents is donated to the First Tee of Cleveland.

For more information about installing the hole-in-one monitoring system on your course, call 216-241-3202.