

Current Trends in Golf Course Management

- 1) **QUALITY CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES** - There has been a great deal of movement in recent years to concentrate more effort into a quality construction project when developing the golf course. The best designed course can be a nightmare for years if the fairways and tees aren't level or the lake banks continually washout or they are so poorly sloped that they become impossible to maintain. Improved greens construction involving proper soil mixes and drainage has become necessary since the demand for faster and consistent putting surfaces requires better subsurface profiles. Adequate drainage features must be engineered into the courses since more and more developments are required to retain a majority of their storm water run off.
- 2) **GOLF COURSE SITE SELECTION** - This has become more of a critical feature than in the past because of the concern of environmentally sensitive property since the construction costs skyrocket when working around these areas. Terminology such as buffer zones, wetland preservations and water retention areas now have a major impact on the style of the course and also strongly impact the proximity of housing locations to the course.
- 3) **DESIGNING THE COURSE FOR PROSPECTIVE MARKET** - It is critical that the development team focuses in on the golfing abilities of their future clients. With this information as a base you are in a much better position to provide the golf course architect with a logical set of design criteria. It is very important to design a course that looks challenging and interesting but plays easy enough to keep the golfers scores at a level that they enjoy the game. Every effort should be made to provide a great deal of variety in design features so that players that play often can continue to appreciate the course.
- 4) **EFFLUENT WATER USAGE** - After so many years of talking about the usage of effluent water for golf course irrigation the reality of this water source has gained widespread acceptance. Areas such as holding ponds and access points to effluent tie-ins must be planned into the community.
- 5) **MAINTENANCE COMPLEX DESIGN AND LOCATION** - Since golf course maintenance costs have risen so dramatically in the past decade it only makes good business sense to design and operate a maintenance complex that lends itself to efficiency. The concepts of adequate storage space, proper mechanical repair zones, employee safety with respect to employer liability and the safe handling and disposal of hazardous wastes, are all items to be considered.
- 6) **CHEMICAL APPLICATIONS** - In various parts of the country chemical applicators are being asked to notify all surrounding property owners when making chemical treatments. You can imagine the ramifications if golf courses are required to notify all residences and the possibility exists that golfers will not be allowed on the course during the time pesticides are in use.
- 7) **NEW TURFGRASSES** - The study of utilizing new turfgrasses that are more drought tolerant, disease resistant and cheaper to maintain are still ongoing with the U.S.G.A. A word of caution is to make sure the turf is thoroughly tested in playable situations before you commit your course to the new variety.
- 8) **NATURAL LOOK** - The use of native vegetation and low maintenance grasses that create a visual texture difference continues to be a topic of much discussion in golf circles. The natural look does create a very scenic appearance on the course, but for the sake of the golfers it does slow up play when there are extreme natural features that are close to the landing areas of the high handicap players. There are also negative features when attempting to merchandise real estate that abutts extreme natural areas.
- 9) **DETERMINING THE LEVEL OF MAINTENANCE** - The agronomic needs of the turf stays relatively constant from region to region, but each individual course has different demands when considering the manpower to maintain and groom the facility. It is important to determine the standard of maintenance and then apply the costs to reach that goal in order to set the percentage needed for golf course maintenance over the life of the projects.
- 10) **PRACTICE AREAS** - With all the emphasis on instruction and equipment improvement it is only logical that the golfer will spend more time practicing his or her skills. The utilization of a well planned multi-use practice area can be a valuable asset to a country club.
- 11) **SPEED OF PLAY** - As always this is one of the most critical aspects of any golf course. It is so important to plan for no wasted movement around the course which will just improve the enjoyability and profitability of the course. Maximizing the course frontage with the land use plan is essential but be careful not to ruin the feel of the course by stretching things to the extreme. ■