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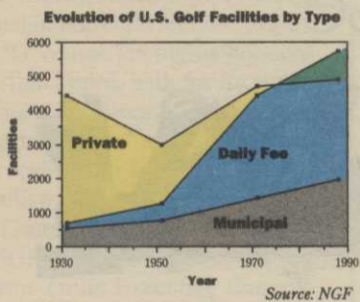
GOLF COURSE NEWS

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Bay area courses recovering



The Oct. 17 earthquake dropped DeLaveaga Golf Course's 18th green and collar eight inches along a 50-foot, four-inch crack.
Photo by Campbell Turner

Irrigation systems, greens major victims of quake

BY MARK LESLIE
In the aftermath of an earthquake that turned some San Francisco area communities upside down, Northern California golf course superintendents braced for the predicted next trembler and worked to get their courses back in shape.
While the nation's eyes focused on the deadly tragedy at the Bay Bridge, nearer the epicenter 50 miles to the southeast, Santa Cruz's downtown was leveled and some people's lives permanently changed. Lost in the tumult of more important matters was the Oct. 17 earthquake's effect on the region's golf courses.

The major problems at the courses were damage to clubhouses and other structures, breaks in irrigation systems, cracks on

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A 95-day miracle

And he could have done it faster, says developer

BY MARK LESLIE
Construction of a "quality" golf course in 95 working days at a Cenvill Development Corp. real-estate project in Illinois has drawn astonishment in the golf industry.
"That's absolutely fantastic," said Golf Course Builders of America Executive Di-

rector Don Rossi. "If it's a quality golf course that's a tremendous effort."

Rossi stressed that he's not impressed with speed unless the work is high-quality, and the principals involved insist the Carillon development's golf course in Plainfield, Ill., is top-notch.

Cenvill Director of Golf Dan Jones declared, "This is no rinky-dink course. It's an excellent product."

Steve Balogh of Kenova Construction in West Palm Beach, Fla., who coordinated

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Builders mark PGA for honors

BY PETER BLAIS
The Golf Course Builders of America will honor the Professional Golfers Association Tour at the builders' association annual meeting Feb. 24 in Orlando, Fla., for the PGA's work in building Tournament Players Club courses.

"The PGA Tour has done an out-
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Flymo makes triumphant return to U.S.

BY PETER BLAIS
Largely banished from U.S. golf courses in the mid-1980s, the Flymo mower is making a triumphant return heading into the 1990s, thanks to a safety device developed by a Florida distributor.

The Flymo, a walk-behind mower that rides on a cushion of air, has long been one of the most popular means of grooming around bunkers. But injuries have often occurred because of severe conditions and operator carelessness, according to Precision Small Engine Co. owner Andy Masciarella, one of Flymo's major U.S. distributors.

"People would slip while working along a

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The view north from the tee of the par-3 8th hole at Washington Green Spring Golf Course in Washington, Utah, shows the contrast between red desert sandstone and golf turf that enhances a breathtaking view.

Flymo

Continued from page 1

steep bank and cut off a toe or finger," explained Masciarella.

Faced with millions of dollars in injury lawsuits and concerned for the safety of golf course workers, Flymo's Canadian manufacturer stopped selling the mower in the United States in 1985, according to Masciarella.

That created a big problem for Precision Small Engine. The Pompano Beach, Fla.-based company, which had carried the Flymo line since 1978, had been doing better than \$500,000 in Flymo sales annually.

"We decided we had to either come up

with a new product line or develop a way of making the Flymo safe. We had so much experience with Flymo that we decided to develop the "Safety System," said Masciarella.

Flymo, which is now manufactured in England and still enjoys wide distribution throughout Europe (where the machine is rarely put through the rigorous use it is in this country) had little reason to develop such a system, said Masciarella.

So he decided to do it himself. Working with Precision Small Engine sales manager George Whistler and cousin Steve Brandt, the Florida businessman spent the next 2 1/2 years and over \$50,000 trying to come up

with a safety device that would be acceptable to golf course superintendents.

"We worked a lot of nights and weekends. We put together plastic models. I even kept what I called a Flymo Bible that I used to write down anything that occurred to me," said Masciarella.

What they came up with was an aluminum disc with a triangular monofilament line that snaps in and replaces Flymo's metal blade, effectively turning the mower into a large weed trimmer.

"If the monofilament line hits someone it may sting, but it isn't going to permanently disable the operator," said Masciarella.

Masciarella patented the 'Safety System'

in September 1988. He then approached the English manufacturer of Flymo, which conducted its own tests.

The British company accepted the design and will be incorporating it into its new mowers.

In exchange for the patent rights, Precision Small Engine was named the exclusive U.S. distributor of the safety kit and the new mowers.

Convincing superintendents and club managers (who often faced their own personal injury lawsuits) that Flymo could be made safe was our biggest accomplishment, said Masciarella.

His company has demonstrated the 'Safety System' at various trade shows. Apparently the superintendents liked what they saw, ordering 3,500 of the \$49.95 kits already this year.

"We're not making much at that price," he said. "It's really a promotion. They stopped selling new machines here in 1985. That means most of the Flymos are at least five years old. We're hoping that the superintendents will be buying new units (which cost about \$700 apiece) down the road."

The manufacturer has redesigned a commercial Flymo unit and dubbed it a golf course trimmer. In addition to the 'Safety System', it has been beefed up with a commercial engine better suited to the needs of a golf course.

An 18-hole course will usually have between one and five of the Flymo units. With a market of 15,000 courses, and another 4,000 expected to come on line in the next 10 years, Masciarella is optimistic about Flymo's future. He expects to sell between 2,000 and 3,000 new mowers next year and projects sales at 15,000 within three years.

"We're gearing up for the February International Golf Course Conference and Show in Orlando right now," said Masciarella. "We'll have an inventory of 500 mowers then with another 500 on the way in May. We've already pre-sold 300 of them."

"Our new unit is going to be more expensive than the other so-called Flymo unit imitations. But ours is the only one that is going to be safe."

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