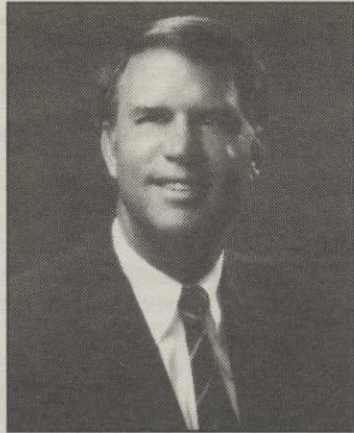


# Sawgrass crew did exceptional job

I mentioned in last month's column that I had an upcoming meeting at Sawgrass prior to The Players Championship. In fact, we did play the Valley Course and Marsh Landing on the Sunday and Monday just prior to The Players Championship. I had the opportunity to look at the Stadium Course and talk to a few of the Tour professionals who would be playing the course over the next few days.

As you know, much criticism came from the Tour professionals regarding the condition of the course — the major concern having to do with several greens that had nearly, bare spots. From my viewpoint, and after talking to a few professionals, the tees, fairways and rough were in fine condition; there were problems with some greens.

In my opinion, Fred Klauk and his staff conditioned the golf course



Charles E. von Brecht

to its best possible shape, under the circumstances, which were:

- Over 40 inches of rain in the fall followed by a hard freeze in December, allowing only a short growing-in time;
- The Players Club is basically a public facility, like the links at Pebble Beach. Thousands of

rounds are played just a week prior to the tournament, allowing very little time for conditioning the course;

• Although the Sawgrass facility is surely becoming one of the best in the country, this north Florida community is certainly not tropical. The growing season usually begins in late March.

I appreciate the Tour's desire to leave the course open as long as possible before the tournament. Perhaps under certain conditions it could be closed a week or two earlier, but that's not my call. Commissioner Beman operates one of the best (if not the best) sports management organizations in the world. The policy board will come up with a solution to the course's condition. I might add that no one was more disappointed in the condition of the greens than the Tour staff.

Tour professionals do have the right to be critical and they will continue to be outspoken on course conditioning. In many cases, constructive criticism provides the impetus to make necessary changes.

It is interesting that this year's champion played the same golf course as everyone else and his putting was exceptional. If the greens were in as poor condition as reported, Jodie Mudd is a miracle worker

\*\*\*\*\*

Mark Leslie's comment column recounts the many contributions the late Don Rossi made to golf. I'd also like to remember Hal Short, who died suddenly last month. Hal was a principal of *Golf Course News'* parent company, United Publications, Inc. He was a great salesman and influential in the launch of *Golf Course News*. He will be missed.

## Rossi irreplaceable in golf industry

BY MARK LESLIE

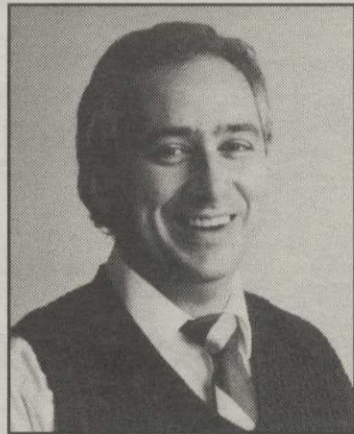
Business guru Peter Drucker once said, "Whenever you see a successful business, someone once made a courageous decision."

Don Rossi once said Bob Rickey took a chance and made a courageous decision by hiring him as executive director of the National Golf Foundation in 1970. If so, that was the chance that led to success at the NGF, and more recently with the Golf Course Builders of America and National Golf Car Manufacturers Association, which he led.

Don would call it a chance. Rickey, and colleagues Herb and Joe Graffis would call it a sure bet.

When Rossi died March 11 he left the golf industry mourning.

One of the last things Don said to



Mark Leslie

me, in February, extolled golf's virtues: "If the good Lord invented a better game than golf, He kept it to Himself."

Now, in Don's passing, the indus-

try extol his virtues. They were many.

A friend at the NGF told me that the people who had worked with Don during his 13 years there were "basket cases" upon learning of his death.

Friends, rest assured in where Don is. You can rejoice instead of mourn, because if there is golf in Heaven, he's probably lining up a foursome right now.

After Don gave abundant credit to Jesus Christ in his invocation at the annual Golf Course Builders of America banquet in February, a companion tugged at my arm and asked, "Is he a Christian brother?"

You'd better believe he was.

Longtime friend Paul Fullmer, executive secretary of the American Society of Golf Course Architects,

called Don the "resident imparter of invocations" at golf dinners.

"He was always called upon to give invocations and they were always appropriate and stirring," Fullmer said.

And that's the highest praise we could give Don Rossi. He loved the Lord, he publicly praised Him for how He had loved and blessed him, and he truly passed that love on.

"Freely you have received, freely give." (Matthew 10:8)

Living the Word, Don freely gave. The stories are countless.

Rickey, the NGF president when Don was hired, later became like a brother to him, and said, "If he was your friend you never had a better one. He'd do absolutely anything for

*Continued on page 35*

## COMMENT

## IMPROVED YARDAGE MARKERS PAY BIG DIVIDENDS

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