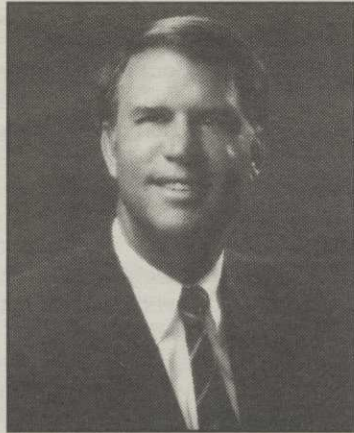


# Sawgrass crew did exceptional job

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

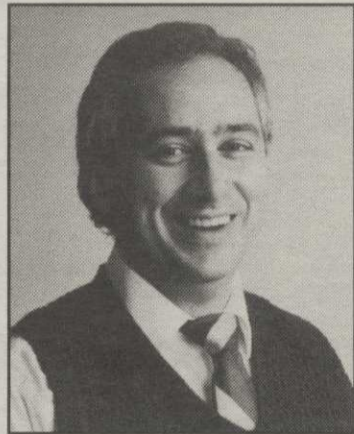
Business guru Peter Drucker once said, "Whenever you see a successful business, someone once made a courageous decision."

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

What's the single most important golf innovation of the century? Dean Beman, Commissioner of the PGA tour, says that measuring the course—and the concomitant benefit to club selection—has done more to improve the overall quality of tournament play than anything else.

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## GOLF COURSE NEWS

### Publisher

Charles E. von Brecht

### Editorial Director

Brook Taliaferro

### Managing Editor

Mark A. Leslie

### Associate Editor

Peter Blais

### Contributing Editor

Vern Putney

### Editorial Adviser

James McLoughlin

### Traffic Manager

Joline A. Violette

### Circulation Manager

Tori Turpin

### Editorial Office

Golf Course News  
PO Box 997  
38 Lafayette Street  
Yarmouth, ME 04096  
(207) 846-0600

### Advertising Office

National Sales:  
Charles E. von Brecht

### Marketplace Sales:

Simone M. Lewis

Golf Course News  
7901 Fourth St. North  
Suite 311  
St. Petersburg, FL 33702  
(813) 576-7077

West Coast Sales  
James G. Elliott Co.  
714 W. Olympic Blvd.  
Suite 1120  
Los Angeles, CA 90015  
(213) 746-8800

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## Bengeyfield

*Continued from page 34*

Despite his retirement, Bengeyfield plans on staying active rather than viewing the game from the gallery.

He is already involved in consulting projects in Spain and Japan and figures to do more overseas and domestic work in the future.

He and wife Betty will spend May through October running Frankfort (Mich.) Golf Course, a nine-hole "Mom and Pop" affair the couple purchased about 10 years ago.

Winters will find them holed up in their Caldwell, Idaho, home.

Bengeyfield also expects to occasionally be in touch with his replacement, or replacements actually.

Jim Snow is being promoted from

Northeast region director to national director. Mike Kenna, who joined the USGA from Oklahoma State University in mid-January, will be director of research, taking over many of the duties Bengeyfield had as chairman of the USGA/GCSAA Turfgrass Research Committee.

"It's reached the point where one man can't do it all," said Bengeyfield. "There are 13 agronomists on the staff now. We had 600 subscribers in 1981 and now it's up to 1,700.

"The research committee invested \$3 million this year. Next year we'll invest even more with all the environmental concerns. Both jobs are on the incline and I'm on the decline."

## Rossi

*Continued from page 8*

Rickey said that after joining NGF, Don soon proved "a master" at working with diverse people with varied attitudes, and bringing those people together.

Don forever spoke highly of others in the industry. Asked his opinion of the NGF's move into the service field, he refused to pass judgment. "I think leadership at the NGF is extraordinary," he replied.

Rickey told the story of the near-collapse of the NGF shortly after Don took over its reins. At that time most of the funding for the foundation came from testing aluminum shafts.

When the aluminum shaft market collapsed, the NGF lost most of its funding and "Don had to go in and fire all these people we had just hired and trained, which is the toughest management assignment there is. Don had to cut the budget 50 percent. He not only managed that but built a very strong organization and handed over a strong organization on his retirement," Rickey said. "But what always remained with me and showed me the character of the man was the way he took care of the people we had to let go. The way he treated them and worked with them to place them in equal or even better jobs was masterful. He had so much compassion and was a fine human

being." The "sentimental Italian," Don called himself.

Rossi is credited with fashioning the Allied Associations of Golf largely by his own enthusiasm and his genuine love for other people.

Near the end he took that enthusiasm abroad for the golf industry.

As Fullmer said, "He brought the Rossi radiance to the entire world."

If something was good for golf, he supported it.

From the very beginning, he encouraged Golf Course News and me, not because of me or the newspaper especially, but because he knew that by its very existence, the paper would help the game.

And though he wisely tempered optimism with realism, you couldn't dampen his outlook for the golf industry. In our last conversation of length, I asked him: "What if the stock market goes boom?"

His reply: "During the Depression there was more golf played than immediately before or after the Depression because people had more time on their hands and golf was a great outlet."

Calling him a driving force in the industry might actually be underdoing it. Don Rossi was an accelerating force.

He will be missed dearly. But those of us who will be spending time with him in the future can look forward to that time with anticipation.

## Fazios

*Continued from page 31*

erations," said Tom. An emphasis on quality was the most important thing Tom and Jim adopted from George.

"His favorite saying was 'I never want to hear you say that's good enough.' Every time I hear that expression it rings a bell about George," said Tom.

Added Jim: "He wanted to do a good job, no matter what the cost. He told us money was just a by-product of what you did in life. If you are good at what you do, the money will come. And if it doesn't, don't worry. The pride in knowing you do quality work is more important."

As for the future, would Tom want his children to follow in his family's footsteps?

"I look at Jim and his kids. I look at the Joneses. And I look at Pete Dye with his two kids. I guess it's a natural instinct. But I certainly wouldn't force it on them. I've seen enough to know it's not an easy business," he said.

## American Golf buys Riverside

American Golf Corp. has bought Riverside Golf Club outside Dallas Texas.

The par 72, 18-hole course, designed by Roger B. Packard, will be open to the public.

Its facilities include a clubhouse, golf shop, food and beverage facilities and driving range.



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