

# Have we passed saturation point in conferences?

It is hard to believe Christmas is just a couple of weeks away, and 60 days from now many of us will be heading for New Orleans for the BIG SHOW.

It has been interesting to note recently the increased activity in the promotion of regional shows.

Ohio and Florida have always been popular, but this year it seems I have seen more information regarding regional turf shows than ever before.

I know it makes sense to turf managers to support their regional shows. But can the suppliers to the industry continue to add regional shows and regional support to distributors and sales efforts in these uncertain economic conditions?

A major supplier to the industry recently mentioned that the company will have supported 80 shows and exhibits in 1991.

That might be an extreme case, but it's got to stop somewhere. I don't know the answer - if you have any comments or suggestions, please let me know.

As we head for the New Year, I am pleased to announce that we have added two new members to the editorial advisory board. Tim Hiers, CGCS, manages the 54 holes



Charles von Brecht

at the John's Island Club in Vero Beach, Fla. I played the West course recently and was in awe of the natural beauty. Tom Fazio was able to retain and Tim and his staff maintain. It's hard to believe some of the elevations that are part of the natural terrain of this unique property on Florida's east coast.

The other new member is Kevin Downing, CGCS. He manages Willoughby Golf Club in Stuart, Fla., and has started to get into some design work.

I've had the opportunity to work with both of these course managers and found them to be true professionals.

Both Tim and Kevin participated in the Golf Course News Market-

ing Conference in September, and along with the other members of the panel, were right on target with the subject matter under discussion.

We look forward to having Tim and Kevin on our board.

The first week of December marks the start of the 14th annual JC Penney Classic and the second year at Innisbrook's Copperhead course, where vice president of golf operations Jay Overton and staff have a new starting hole for this mixed-team championship.

As I've mentioned before, I've been fortunate to be associated with this fine tournament and look forward to a fine field of PGA Tour and LPGA Tour players.

## COMMENT

# It's the season to put priorities into perspective

We had a good time in this issue asking superintendents around the country what they would most like to get for Christmas for their golf courses. We thank them all for sharing their dreams for their courses.

Dreaming is great. Planning is better. Reality is sometimes tough to take. My dream — aka prayer — for this Christmas season is that we would all take stock of the realities of the world around us and put our own personal worlds in perspective.

Not to sound ethereal, I mean to say, let's place our toys, games, hobbies and even political ideals in a package, take a step back and view them for their real importance.

Two very divergent events bring this to mind — Christmas and a bizarre occurrence that happened at a Florida golf course.

First, for most people reality and priorities take a vacation during the Christmas season in America. Our society tends to turn on the lights

(on the trees and houses), turn up the volume (of holiday music) and turn our heads (away from the poverty, despair and pain around us).

Lost is the true meaning, the "why" of Christmas — salvation from a loving God. ("For there is born to you this day in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord... a light to bring revelation to the peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel. — Luke 2:11 and 31-32)

No holiday gimmicks. Rather, reality. And priorities.

Yet, reality and priorities take a vacation somewhere every day, not just Christmas. It happened one day recently for people in a golfing party at a Florida course. Buried in the news pages of Nov. 16 was a tale that, at once, made me both lose a



Mark Leslie

breath to shock and disbelief and accept it as another tale of where our society stands. You might hope the story is one of fancy, but the word that comes to my mind is macabre. Stephen King would be proud to include it as a queer kind of aside in one of his novelettes.

It seems a man died of a heart attack on the 15th green. His foursome ended its game, but the rest of the group the foursome was with played through, skipping only the 15th green where the man's body lay for two hours until authorities arrived and did their duty.

Tell me: Am I wrong or is this a **bold print** statement on our priorities and what we human beings think of life? I don't know where this particular golfer went to spend eternity, but was his death not worth mourning? — Or were the last three holes of that round in Florida life-or-death holes for the golfers?

The man apparently was barely worth a second thought to his golf group. "Gee, that's a good way to go," said one — probably with a

"Pass my driver, please" punctuation mark.

All of us associated with the industry love golf. We depend on it for our livelihood. We practice it, play it, watch it and read about it. But how all-consuming is it? And how all-consuming are our other pastimes?

Just how important is the Super Bowl, anyhow? Or the World Series? Or Wednesday night's bowling league? Or that Saturday morning round of golf?

Reality. We can handle it — at Christmas time and on the golf course — if our priorities are in the right place. Get our priorities right, and the other things will fall into place.

Now, enjoy your Christmas, remembering why we celebrate it. And, Jerry Faubel, Tim Hiers, Randy Gai, Joe Adams, Joe Esposito, George Frye, Tom Fisher, Jim Burton, John Granholt and all you other superintendents around the country — I hope you all get your wishes... this year.

## GUEST COMMENTARY

# Pro-golf publicity campaign is must for the industry

By Larry Hawkins

The scenes in the public hearing forums of the golf development approval process have not changed significantly within the past few years. While the golf industry has made remarkable progress in accumulating academic studies and other research documenting positive findings and environmental benefits of golf courses, public perceptions of golf development continues to present differing views.

The concerns and issues on golf development expressed by organized environmental groups and concerned citizens in public hearings have basically remained the same. Golf course developers, architects, engineers and planners frequently involved in the permitting process can easily predict the issues in sensitive projects. Water

quality, wetlands and wildlife habitat are consistently at the top of the public's list.

These are followed closely by the more politically oriented topics such as water and natural resources management, and the assertion that golfers are an "elitist" special-interest group.

It is often said the "critics" and "objectors" offer few, if any facts to support their negative, environmental views on golf courses. The golf industry, rightfully, maintains the position that there is a wealth of independent, government and academic studies documenting that



Larry Hawkins

properly designed and maintained courses do not degrade but help the environment.

Obviously, there is a broad chasm between the positive conclusions of numerous studies on courses and the environment and the persistent, contrary public perceptions on environmental issues.

Part of the answer to this quandary may lie in the fact that we are dealing with emotional and perceptual issues rather than technicalities. The golf development industry has a "public image" problem.

### ILL-INFORMED OFFICIALS

It is evident that the public, government administrators and regulatory reviewers are not aware of the significant and recent advances in modern golf course design and maintenance, water resource and

environmental management, wetlands and water quality management technologies.

Perhaps we should consider the recent environmental image problems faced by other industries and their approach toward public perceptions. The controversies over the fast-food industry and foam packaging and metal containers, and pulp and paper industries over resource management and the resulting recycling programs have been highly publicized.

Many major industries have projected a public image of "environmental consciousness" through public media information campaigns. You don't have to thumb through many outdoor magazines to see a full-page, color message on wetlands preservation sponsored by

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