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# GOLF COURSE NEWS

**PULL-OUT SECTION**  
Int'l Golf Course Conference and Show  
Pages 37-44

THE NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

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Course construction companies find perfection a necessity in blending soil mix for greens. .... 14

## USGA awards millions in research project grants

By Peter Blais

Pesticide and nutrient fate along with alternative pest management are the primary focus of the 15 research grants the United States Golf Association has decided to fund as part of its most ambitious research effort ever.

Contracts potentially worth a total of almost \$2.8 million over the next three years will soon be offered to 15 colleges and universities, said USGA Green Section National Director Jim Snow.

Some schools are involved in more than one project.

Certain projects, especially those involving pesticide and nutrient fate, will take three years to complete, he added. Some could continue farther into the future.

Requests for bid for another \$300,000 in research money dealing with golf

course benefits will be made this winter. The USGA's Environmental Research Committee will select the successful proposals at its March meeting, Snow said.

The research committee met in early December. "It  
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## Japanese continue investments

By GCN staff

Landmark Land Co.'s anticipated sale of the bulk of its golf and resort assets for approximately \$739 million is just the latest of dozens of

Japanese golf facility acquisitions in the United States that have put that country's financiers at the forefront of U.S. golf ownership.

According to Mead Ven-

tures, Inc., of Phoenix, Ariz., which provides information on international business, 120 golf course developments totaling about 160 courses in the United States

were owned wholly or partly by Japanese companies or their U.S. subsidiaries before the Landmark purchase.

The Mead total includes  
**Continued on page 57**

### GROWTH OF COURSE TYPES IN U.S.

| Year | Municipal | Daily Fee | Private |
|------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| 1983 | 2032      | 5915      | 5137    |
| 1984 | 2056      | 5961      | 5164    |
| 1985 | 2090      | 5968      | 5196    |
| 1986 | 2098      | 6004      | 5251    |
| 1987 | 2122      | 6025      | 5289    |
| 1988 | 2135      | 6203      | 5288    |
| 1989 | 2166      | 6296      | 5276    |

See related page 1 story on municipal courses.

Source: NGF

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The River Islands Club course, designed by Arthur Hills, plays on both sides of the French Broad River and on two islands in between. It opens for play this spring. For more information on golf course development see pages 29-33.

## Communities finding munis money-makers

By Bob Seligman

A growing number of communities are building municipal golf courses to earn money and provide recreation for their residents.

According to Angelo Palermo, vice president of golf course development for the National Golf Foundation, 125 municipal courses were in planning last Dec. 1, as

opposed to 85 at the end of 1989.

Seventy-two municipal courses were under construction by Dec. 1, 1990, as opposed to 63 at the end of

1989. Thirty-six new municipal courses had opened in 1990 by last Dec. 1, one more than opened in all of 1989.

**Continued on page 45**

## Beard urges: Speak out on benefits

By Peter Blais

Dr. James Beard exhorted superintendents and others at December's Ohio Turfgrass Conference and Show to speak out on the "unfounded" attacks against the turfgrass industry.

Although turf is beneficial in many ways, it is coming under severe pressure at local, state and national levels by special interest groups ranging from tree and ornamental organizations to water conservation interests to anti-

pollution forces. "Trees, shrubs and turf go together," Beard said. "We've got enough problems from other groups without the tree and shrub people coming out against turf. It  
**Continued on page 48**

# Municipal courses proving profitable across U.S.

Continued from page 1

From 1983 to 1989, the number of municipal courses in the United States grew from 2,032 to 2,166 — an increase of 6.6 percent. Daily fee courses grew from 5,915 to 6,296, an increase of 6.4 percent, while private courses grew from 5,137 to 5,276, an increase of only 2.7 percent.

Palermo said 60 percent of golfers are public course players.

"Daily fee and municipal golf courses will never stop," said P.B. Dye, a West Palm Beach, Fla., architect involved with four municipal projects. "There are more people out there than there are golf courses."

"Golf is no longer the sport of the wealthy," said architect Rees Jones of Montclair, N.J., who is designing the Ladies Professional Golf Association's new municipal course in Daytona Beach, Fla. "It's the sport of everyone."

There's a growing demand for lower-level, lower-cost public courses," said Robert Muir Graves, a Walnut Creek, Calif.-based architect involved with four municipal courses. "We don't need higher-end courses. We need a good old-fashioned public course you can play for 10-15-20 bucks."

## MONEY-MAKERS

Municipal courses can be money-making

machines "if they're properly run and maintained," Graves said. Revenues can be put back into the course, or returned to the local government's general fund.

Jones said "munis" probably produce the most revenue of any area. "Public golf is a definite profit center," he said.

"If you can offer a private country club atmosphere at a daily-fee price, you'll be successful," said Dye. "If you charge a high greens fee and the course is in poor condition, nobody wants to play it. A course can handle up to 100,000 rounds a year, but you have to put the money back into it. As soon as the condition of a golf course deteriorates,

everything goes downhill. Nobody wants to play a cornfield."

"In most cases, the towns and cities take a tremendous pride in the courses," said Geoffrey Cornish, an Amherst, Mass.-based architect who has designed 22 munis. "Years ago, you referred to the municipal course with disdain. Now, you try to give them country-club courses."

Graves feels munis should also present a country club-type atmosphere by offering such things as good practice facilities, a convenient clubhouse and plenty of parking.

Dye said there should be such extras as

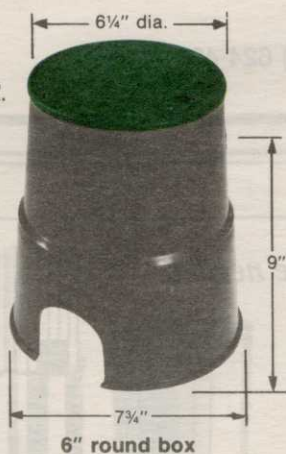
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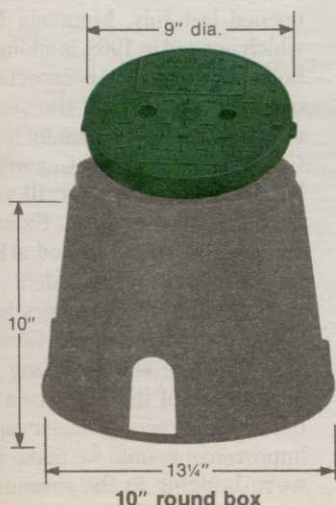
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Workers inspect a new green being built at the municipal Blue Hill Golf Course in Orangeburg, N.Y. Project architect Stephen Kay of Bronxville, N.Y., said communities are updating existing municipal courses to meet the needs for better quality, more play and safety.

Photo courtesy of Stephen Kay



## Low supply, high demand ideal mix at Salt Lake City

By Bob Seligman

When officials of Salt Lake City, Utah, began planning to build the city's newest municipal golf courses — Winged Point and Mountain Dell — they were faced with a low-supply, high-demand situation.

Scott Gardner, the city's director of golf and recreation, said all four of the city's 18-hole municipal courses were doing more than 100,000 nine-hole rounds annually. The city's two nine-hole courses totaled 50,000 to 70,000 rounds a year. With a population of 165,000 in Salt Lake City, and 800,000 to 900,000 people within a 20-square-mile radius, there weren't enough golf holes.

"In Salt Lake City, you can hardly get a tee time," said Gardner. "Years ago, it pretty much slacked off after Labor Day. Now, people will play in November if there's no snow on the ground, no matter how cold it is. We just ran out of golf courses."

Gardner added that Winged Point also was built to improve the city's west side region, and to attract new businesses.

The new courses are being funded by municipal revenue bonds under the Municipal Building Authority of Salt Lake City, thereby keeping taxpayers from being responsible for payment of the bond. The debt payment is \$7.75 million over the next 10 years.

Despite the demand for public golf, Gardner doubts the courses would have been built if they were tax-supported.

Yet the public, or at least the golfing public, still is paying the way. To be eligible for the bonds, the municipality had to show that enough money was being generated by the existing "munis."

So, greens fees were raised two years ago by \$1 per nine holes.

"The greens fees are paying back the bond. If our revenue doesn't best our expenditures, we'll have to raise the greens fees," said Gardner. "We can not go after the renewal fund to bail us out if we don't make our payments."

Winged Point, an 18-hole course, opened last July. Mountain Dell, which opened in 1968, is adding 18 holes. The first nine is expected to open this spring, and the second nine is expected to open by July 1. Gardner said Salt Lake City will not build a new course for 10 years because of the debt. Existing courses also will be affected, at least for the time being, he added.

"Right now, all the money is going to pay off the debt," Gardner said. "We are still grooming and taking care of the other courses, but you won't see any major capital improvements until we make sure we're bringing in the revenue to pay off the debt."

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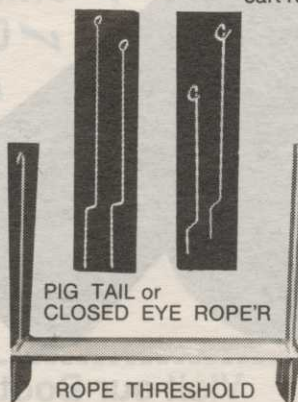
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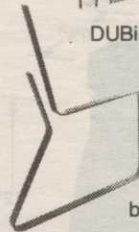


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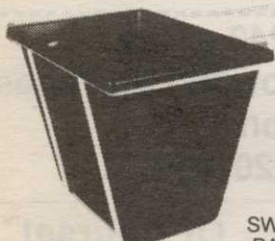
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# Munis

Continued from page 45

caddies and shoe shine boys.

No matter what they offer, munis are not just a strong recreation lure for citizens within a community, but also for businesses looking to locate or relocate into an area.

Scott Gardner, director of golf and recreation for Salt Lake City, Utah, said Winged Point, a new muni, was built to attract business to the city's west side.

"With the rapid pace of the world today, people are counting on the green space for a leisurely stroll or a competitive game, and that's what golf does," said Gardner. "We are encouraging people to know that life is more than just a job."

Architect Patrick Wyss, of Rapid City, S. D., who has designed more than 20 munis, added: "Public golf is one of those images of quality of life for a community. Businesses that are looking to locate or relocate look for quality-of-life factors."

Cornish said the presence of a muni raises surrounding property values. Munis also are beneficial to the environment. As Jones said, they enhance a park with their beauty.

"Any golf course architect worth his salt wouldn't go into an area to destroy it and set up a monument to himself," said Graves. "You'll be very conscious of the environment that's there and use it to the best of your ability."

While munis generally are seen in a positive light, architects acknowledge there are several disadvantages. Wyss said someone who owns an existing private daily fee golf course in an area might be threatened by a new municipal course and be forced to reduce green fees.

Dye said munis suffer when operated by management teams that lack golfing backgrounds.

Yet the darkest cloud hovering over the building of new munis is apprehension caused by the economic recession. Even though Jones and Dye, among others, said the recession is not affecting their development of munis, Palermo said the current rate of growth is the result of planning and implementa-

## Profits push city to build second 9

SALEM, Mass. — Buoyed by a \$150,000 profit last year at Olde Salem Greens municipal golf course, Mayor Neil J. Harrington is pushing for a second nine holes and a clubhouse.

The new nine would cost \$1.1 million, the clubhouse \$400,000.

The golf course made \$70,000 more in 1990 than in 1989.

"Golf courses are environmentally sound and don't disturb the natural habitat," declared Harrington, who made the course expansion an issue in his successful mayoral campaign.

He plans to meet with environmental groups who have opposed course expansion into the city's last remaining tract of open land, and has met with course architect Philip A. Wogan of Topsfield, Mass.

GOLF COURSE NEWS

tion that took place three to four years ago. He wouldn't predict what the future holds.

"Fiscal conservatism is ruling the decisions of local governments. Golf courses are not a high priority on the recreation or community needs," Palermo said. "It's not likely municipal courses will take precedence over other municipal improvements. To some degree it's a reflection (of tough economic times)."

### FINANCING

To get funds to build municipal courses, communities are practicing what Dye termed "creative financing." Salt Lake City, for example, issued revenue bonds for its

two new munis, meaning bond holders are paid through money generated by the courses.

Graves called revenue bonds "the fairest way to proceed."

In other cases, a town will enter into a lease purchase agreement, where a company will build and finance a course and the municipality will repay the builder on an annual basis from the revenues generated. Payments must be made in order for the municipality to keep the course. The debt is incurred by the leaseholder, not the municipality.

General obligation bonds, another method of funding, put the onus of paying the bond on the taxpayer, regardless of revenues generated

by the course. However, taxing the public appears the least acceptable option.

"The problem is that municipal courses have several strikes against them," said Graves. "The idea is repugnant to some voters. In a typical community, only 10 to 20 percent of a population would play golf. Since the majority of a community doesn't play golf, they'll vote it down. The point is to let the revenues of the golf course pay for it.

"Municipalities provide good public facilities and charge rates that will cover the ongoing high quality of operation and maintenance," said Wyss. "Public golfers are willing to pay the costs of keeping the facility open to the pub-

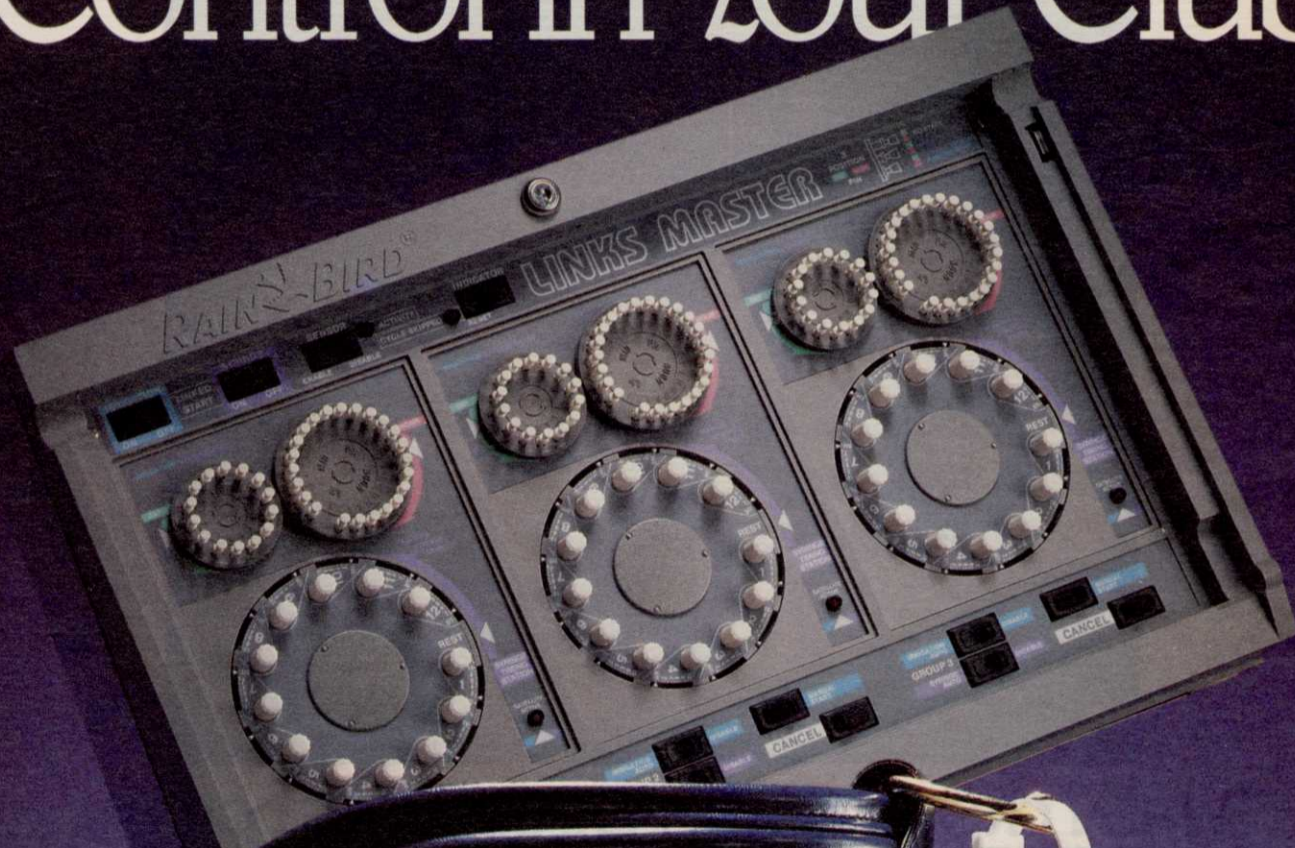
lic. The taxpayer is not inclined to subsidize the cost of the courses. The trend is toward golfer-supported courses."

As golf continues to grow, the supply of golfers will have to meet the demands players are creating. While Wyss admits there may be a slowdown in the next 12 months in the development of municipal courses, he speaks glowingly of the long-range future.

"The demand over the next 10 years will be tremendous," he said. "There's a need out there and we need to keep up with it by providing good public facilities."

Bob Seligman is a free-lance writer based in Pomona, N.Y.

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