

GCN launches marketing conclave, int'l editions

CHICAGO — From the day *Golf Course News* was launched, we've billed it as "the newspaper for the golf course industry."

Our objective always has been to inform you on all aspects of the industry. In keeping with that objective, I'm excited to tell you about two "firsts."

As I write this column, *Golf Course News* is in the second day of our first conference venture — marketing products and services to golf facilities. The highlight to this point has been the superintendents panel. Although the session lasted two hours, the unanimous opinion

was that it could have been an all-day session.

Panelists were John Potts, Peoria Park District; Tim Hiers, John's Island Club, Vero Beach, Fla.; Kevin Downing, Willoughby Golf Club, Stuart, Fla., and Roger Stewart Jr., Stonebridge CC, Naperville.

Jack Frost, president of Marketing Resources Group in Elkhorn, Wis., was panel moderator.



Charles von Brecht
publisher

The session also included a panel discussion on the subjects of marketing to management companies and to architects, builders and developers; global marketing opportunities, and environmental marketing.

Andrew Snook of the National Golf Foundation in his introduction used a well-produced video that was shown at Golf Summit 1990.

In another bold move, we have launched a special edition to the international market. *Golf Course News - Europe* was distributed at Golf Course Europe '91 in Wiesbaden, Germany. The response to this issue has been very

positive. Many American and international advertisers participated in this first overseas venture.

We plan to make the marketing conference an annual event, and also hope to publish *Golf Course News - Europe* regularly in the future. Also, our plans call for publication of another special edition — *Golf Course News - Asia* — to be distributed at the Golf Course Asia Conference in Singapore March 26-29, 1992.

As we gear up for 1992, I want to reiterate that we are committed to providing you with all the news for the industry. Please keep your comments and questions coming.

COMMENTARY

Global sharing would help golf industry

Dramatic — and sometimes abrupt — changes throughout Europe and the Soviet Union in the recent past, and a dynamic metamorphosis just ahead among the Common Market countries, have the eyes of the world focused on this part of the globe.

Tentative, yet hopeful, would-be golf course developers are investigating financial angles, environmental obstacles, and political ramifications as the planned European Community draws near its late-1992 deadline for implementation.

The golf industry should continue to hope, and pray, for the best. But at the same time it must be ever mindful of words of wisdom concerning government.

"A government that is big enough to give you all you want is big enough to take it all away," said former U.S. Senator Barry Goldwater.

"Government is an association of men who do violence to the rest of us," said Leo Tolstoy.

"Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state, an intolerable one," was

the assessment of American revolutionary Thomas Paine.

Where does golf stand?

That said, those in the golf industry must look at golf's prospects in the midst of all this political evolution.

Outside the United Kingdom, where golf took root and grew globally, Europeans have just in the last several years started to really "discover" golf.

Though total numbers of golf courses is low, growth rates in some European nations is phenomenal.

From 1986 to 1989, France's number of courses nearly doubled, from 160 to 300. Finland's more than doubled during that time, from 15 to 32, while Sweden's grew from 165 to 260, The Netherlands' from 32 to 52, Italy's from 60 to 105.

The United Kingdom and Ire-



Mark Leslie
managing editor

land remained fairly stagnant during those three years, but business was booming elsewhere.

Where do these countries stand now?

National boundaries will, in many ways, become almost a thing of the past in another year.

Many developers see that as a positive.

Many suppliers to the golf industry do, also.

The idea of a United Europe, or One World Government — and the many doctrines such associations may one day embrace — can be a frightening thought.

People in golf might do well to pray that, being involved in a sport, they are insulated from political changes even if they are a direct partner in social change.

In the meantime, they can learn from shared experience in many areas. They can work cooperatively, share data and research.

They can communicate. What's the latest seed research? The latest information on bentgrass, pesticide leaching, aeration, verticutting, restaurant

and pro shop management? How effective was isolate in saving water on golf course test plots?

Scientists, golf course superintendents, and college researchers are gathering information on myriad such topics worldwide.

How much research is being duplicated and money wasted because information is not shared in one succinct way and one physical place? Probably a ton.

In the United States the U.S. Golf Association in Far Hills, N.J., National Golf Foundation and Professional Golfers Association in Jupiter, Fla., and University of Michigan are clearinghouses for this sort of information.

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America is researching educational needs in other countries and investigating ways to share its agronomic knowledge with others internationally.

Annual conferences like Golf Course Europe, the IoG Sports and Leisure Exhibition, Golf Asia and

Continued on page 13

GUEST COMMENTARY

Courses in dire need of scenic environment

By Stephen J. Rusbar

I have actively played golf for 25 years, having been brought up through the junior ranks and participated in many state and local amateur events. Having played various courses throughout Louisiana and Mississippi, one very noticeable condition has emerged.

As golf courses are built and enter maturity, the new development and construction surrounding them erodes the visual quality and uniqueness these courses possess. Additionally, the course's functional requirements of parking lots, roads, utility buildings and other elements contribute to overall degradation of the visual quality and character of the course.

These elements are a permanent part of every course. But need they be visible?

The visual image, beauty or

character each course projects is tied directly to its scenic surroundings.

If no scenic environment

complements a course, it has no particular uniqueness and, more importantly, the level of enjoyment derived from playing it is minimal.

A major golf course design flaw in practice today that supports this view is the virtual or near total elimination of on-site vegetation during construction. When this occurs, the course is forced to rely solely on off-site plant material to help create its visual image and character. Then, because of the subsequent periphery development, this off-site plant



Stephen Rusbar

material is routinely and systematically reduced to a splattering of miscellaneous trees and shrubs that have no real meaning or environmental impact at all.

The point here is that golf courses in this country would benefit immensely from relying on their own planted material to create, enhance and preserve their uniqueness because plant material in general and trees specifically are the only true physical elements that create scale, add interest and create the uniqueness that golf courses strive to achieve.

Let's face it: golf course construction is about as environmentally sensitive as runway construction. No wonder, then, that the visual appearance of many golf holes resembles that of an airport.

There are more than 140,000 par-4 holes in the United States alone. What separates the good holes from

the crummy? Beauty? Scenic value? Uniqueness? Visual integrity or character? Aesthetics? Are they enjoyable holes that are fun to play?

I am certain it is the hole's design and its relationship to the natural environment that creates the uniqueness and the unforgettable image in your mind.

The intuitive, creative and "plant-wise" designer is an asset golf needs. Trees represent an investment in the course's future, not an expense.

Because trees and support plants greatly influence the design of any golf hole, short-range and long-range tree planting programs or goals need to be established and realized now, so that the visual quality of where we play mirrors the thinking of the creative designer.

Golf course design has to become more ecologically oriented to sur-

Continued on page 13

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