

# Inaugural Buyer's Guide coming your way

Next month at this time, when you settle down to read your new issue of *Golf Course News*, don't be surprised to find a complete, cross-referenced listing of nearly 400 suppliers to the golf course industry. Instead of a December issue, we're sending along our first-ever Buyer's Guide.

Now, don't panic. *Golf Course News* will return in January, complete with a blockbuster special section devoted to the GCSAA show in Anaheim, not to mention the thorough news coverage you've come to expect from this publication.

The Buyer's Guide is actually more of a buyer's companion, providing superintendents, architects, builders and club managers with all their purchasing options. This is a true supplier directory because it doesn't cost a penny to be included.

Competitive directories charge suppliers for space in their guides — this hinders some firms from

taking part, thus rendering the guides incomplete. The *Golf Course News* Buyer's Guide is different because it serves the reader: If you're a supplier of the industry, you're in the guide at no charge.

As you'll discover early next month, the *Golf Course News* Buyer's Guide is a magazine-sized, square-bound publication that will fit nicely on a shelf. It looks nice. But its good looks have a larger, lasting purpose: To provide industry reference assistance for the coming year.

It's indexed by company (in alphabetical order) and product/service, so it's easy to find what you're looking for.

We hope the *Golf Course News* Buyer's Guide helps our readers make more informed purchasing decisions. That's why we've compiled the directory; that's why we'll do



Hal Phillips  
editor

the same thing next year.

However, I would be remiss if I closed this column without addressing the suppliers out there. By the time you read this, it's probably too late to be included in this year's Buyer's

Guide. For those of you who've missed out, bear the following in mind:

- The information in our Buyer's Guide will reach all 22,000, qualified *Golf Course News* subscribers, whereas the competing guide reaches only 11,000.

- And remember: Our subscribers include superintendents, architects, builders, club managers, developers, club presidents, club owners and green chairmen — anyone who's anyone in the golf course industry.

- The *Golf Course News* Buyer's Guide will be delivered



to 7,987 superintendents, and we'll provide bonus distribution at the 1993 GCSAA Show in Anaheim.

We believe it will be useful and warmly received because the Buyer's Guide — like everything we do at *Golf Course News* — is intended to serve the entire golf course industry.

That's all for now. Enjoy the holidays, and we'll see you in January, 1993.

## Why has USGA questionnaire raised so many hackles?

People have taken enough shots at the U.S. Golf Association recently to sink the Good Ship Golf House.

TRACS... Green construction specifications... Tough tournament preparation... But really, folks, in the spirit of friendship, this poll of theirs should be no reason for them to be drawn and quartered.

The USGA is on golf's side, for heaven's sake. It just wants to get to the root of the public's and golfers' perceptions of golf and the environment and today's ever-changing equipment technology.

If you don't know what I speak,

I've gotten calls and faxes from people appalled at USGA's "1992 Golf Opinion Poll." Simply, in a mailing to golfers nationwide recruiting them to join the USGA, Arnold Palmer wrote that one of the association's responsibilities is "to ensure that golf remains a great game for all golfers. To accomplish this goal, the USGA examines key issues that affect the way the game is played."

He asked the golfers to fill out a survey including these four questions:



Mark Leslie  
managing editor

- Should golf courses be forced to stop using pesticides and be shut down if they continue?

- Are you aware that the USGA is sponsoring research to examine the complete impact golf courses have on the environ-

ment?

- Are today's golf equipment manufacturers ruining the challenge of the game, replacing skill with technology?

- Are you aware that the USGA continually examines golf equipment for conformity to

strict rules?

"Since you have more than a casual interest in the game, and will be affected by the USGA's response to these issues, here is your chance to share your thoughts with us," Palmer added.

Some people in the golf industry saw this letter and went up in arms. They apparently equated the questions with condemnation.

Indeed, the industry should have more polls, more solid information on how Americans — even the clients, the golfers — feel about golf courses and

**Continued on page 26**

## Letters

### HYDROJECTIONS

To the editor:

I enjoy reading *Golf Course News*.

The September issue of *GCN* carried an article about the Toro HydroJect. I believe you also printed another HJ article earlier this year, which read more like a press release from Toro.

The HJ is a good machine and has a place in turf management. However, reading some of the promo material originating from the manufacturer, aimed at both Superintendents and players alike, the implication one might get is that the HJ is a cure-all for many of our existing soil problems.

As many in the field are finding out, it is not.

Advertising revenue aside, as a reader I would benefit from a more objective article, similar to one we gave to our Met GCSA membership last month, copy attached.

Patrick Lucas, CGCS

Innis Arden GC  
Old Greenwich, CT

**Editor's note:** When you're right, you're right. The above mentioned story has been reprinted in this month's *Golf Course News*, on page 11.

### REPORT FROM BURNING SANDS

To the editor:

I read with great interest the article about Furnace Creek Golf Course in your August 1992 *Golf Course News*. United States Gypsum Co. maintains one of the few remaining company-owned mining towns in the West. I have been town manager of Empire, Nev., the past 12 years. One of my responsibilities has been the maintenance and upgrading of the nine-hole Burning Sands Golf Course.

The course was started 30 years ago by a group of volunteers who

divided into three teams, each to construct a green. Each green had three holes and they had to play around three times to get in their nine holes. The fairways were sand, hence the logical name, Burning Sands.

Over the years, improvements were made and greens added. The number 2 and 3 fairways were seeded in 1978, the 6 and 7 fairways in 1984. The 1, 2, 3 and 4 greens were opened for play in their present state in 1980.

We have many of the same conditions and problems as Furnace Creek. The soil is alkaline, water is extremely high in mineral content (non-potable) and maximum flow is only 275 GPW, the winds blow almost constantly from the west, and temperatures vary seasonally from 100 degrees to 105 degrees Fahrenheit down to as cold as minus 15-20 F at night in the dead of winter, though winter daytime temps usually are above freezing.

We, too, had the same problems with our sand traps. Available sand is DG (decomposed granite) which crusts over after it gets wet, and good sand merely blows away.

After reading the article and discussing it with the local golf club, we decided to try turf bunkers and will lay sod tomorrow in the number 4 and 7 bunkers. If this is readily accepted by the local golfers, the others will be converted to solve a long-standing problem. Furnace Creek can no longer lay claim to be the only course with turf bunkers.

We have a feature I'm sure no other course can claim. It is open to the general public and it is free ... no greens fees! And, there is no reservation requirement and no waiting list. Though it is open year-round, there is no maintenance after the grass goes dormant.

Kenneth McCurdy,  
town manager  
United States Gypsum Co.

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## Investment pools

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Stewart, who has vast experience wholesaling land. "Good projects can be profitable, even in today's market."

Nicklaus and Marriott, on the other hand, are steering clear of residential golf course development in their new daily-fee pool, according to Clyde Measey, director of Golden Bear's daily-fee golf division.

Golden Bear, Marriott and Merrill Lynch formed a pool earlier this year to build new residential golf course communities, Measey said. They aimed the private place-

ment at institutional investors.

"It became clear very quickly that investors were hesitant to get involved because of the [depressed] real estate market," Measey said.

Realizing investors weren't interested in new construction, Golden Bear and Marriott turned their attention to acquiring existing courses without housing, Measey said. Plans are to buy two to five courses for an average \$5 million apiece over the next 12 months, he added. Golden Bear will make any improvements necessary before turning manage-

ment responsibility over to Marriott.

The two companies will fund their purchases with a combination of conventional financing and private placements with high-income individuals. Merrill Lynch is not involved in this latest venture.

Serious negotiations are underway with several projects, Measey said. The biggest challenge is educating current owners that their properties are worth less than they might have been in the late 1980s, when some foreign investors paid exorbitant prices for U.S. courses, he added.

"They are pricing their courses in the belief that [foreign] money

is still available. It's not. We base our offers on cash flow. Some owners are becoming aware their courses are not worth as much as they thought," Measey said.

At least 10 memoranda are floating around the investment community trying to raise blind pool money for new golf courses or acquisitions, according to Jerry Sager of HJM Corp., a New York investment banking firm involved with golf course projects for 30 years and \$100 million in projects this year alone.

"None of them [blind pools] have been very successful," he said. "Most aren't experienced in golf. They just

want to be in the golf business."

Golf's glamour attracted many investors to the business in the 1980s who had no business being there, Sager said. That's why 234 courses were in default or receivership in early October, he added.

"The best advice I can give [a developer seeking financing] is to get an independent, demand-side feasibility study. What is the market now? What has it been the past five years and what will it be five years from now? The person with a logical business plan and solid numbers will get financing," he assured.

Sager said HJM is considering financing a project in Memphis, Tenn., with The Prestwick Group, a Northbrook, Ill.-based company interested in developing 10 to 15 high-quality, reasonably-priced, daily-fee facilities by 1995. The course is located within a residential development. But it is designed to survive as a stand-alone entity that could meet its debt payments at just 50 percent of anticipated play, according to Prestwick President Brian Mahoney.

"They've done their research and based their decision on the demand for golf in the area. They're building a course with no residential project [dependence]. It will make money. That's not necessarily the case with a lot of the proposed projects out there," Sager said.

Roughly half the Memphis project's financing is debt and half equity, Mahoney said.

"The days of S&Ls funding projects at 120 percent of value are long gone," the Prestwick executive said. "A developer must bring a substantial amount of equity to the table to get the type of financing that is available today."

## USGA survey

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golf equipment.

The purpose of the National Golf Foundation's Golf Summits is to determine where the industry stands in the eye of the American public, decide what directions it should go, and galvanize action.

The American public has Gallop and Harris and a few dozen other pollsters. Hey, let the USGA poll potential members. Can it hurt to find out their feelings?

It can help to know what's muddling around in the heads of golfers — like those in California's San Mateo County, where golfers who belong to another course are among those who have opposed a new county course for 17 years.

You may feel they should be 1) flogged; or 2) educated. But, one thing is certain. The industry must try to understand why they feel the way they do if golf is going to advance in certain parts of the country.

The golf industry knows full well it cannot insulate itself from world opinion. So, let it discover that world opinion and formulate ways to change it.

The *Golf Course News* survey on the toughest and easiest "approvals" states (see page 21) tells us that in exclamation points!!!



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