

Do golf and casino gaming mix? The jury is still out

America has either come a very long way or sunk to its moral depths, but this much can be said without fear of contradiction: Casino gambling is beginning to carve itself a niche in the nation's fastest-growing vacation trend, the family-style destination resort.

Indeed, the idea of changing your average resort into a theme park may have already taken hold. Don't expect the good folks at Disney to install slot machines in Epcot Center anytime soon, but don't be surprised if more traditional vacation spots start buying into the lucrative, low-overhead appeal of gaming.

Las Vegas, because it's the birthplace of modern American gambling, is further along this curve than any of its resort competitors. As it matures further, Vegas will look more and more like a giant, gambling theme park. By day, "fun for the whole family" will mean parents playing golf and shopping; kids frolicking by the pool and indulging themselves in various "theme" activities. The whole brood will get together for dinner, after which the kids will go to bed and parents will make a bee-line for the casino.

Indian tribes across the nation have begun to see gaming as their economic panacea (see story page 1), drawing millions of Americans to out-of-the-way places like Fort Thompson, S.D., and Loughlin, Ariz. Following the lead of Las Vegas — the gambling community's role model — tribes also see gaming as the first step



Hal Phillips,
editor

toward creation of full-service, destination resorts.

You may have gathered I'm not a big fan of organized gambling, which tends to separate cash from the pockets of those who, in general, can least afford to lose it. However, it's impossible to ignore the bright side here, which is the huge potential growth for golf.

The game has long been a favorite of resort developers who must occupy vacationers during daylight hours. Unlike seaside resorts, most Indian reservations have no beach component — making golf even more important to providing outdoor activities.

Golf developers who've spent the last 10 years wading through seas of red tape may salivate uncontrollably at the idea of building courses on land unregulated by local pols. Land on Indian reservations is often plentiful and, because the tribe owns it outright, beyond cheap.

Don't get me wrong: There is money to be made here as golf rides the coat tails of this burgeoning trend. But, developers beware: There are pitfalls that shouldn't be underplayed (see story page 33).

The temptation — as it was in the late-1980s with regard to real estate-based developments — is to seize immediately upon this new golf vehicle before the competition does.

Yet the family-style gaming theme park is not a proven commod-

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Knott's call for return to classic design a worthy crusade

In the beginning: Brown. Unmanicured. Unruly. Natural. Unique. Not bound by rules beyond a tee box, a green and a cup. This is what golf courses were made of.

Today: Green — always green. Grass smooth as a billiard table and fast as a speeding bullet. Holes in multiples of nine. Well-defined. No blind shots. Never (well, hardly ever) two consecutive par-3s. Never (well, hardly ever) two consecutive par-5s. Contrived. This is what golf courses are made of.

Such is the Tale of the Prodigal — The Prodigal Golf Nation, that is. Just as the United States is an evolving analogy of the prodigal son, is not golf as we know it today, at many facilities and in many ways, an analogy of the prodigal son?

Just as the prodigal son left his roots to frolic in the (Egads!) pig stench, among other things, has not Golf Nation departed from its roots?

While it has fallen victim of the "We Can Do It Better Syndrome," the natives are stirring. Many course designers in Golf Nation are now espousing "Back to Basics," calling for a return to "classic design." They may not actually be doing it, but they are espousing it.

A few others are actually Doing It. And, hooray for Hollywood, the president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, Don Knott of Robert Trent Jones II International, has proclaimed this return to the classics as his Number One Call to Duty. Why nine holes, or 18 holes when the land you're dealing with is too small? he asks. Why always have lush green turf? he asks. Why,

Letters

TORO RESEARCHER ANSWERS WALL STREET JOURNAL REPORT

To the editor:

Your May 2 Marketplace article, "Golf Courses Are Denounced as Health Hazards" did a great disservice to the golf industry as well as the emerging group of environmentally responsible turf-care companies working to pioneer new management techniques.

Virtually every superintendent will agree that the turf management practices used on a golf course need to evolve as our understanding of the environmental impact of fertilizers and pesticides grows. Most golf superintendents are well-educated, skilled agronomists anxious to make their

(The above letter to the editor appeared in the June 1 Wall Street Journal. It has been reprinted with the author's permission)

courses environmentally safe for their players, crews and communities.

A new breed of turf nutrition companies is emerging. Their programs use the natural balance in the turf to control infestations and promote improved playability on the golf course. These products use environmentally responsible formulations (and no pesticides) to minimize the impact on the local ecosystem. Many employ "spoon feeding" programs that apply light but frequent doses of liquid nutrients stay in the root zone and less is leached into ground water or runs off into holding ponds.

New diagnostic techniques also can help the superintendent apply only the nutrients and trace minerals needed at that particular time.

All of us associated with the

why, why to scores of little rules man has made over the last 100 years that have narrowed the concept of a golf course to, in effect, rule out the very classics from which golf grew.

In the end, the prodigal son saw the light. He realized the error of his ways, how they led to his destruction. His father welcomed him back home with outstretched arms. The sentinels of Golf Nation would do the same to our own prodigal — wouldn't you say?

...

He has been called sinister, diabolical (or was that "dye-abolical?"), and a savage envisioner of nightmares for golfers. But those who know him, love him. Next winter they can know him better.

Golf course architect extraordinaire Pete Dye, not to be outdone by his author/designer buddies, is coming out with his own book in November (see story, page 32). What will Pete title it? "Bury Me in a Pot Bunker." Appropriate enough. Word is, Pete is leaning toward the subtitle "18 Holes That Changed the Course of the Game." But, how about "Bury My Heart (or Driver or Putter) in Crooked Stick" — and subtitled "PGA (Purgatory Grabs Able-bodied) West Revisited"? — Or "Spitting Upwind in the Teeth of the Dog"? Any ideas?

Meanwhile, Pete is venturing into the world of clothing design. The Bowie, Md., firm Membership Bounce has announced its Pete Dye Architect Series golf shirts, which will consist of signed interpretations of newly created golf holes. His trademark — island

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golf industry recognize that our horticultural practices need to change as our knowledge of environmental pollution grows. Rather that vilify the golf superintendent for past practices, you need to recognize their pioneering work to improve the environment on the course. We will all benefit from that work and still enjoy a good round of golf."

H. Parker Smith Jr., director
Toro Probiotic Unit
Scottsdale, Ariz.

FAUBEL AGREES: GOLFERS SHOULD HELP FUND TURF RESEARCH

To the editor:

Mark Leslie's editorial in the June issue of *Golf Course News* ("It's time for golfers to pay their fair share") is right on target.

Superintendents have worked diligently for years to provide research support so they might pro-

vide better playing surfaces for golfers. The United States Golf Association has probably made the most impact with the millions of dollars it has provided for turfgrass research. The full impact of their efforts will be felt for years to come.

At the present time, the turfgrass industry in Michigan is being used as an example by other traditional agriculture groups for their efforts to raise money for research and extension, an effort which is having a very positive effect on the College of Agriculture & Natural Resources (at Michigan State University).

Ultimately, it is the consumer who pays the bill. However, if the funds are to be raised, it is the responsibility of those within the industry to find the vehicle.

Jerry Faubel, CGCS
Saginaw (Mich.) Country Club



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

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Course cleared in fatal lightning case; liability questions remain

By JONATHAN BROGAN

On July 20, 1990, Tom Fisher and friends Chris Rosengren and Daryl Smith were playing golf at South Portland Municipal Golf Course in South Portland, Maine. South Portland is a small (2,700-yard) daily-fee course which caters, typically, to a less experienced group of golfers.

As Mr. Fisher's group approached the 5th green, the skies darkened and it began to rain. Apparently the rain became quite heavy and Mr. Fisher and his group went to the 6th tee. The 3rd and 6th tees share approximately the same area of the golf course. The 6th tee area is the highest point of the course.

Jonathan Brogan is an attorney with the law firm of Norman Hanson and DeTroy in Portland, Maine. He specializes in trial work and was lead counsel in the case entitled Thomas Fisher v. City of South Portland, detailed above. Brogan represented the city.

Upon arriving, Mr. Fisher and his group noticed the course was virtually empty. It was raining heavily.

Chris Rosengren, Mr. Fisher's best friend, noticed lightning and heard thunder. He did not believe the lightning or thunder to be an immediate threat to the group's safety. Mr. Rosengren and Mr. Fisher discussed their options. Apparently the group decided to "wait out" the storm. Within five to 10 minutes, a lightning bolt struck the tree by which Mr. Fisher was standing, killing him and injuring Mr. Smith. Mr. Rosengren, who had answered the call of nature, escaped unharmed.

Deborah Lee Fisher, Thomas Fisher's widow, filed suit on her behalf and on the behalf of her two children, Lauren and Katherine, alleging the city of South Portland had negligently caused the



Jonathan Brogan

death of her husband.

At trial, the chief argument of Mrs. Fisher's attorney was the city had a variety of options available to it to help protect golfers from lightning. It availed itself of none of those options. The city's contention was simple: Mr. Fisher was a full-grown adult aware of the "awesome power" of lightning who failed, for whatever reason, to use his common sense and leave the golf course during a thunder and lightning storm.

The jury, after deliberating for 2 and 1/2 hours, delivered a verdict which found the city somewhat responsible for Mr. Fisher's death but found, pursuant to Maine law, that Mr. Fisher's responsibility was equal to or greater than the responsibility of the city. The jury found the city not liable for the death of Thomas Fisher.

Needless to say, the litigation costs

associated with this trial were not insubstantial. The plaintiff was able to convince the jury that the city was negligent for failing to do anything to warn Thomas Fisher of the dangers of lightning. The attorneys for Mr. Fisher's estate relied upon Appendix 4 of the USGA Rules which provide, in pertinent part, *as there have been many deaths and injuries from lightning on golf courses, all clubs and sponsors of golf competition are urged to take every precaution for the protection of persons against lightning.*

Despite lengthy testimony concerning the efficacy of the USGA rules to a friendly match on a Friday afternoon on a non-USGA golf course, a jury had to be swayed by the USGA's words asking clubs to invoke "every precaution."

Where does the jury's verdict leave golf course operations and municipalities? Frankly, the jury's verdict did nothing to decide the final issue of responsibility in the event of a lightning storm. It would seem appropriate that every golf course display USGA posters

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Letters

THE GOLF INDUSTRY MUST ORGANIZE, OR 'WITHER'

To the editor:

I always enjoy reading *Golf Course News* as it is informative and timely with respect to what is happening in the golf industry.

In this regard, I was particularly delighted to read Hal Phillips' column about the golf industry's need for a lobbyist in your June issue, as well as Mr. Phillips' response to the *Wall Street Journal's* article, "Golf Courses are Denounced as Health Hazards," on May 2.

Golf has long needed a representative in Washington. The environmentalists are "light years" ahead of us in this regard and as a past, and current, victim of their regulatory policies and sometimes irrational requirements, I'm here to tell you that unless we can gain an equal voice with these people, golf will become a withering sport in the 21st century.

The golf industry has failed to effectively communicate its message for years; i.e., that it is a vibrant, thriving sport that not only aids the environment, but contributes significantly to economic well-being of our citizens, golfers and non-golfers alike.

Proof of that came from your own publication nearly two years ago (Sept. '92 issue) which quantified golf's economic impact. In that issue Peter Blais wrote that "Golf pumps \$17.5 billion into the marketplace." He was reporting on an article published by Frank Mahady of the Massachusetts-based FXM Associates and entitled "Economic Impact of Golf Course Operations on the Local, Regional and National Economy."

The National Golf Foundation commissioned the study for use by developers, golf course owners and others to explain the benefits of golf projects to local, state and regional officials as well as special-interest groups like environmentalists.

The report "confirms the positive benefits of golf previously chronicled in a handful of regional economic impact studies," Blais wrote.

"Golf's \$17.5 billion in direct and indirect economic benefits, combined with its ability to raise adjacent property values, provide green space and add recreational amenities," he said.

He further quoted Mahady, who stated that this multi-billion dollar industry is one of the "most powerful combinations of posi-

tive effects" ever witnessed by a researcher who has done hundreds of economic impact studies for various industries.

"Very few businesses produce these types of numbers and the wide range of benefits provided by golf courses," Mahady continued.

So, why are we failing so miserably to tell our story, and conversely, why are the environmentalists so effective in getting out their messages? Like the NRA (National Rifle Association), the environmental lobby has powerful self-interest groups in Washington and in every state of the Union. Thus, they have forged a strong coalition of forces in this country that is unbelievably effective.

Take, for example, what happened just yesterday here in San Diego. In the primary election, one of the measures on the ballot—Proposition C, proposed to free up the City of San Diego's biggest chunk of open land, known as the North City Urban Reserve.

The measure, which lost narrowly, 54 percent to 46 percent, would have permitted construction of 17,500 homes on a 12,000-acre swath of land stretching from Carmel Valley in the West to Rancho Penasquitos and Rancho Bernardo in the East.

Sadly, even though one half of that 12,000-acre parcel would have been preserved forever as "Open Space," the measure didn't pass because of a well-orchestrated campaign by the environmentalists. Even more sadly, there were four golf courses that were planned to be built in that area if the voters had approved Proposition C.

Your article about sending a lobbyist to Washington should serve as a "wake-up call" to the industry. It is time for the golf industry, and those who profit therein, to send a lobbyist to our nation's capital.

However, until such time as the golf industry acts unitedly on this matter and every state in the Union forms a "Pro-Golf Interest Group," to protect and enhance the industry's goals, having one person in Washington may be like a voice crying in the wind! The lobbyist needs "grass roots" support from all golfers and every association or business in the industry.

Whoever is sent, I hope he/she is well versed in issues at hand!

Don Collett, president
Don Collett & Associates
San Diego, Calif.

Words of Wisdom, in verse, from the Olde Sage

Throughout the land there came a great wail,
A testy problem to solve, with logic and wisdom, wrought to prevail.
Who is the most important in this game of golf? was the cry,
From all corners of the kingdom the answer was heard, "the most important is I."

The clamor went on, for so long it was thought,
The kingdom will fall, and all come to naught.
One day on the links, a wizened olde man, his eyes clear as crystal and a putter in hand,
Though wanting to play, at least one more round, took up his clubs and strode into town.

"Let the word go out across this land," proclaimed the Olde Sage,
"Roust every stable boy and wake every page,
Take note all ye groups in golf, a meeting shall be conducted by the Olde Sage."

Came Saturday next, down at the clubhouse, on the public links land,
His crystal eyes grazing, the Olde Sage held session, with all those on hand.
"Tell me," asked the Olde Sage while he sipped on his ale,
"why are you the most important, in the game of golf, why must your view prevail?"

"Let me speak first, Olde Sage, if I may, I've come to represent the PGA.
"It is our task in this fine old game, to teach the techniques to players young and old, and Provide the wares which are to be sold.
We are the makers of clubs, and tell of the rules, To enjoy this great game, we provide all the tools."

"Let me speak next, Olde Sage, if I may, I've come to represent the CMAA.
"It is our task to serve you, your food and your ale. We schedule your meetings, and parties Divine.
Your clubhouse is perfect both inside and out, our task is so vital without us no doubt,
Your golf would be lacking, and your club bound to fail."

"Let me speak next, Olde Sage, if I may, I've come to represent the GCSAA.
"The keepers of the game that is our charge, the task is vital, the responsibility large.
We Are the keepers of greens, so great, without us, your golf you would hate.
From the trees To the turf, which we diligently mow, come the playing fields of golf, where we make the grass grow."

"Let me speak next, Olde Sage, if I may, I've come to represent the USGA.
"Ensure the game's integrity, that is our quest, fair play and rules are, at our behest.
The equipment we test for distance and groove, that all tools are fair, is our charge to approve.
Tournaments we run, from sea shore to plain, where the roughs will be tough and the greens free from grain.
So let the truth be known, both far and wide, the USGA is the game's invaluable guide."

At last, all had been heard and, the Olde Sage went on to speak.
"Important you are, but TEAM players, are all that I seek"
"To answer the quest, who's the most important in golf? here is my offer,
The answer is ME, for I am the GOLFER."

Dennis D. Lyon, CGCS
Aurora, Colo.

Obituaries Jack Murray, 53

BRADENTON, Fla. — Former United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) research agronomist James "Jack" Murray died in May after a long battle with cancer. He was 53.

Mr. Murray worked with the USDA from 1969-1988 when he retired here with his family for health reasons. His contributions to the turfgrass industry include the development of "Belturf" Kentucky blue and "Belair" zoysia.

Mr. Murray was an active member in the American Sod Producers Association, the Golf



Mr. Jack Murray

Course Superintendents Association of America and the Professional Grounds Maintenance Society. He was also involved with the Turfgrass division (C-5) of the Crop Science Society of America, the

Musser International Turfgrass Foundation and the International Turfgrass Society. Upon retirement, Mr. Murray worked here part-time for Pursley Turf Farms then, as his health permitted, for his own company, Turfgrass Germplasm Services.

He is survived by his wife, Bobbie, and son Paul, 14.