

## Golf industry needs a lobbyist of its own

The golf course industry has a simple but nevertheless enormous problem in our nation's capital. Image and perception are everything in Washington, and golf is sorely lacking on both counts:

- For those of you waiting to see whether the Clinton Administration would follow through with its commitment to reduce pesticide use, you can stop waiting. The legislation was introduced in May and it will be difficult for Congress to stand in opposition.

- The national media increasingly depicts golf courses as flash points in the environmental debate. The *Wall Street Journal* article, "Golf Courses Are Denounced as Health Hazards," run on May 2, is only the most recent example (see my editor-to-editor response at right). As for Paul Harvey... well, don't get me started.

- And despite the monumental growth of public-access golf—and the fact that two-thirds of the nation's courses are open to anyone—the sport is still seen as a pastime for rich, white males who discriminate against women and minorities while erecting their new play-



Hal Phillips,  
editor

grounds atop environmentally sensitive lands or ancient burial grounds.

It's time the golf course industry pools its efforts and resources, and the first step should be a golf-only lobbyist in Washington, D.C.

Now, before I go any further, a word should be said about RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment), the specialty chemical trade association. RISE and its executive director, Allen James, have

done a creditable job representing golf's interest. But the job is too big and RISE has plenty to occupy itself outside the golf realm.

Further, sending a lobbyist to Washington is just what the golf industry needs to pull people and organizations together.

For a while there, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) seemed determined to go it alone. But the superintendents have changed their ways, as exhibited by their recent cooperation with the United States Golf Association (USGA) and

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## It's time for golfers to pay their fair share

Over the years, the entire golf industry has borne the cost of turfgrass research. The United States Golf Association, private industry, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and state and regional chapters have all gone to great lengths to raise money, then given it away to scientists investigating everything from pesticide fate to low-input turfgrasses.

Now it's time for the end-user—the golfer—to pitch in. Golfers are, after all, the beneficiaries of the lifetime of hard work superintendents and their crews devote to creating perfect playing conditions.

The Arizona green industry took a severe blow this spring when two legislators killed legislation that would have assessed 10 cents per round of golf, with the funds bankrolling research. The entire golf industry reeled, stunned by that debacle. Similar legislation is in effect in various states supporting research in citrus, agriculture and other industries. Superintendents and scientists around the country expected to push for this type of law. That may still happen.

But in the meantime, others are undeterred in their own innovative efforts to raise funds.

Dick Stuntz of Alvamar Country Club in Lawrence, Kan., may have pioneered another way to skin this



Mark Leslie,  
managing editor

cat—using mailings to GIN Handicap users to ask for donations for research (see page 13). Stuntz and his green industry colleagues in Kansas should be lauded. They and others must have unique ideas to pass on. We welcome the chance to be a clearinghouse for these ideas, tried or untried. Multiply a \$2 donation by the number of golfers applying for handicaps in America and the potential is truly enormous for the Kansas-type fund-raising alone.

The industry could take the lead from organizers of the Herman Sani Fund in Iowa, which provides scholarships to graduating high school seniors. For 30 years they have raised funds at state tournaments. Sometimes it's voluntary. Other time, a donation is simply added to tournament charges.

There must be myriad solutions to the money problem. One thing is certain: "A worker is worthy of his wages." And scientists from the University of Massachusetts to the University of Arizona continue to solve problems affecting golf courses.

They should get the support they need. And golfers should be among the supporters.

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Earthquakes and mass murders grab the page 1 headlines—and rightfully so. Yet disasters some-

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### WALL STREET JOURNAL REPORT OFF THE MARK

(The following letter was dispatched to the *Wall Street Journal* following its publication of the story, "Golf Courses Are Denounced as Health Hazards," on May 2.)

To the editor,

Headline aside, Timothy Noah's story on golf courses and the environment (May 2) was balanced and thoughtfully researched. However, the contention that golf courses apply seven times more pesticides than do farmers and homeowners is yet another example of political hyperbole.

The farming vs. golf debate (and just who applies more pounds of chemical per treated acre) has raged for some time, and citing the now infamous 1991 study from the N.Y. Attorney General's office has become commonplace. Unfortunately for the environmental lobby, it's the only study in recorded history that supports its argument. Further, the study's lead researcher has long disputed the AG's final "edit," which enabled the study's conclusion to match its initial intent—namely, to paint golf courses as environmentally voracious.

Compared to farmers, golf courses do not apply as much pesticide per treated acre—a fact the British environmental movement has accepted for decades. In addition, if a golf course covers 150 acres, less than half the acreage is actually treated, whereas farmers spread pesticides wall to wall. Furthermore, on golf

Continued on next page

## Letters

### BORDER COLLIES NEEDN'T BE PUREBREDS

To the editor:

In response to your "On The Green" article in the March edition of *Golf Course News*, I have owned a border collie since 1983. His name was Samson. Unfortunately, I had to put him to sleep, because of leukemia, which his mother had also died from. Since his death I was able to find another border collie, named Divits. Border collies were raised to herd sheep, and for the most part they do it instinctively, so doing the same with geese comes as a natural instinct. Both dogs took to chasing geese within a few months after I acquired them. Samson cost me nothing and Divits only cost me \$180.

With Samson, the mention of geese would excite him, and he would start looking everywhere for them. If the geese found their way into a pond, he would follow and chase them, until they would

give up and fly away. When Samson died, I knew I would have to get another border collie, so I went on a search for one. I found a place where they had a border collie with what I think had some husky in him. I was not sure he would take to herding geese as well as Samson had. The first few months he seemed to not even notice the geese, but they sure did notice him. As soon as they saw him, they flew away. After about two months, Divits started chasing animals. By the third month he understood the word geese, and would start looking for them, until he found them. I had another dog, who loves to chase geese.

I guess, what I am trying to tell you is that border collies do love to chase geese, and you do not have to spend \$2,000 for a perfect dog to get rid of geese. I did talk to Richard Marcks, owner of the border collie, Tac, you wrote of in your article, and his dog was trained

exceptionally well. But border collies do tend to obey their masters instinctively, and neither of my dogs has ever gotten into a situation where the geese were going to drown them. His dogs are also trained not to bark, and I have yet to figure out how to keep mine from barking. If you do not have \$2,000 to buy a dog to rid the golf course of geese, I would still recommend a border collie, just one you will have to train yourself.

Thomas F. Dale, CGCS  
Radnor Valley Country Club  
Villanova, Pa.

### CAPTURING THE 'FLAVOR OF THE WADSWORTH WAY'

To the editor:

I would really like to thank you for writing such a wonderful article about Wadsworth, its legacy and the people who have had the opportunity to be associated with this outstanding firm. Not only

was your article accurate, but was extremely well written and I think that it encompassed the flavor of the Wadsworth Way.

I am particularly grateful that you mentioned that Mr. Wadsworth and the Wadsworths' team-work being on a spiritual level. Because, you know when all is said and done the most important things are relationships between people, not money or power or status or recognition and I truly think the most successful people in the world are the ones that are the most humble.

Mr. Wadsworth has been able to demonstrate that when you place the clients' needs above yours and also above all else, you will succeed.

Your article portrays this very nicely. All in all, it was a wonderful article.

Craig Schreiner  
ASGCA, ASLA  
Kansas City, Mo.

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# Now's time to reeducate golfers, and ourselves

By DAMIAN PASCUZZO

We all seem to be in agreement that the golf course of tomorrow will be simple, environmentally unobtrusive and economical. Maintenance will be greatly reduced and fewer chemicals will be used. Rough and other out-of-play areas will be unirrigated, thus saving on water usage. Hazards will be areas gone to native plants, sand wastes or wetlands. Cattails and rushes will grow at the edges of water hazards.

The course will be cheaper to build and maintain, and the green fees, if it is a public course, may be incrementally lower. The course will be walked by a more fitness-minded golfer and no one will feel pressured to take a cart.

To those who like their landscaping formal and ornamental, the future could be disappointing. Gone will be timber bulkheads around greens, flower beds, fountains, and uniformly lush green grass in every fairway. The homogenization of courses will disappear. Players who go on vacation to the beach or mountains will find those courses nothing like the ones they left at home. Whatever the character of the original land (open hills, woods, marsh, dunes or desert) that character will remain.

Don Knott, the new president of the

*Damian Pascuzzo is a lead designer with Robert Muir Graves Limited in Walnut Creek, Calif.*

American Society of Golf Course Architects, has suggested a return to a less structured arrangement of holes which will allow many sites to be developed that are presently considered unsuitable. There may not be two returning nines (George Thomas wrote in the 1920s that this concept almost always compromises design). There will be no guaranteed number of par 3s, 4s and 5s, or their lengths. There may even be an odd number of holes instead of the predictable nine or 18.

Yes, this means golfers may not always have a standardized par-72 score like the Tour pros on television. So, they might be forced to go to match play, to pick the ball up, to move around the course at a much faster pace — and probably enjoy the game more.

So, if we all believe this is the right direction, why do we seem to be edging into this brave tomorrow at a snail's pace? The general fear seems to be the golfer simply won't buy it. If that is the case, why do so many American players make pilgrimages to St. Andrews, the very model (ironically enough) of the course of tomorrow, and come away saying, "This is the way golf should be."

No, the public isn't the problem. It's us... architects, developers, golf pros, course superintendents and the golf media. It's we who taught the American golfer to like



Damian Pascuzzo

lush, perma-green parkland courses, to think that zippy little golf cars are a big part of the fun, and to believe that it's okay to learn the game right on the course with no sense of rules, etiquette or the rudiments of a swing.

Since we taught golfers the wrong way, it's up to us to reeducate them now.

Developers of golf-residential projects have always assumed homeowners wanted a seamless blending of manicured turf into their front yards. Now we find homeowners turning their yards into wildflower meadows and planting unthirsty vegetation. Maybe these residents are ahead of us. What's wrong with natural rough separating the course from the backyards?

PGA professionals could do a lot to educate their players on what a true course should be. Pros should be the ones to instruct new players in rules and etiquette, on speedy play, on responsibilities in course maintenance like fixing divots, and, of course, in developing a good enough swing that the player can keep the ball reasonably in play.

If there is a transition away from the golf car, pros should lead the way, convincing a new generation of golfers that the course can be played more successfully and enjoyably on foot.

Superintendents can do much to lead the march away from the "green is beautiful" obsession. For instance, many courses that get heavy play would profit from planting Bermudagrass, but there is a concern play-

ers will resist the plant's brown winter phase. Superintendents can help educate players on how the obsession with green and the idea the ball must be playable anywhere on the course is not what golf is about.

The golf media's support of this movement (sometimes called naturalism) is essential. Despite the ink invested in the phenomenon of naturalism, the new and old course rankings still line up with the "green is beautiful" crowd. Why shouldn't there be style points in rankings for natural beauty, a "good walking course," minimal maintenance and chemical usage, and low green fees?

Bringing naturalism criteria into the rankings would change things overnight. And why not regular features in the golf press on the new drift in golf course design?

Certainly, we golf course architects must assume some responsibility. It is true we serve the client. But that doesn't excuse us from the responsibility of wise counsel on environmental matters, low maintenance, and selling the game as an adventure for the golfer, not just another numbers exercise.

We also can, through our national association, pressure the media to start evaluating and ranking courses on some criteria other than biggest, costliest and greenest.

The important thing is that we're all in this together. No single group within the golf industry can, alone, change the public's attitude. It serves all of our interests to develop as many courses as possible within the environmental constraints we face and the scarcity of quality land.

But the job requires a massive attitude adjustment to get everybody under the tent — an education process that will require all of our best efforts.

So, what are we waiting for?

## Phillips commentary

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joining RISE.

Funding the lobbyist would be shared among the various golf organizations, a veritable flood of acronyms in pro-active cooperation: GCSAA, USGA, NGF, PGA, PGA Tour, LPGA, ASGCA. Sharing the cost of a golf lobbyist would do more to bring these groups together than anything the Sierra Club might do.

Once the lobbyist has been hired and sent to the "Seat of Power," there should be two main messages; one for legislators and the general public, the other for the golf industry itself.

- Our new lobbyist should concentrate on conveying the following message to Congress and the public at large: Man owns land. Man wants to make money. Man might develop a mall or upscale condo complex. Or man might develop a golf course. But the land will be developed... Which would you rather have: An asphalt jungle or grassy open space?

- The second message will be harder, because we in the golf course industry must heed it: Basically, the industry in general and manufacturers in particular must get out in front of the environmental debate.

Chemical manufacturers have been doing this for some time because they have been under attack from the start. But make no mistake: Fertilizers, aerators, golf cars and mowers will be next.

Don't wait for the green movement to set its sites on your segment of the industry. Start promoting the environmental safety of your products right now. Don't merely position yourselves as "environmentalist" — position yourselves as "pro-actively environmentalist." Big difference. And don't be afraid to discuss how much better, how much safer your products are now compared to 20 years ago. Don't be afraid of this perceived admission of guilt.

That's what our lobbyist will tell us.

Let's hire him and give him listen.

## Journal response

Continued from previous page

courses, pesticides are applied to areas covered with turfgrass, one of nature's most effective filtration systems. Farmers apply the stuff to more porous, tilled soil, through which liquid pesticide treatments leech far more easily.

No one dares pooh-pooh the findings of Iowa State University epidemiologist Dr. Burton Kross, whose study showed elevated levels of cancer in golf course superintendents who died between 1970 and 1992. However, those superintendents cited in the study worked on golf courses during the 1950s and '60s, when arsenic- and mercury-based chemicals were commonplace — on farms and golf courses. The federal Environmental Protection Agency has seen fit to ban these compounds.

The EPA has also seen fit to approve the chemicals currently applied on golf courses. Golf course superintendents follow label instructions religiously, more strictly than any other applicator group, including farmers, pest control operators, roadside vegetation managers and lawn care workers (Source: Sandoz National Environmental Poll 1994, conducted by the Gallup Organization). I think it's also fair to assume golf course superintendents are more careful applying chemicals than the average homeowner, who has no agronomic training or unannounced visits from OSHA.

It's interesting this argument almost always pits farming against golf; man's most revered profession against a pastime of rich, white males. It's an attack on elitism as much as anything else. But while we're on the subject, how many farm-related bird kills has the N.Y. state department of conservation recorded since 1971?

Hal Phillips, editor  
Golf Course News



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