

Commentary

# Lifetime tee times can be can of worms

By SCOTT MARLOWE

The City of Lake Worth has a problem which, considering all the uproar it has received, is taking on the controversial dimensions of a tax or utility rate hike.

The municipality granted, in effect, "lifetime" tee times to about 100 golfers during the 1980s. Now, other local golfers

are up in arms. "It's not fair," says Alvan Rikkola, representing the opposition citizens group. "It's a buddy-buddy system... Those people — who don't pay any more than anyone else — have those slots for life and can pass them on to whomever they choose."

Lake Worth Mayor Rodney Romano has joined the debate — along with the entire City Commission: "It doesn't sound fair. I want someone to justify this."

City Golf Director, Robert Metzler, explains the guaranteed tee times evolved when members of his staff used to post a starting sheet at 6 a.m. and were met by golfers who had been lining up for tee times at 5:30 a.m. The staff began posting the roster earlier and earlier, but people still got there — as early as 2:00 a.m. — to sign up for their favorite tee time.

Sometime around 1981, the City decided to grant preferred

Saturday morning tee times to the regular players when they discovered that it was consistently the same group of people who were camping out on the golf course's doorstep.

The interesting aspect of this dilemma is that preferred tee times are normally an aspect of private or semi-private golf course operations. Such clubs normally charge a membership fee, or Deposit on Membership Privileges (a relatively new practice which is becoming increasingly popular with golf facility developers and club members) for considerations

like premium starting times.

"It's unusual for municipal facilities to pursue a policy that competes with the private business sector," comments Tony Marlowe, a former president of the Middle-Atlantic Section of the PGA. "I don't think that a municipal authority should institute any program which favors specific individuals."

Marlowe may have a point. It's common knowledge that public golf courses in the New York City area routinely see golfing patrons line up in the wee hours of the morning to secure coveted tee times. A "first-come, first-served" starting time policy is a matter of tradition in municipal golf course management.

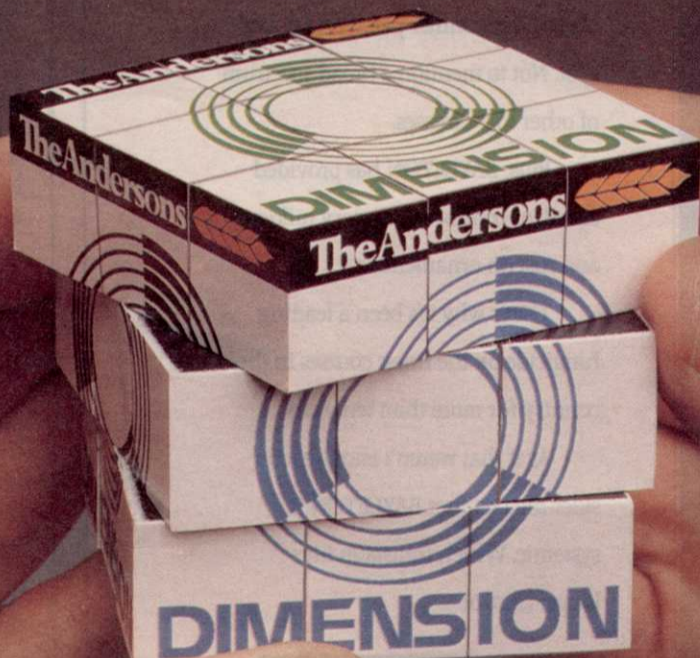
"The City's policy may not be defensible," observes Bill Strausbaugh, Jr., a club relations expert, "especially when there is technology like automated tee time systems readily available. It seems to me that this would be a much more equitable solution to their problem."

An automated tee time system is a computer which the golfer dials up, at a golf course or service bureau, on a touch-tone telephone. He or she can book a starting time by keying in numbers on the telephone key pad. Tee times booked in this way are usually guaranteed to a major credit card. These services are typically well received in areas where golf is in high demand.

Similar technology is used in the airline industry to book travel reservations and at some banks where depositors can call in to check account balances and pay their bills.

However Lake Worth resolves its problem, the City is certain to wind up with continued friction. According to Vice Mayor, Daniel Shepard: "Maybe longevity has some merit. No matter what we do, we're not going to satisfy everyone."

## With the right combination of Tee Time<sup>®</sup> plus Dimension<sup>®</sup>, your problems are solved.



**S**olving the puzzle of weed problems on a golf course requires the right combination of professional experience, proven skill and reliable product performance. With The Andersons' selection of mini-granular Tee Time fertilizers with new DIMENSION herbicide, you've got the formulas you need to keep your course in peak, weed-free condition.

An early, pre-emergent application of Tee Time fertilizer with DIMENSION can set up an effective, season-long defense against weed growth, while simultaneously delivering important turf nutrients.



And with The Andersons' proprietary mini-granular sizing process, you get product uniformity that provides:

- "No-stick" uniform application
- Superior ballistic characteristics for efficient distribution

- Reduced dustiness
- Excellent flexibility for a wide range of rate settings

Find out more about Tee Time fertilizers with DIMENSION and how you can keep your turf growing healthy without letting weeds cause you problems.

the professional's partner<sup>®</sup>  
**The Andersons**  
 1-800-225-ANDY

**The Andersons.**  
 Uniformly the best in the business.

©DIMENSION is a registered trademark of Monsanto Company  
 ©Tee Time, ©1993 The Andersons

## LinksCorp adds Alabama course to portfolio

NORTHLAND, Ill. — Links Corp. has added two additional courses to its portfolio: The Glenlakes Golf Club near Gulf Shores, Ala., and Hickory Hill Golf Club near Biloxi, Miss.

Links Corp. officials indicated the firm plans to immediately add 9 holes to Glenlakes and to significantly upgrade the facilities at Hickory Hill. Glenlakes and Hickory Hill expand the Links Corp. stable of courses to six.

LinksCorp is owned by management and three venture capital firms; Batterson, Johnson & Wang, and William Blair Venture Partners of Chicago and Norwest Venture Capital of Minneapolis.