

Golf Course Expo, not just another trade show

Almost exactly one year ago, *Golf Course News* announced the launch of Golf Course Expo, the only trade show and conference for owners, managers and superintendents at public-access golf facilities. Almost immediately, we heard the familiar chorus: "Geez, not another trade show!" Apparently, this was a repeating chorus, because we've confronted this refrain many times over the last 12 months.

This is a touchy subject because, to be perfectly candid, there are too many trade shows in the golf course industry. No wonder people are tired of them. Most are ill-defined, misdirected and focused at the wrong end of the industry.

When thinking about Golf Course Expo, the proper refrain shouldn't be, "Geez, another trade show," but rather, "Wow, a new market!"

Truth is, until this year, there

has been only one trade show that successfully serves its market sector on a national basis. The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) show has catered to the private club market extremely well for many years, and only a foolhardy organization would attempt to compete with GCSAA on this front.

But there is another, larger front to consider: Public-access, i.e. daily-fee, resort and municipal courses.

Private golf clubs, while they represent a strong portion of the golf market, account for only one-third of the nation's golf facilities. Further, the number of private clubs is dropping, according to National Golf Foundation statistics, while the number of public-access facilities is growing



Hal Phillips,
editor

hand over fist — a full 80 percent of the courses opened over the last five years have been public access.

Put simply, the market is changing. Already, two-thirds of the 14,600 golf courses in America are public-access.

Serious change is difficult for any industry to accept, much less foresee. However, as *Golf Course News* has been reporting for more than three years, public-access represents the future for this market — and golf course owners, associations and manufacturers will ignore this at their peril.

Even GCSAA has acknowledged the shift with its new concentration on attracting members from the public-access sector (see story, page 1).

In one way, Golf Course Expo is just another trade show. But

it's the only trade show that targets the largest, fastest-growing portion of the golf course industry. And this majority portion of the market has distinct needs; needs that aren't currently being served; needs that will be met at Golf Course Expo.

For example, exhibitors need to understand that buying patterns are different in the public-access sector. Put simply, owners and managers at public-access facilities have more input than their counterparts at private clubs. Appropriately, owners, CEOs and general managers account for a full 47 percent of the Golf Course Expo attendee list.

From an educational standpoint, superintendents and owners at public-access courses have different needs. Ask superintendents who, during their careers, have cared for both daily-fee and private courses. They will tell

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We mustn't forget: Greens, rootzones are living organisms

It's hard to believe the claim that sports field contractors are more diligent than golf course builders about using quality root-zone mix (See page 1 story).

As architect Bob Cupp said about scrutinizing the root-zone delivered to his projects: "Billy Fuller, my agronomist, will shame the contractor into performance, and most of them don't need it."

"The certified members of GCBA [Golf Course Builders Association of America] are all terrific. They're great. When we say we want to do something, they do it."

"Besides," he added with a laugh, "if they didn't, Billy'd maim 'em."

A major part of the problem is the simple fact that builders are dealing with living organisms in this process of greens construc-

tion. They're blending peat moss — which is fairly acid (3.0 pH) — with silica sand or calcareous sand that is inert and, if it's calcareous, has a pH of 7.8 to 8.2 or higher. The organic matter hasn't broken down because of its acidic environment. But now it is placed in a neutral environment where it will start to break down. Plus, fertilizers and water will be added to the equation.

Does anyone know what this recipe evolves into?

Could be a good research project for some enterprising university professor or PhD candidate.

Until then, is the golf industry putting its superintendents in a crap shoot? Sounds to me like that old schoolyard game, Dodge



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

Ball... better known in some parts — and perhaps more aptly — as War Ball.

"My fundamental feeling is that the most important thing to having great putting greens is to have a great superintendent,"

said Mike Hurdzan, a golf course architect and PhD guy himself. "We have seen superintendents grow every kind of bentgrass you can think of on every kind of material you can think of, and if the guy understands his craft, you are going to have great greens."

No matter how well constructed a putting surface is, if the super isn't "lucky enough to understand what's happening in this organic soup, he could have problems," he said.

Hurdzan said the biggest prob-

lems he has seen in root-zone mixes have been in the micronutrient balance. "It's never the big things that are out of kilter," he said. "It's the little things — the magnesium, the manganese, the copper, the trace elements. Magnesium is the one I see the most often. It causes a problem with establishing greens in that there is usually a magnesium imbalance — especially with calcareous sand, which is high in calcium, low in magnesium, and in that imbalance the center of the chlorophyll molecule is magnesium."

"You have to have magnesium there for the plant to make chlorophyll. So we end up using epsom salts in order to try to balance that out. It's a matter of taking soil tests, using your knowledge of how grass looks, taking a calcium-to-magnesium ratio and making adjustments."

Did you all stay with that? We'll have a short quiz in the next issue.

•••

Ask when they first decided they wanted to design golf courses and some present-day architects sound like golf's answer to the kid who decides he wants to be a firefighter and ride that big red machine.

• Said Dr. Michael Hurdzan, who earned bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees all with the goal of designing golf courses: "I knew [my career] from the time I was 13 and went to work for Jack Kidwell and saw a golf course laid out on an aerial photo. I was so captivated by what I saw that, even at 13, I said that was what I wanted to do. No question, that's where I was headed."

• The defining point of the life of Jan Beljan, a lead designer for

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Letters

FROM THE LOST & FOUND DEPARTMENT

To the editor:

I noted with great interest an article on Fort Wayne's (Fla.) Pine Valley Country Club's appreciation party for the grounds crew [GCN September '94]. That was great.

But what struck my fancy was the man who was instrumental in putting the party on, Mr. Hughie Johnston. Hughie played for at least 10 years for the Fort Wayne Zollner Piston fast-pitch softball team.

Mr. Johnston is in the Hall of Fame. And in the opinion of the team I played for, the State Farm Chiefs, Hughie

was the greatest all-around player in the world.

He played first base (with a fielder's glove) and was the best hitter I ever faced. And most of all, he was a fine gentleman.

It's no surprise to me that he is a "force on the course!" I congratulate him — again!

Don MacPhail
Green Chairman
Sugar Mill Country Club
New Smyrna Beach, Fla.

Ed. After years of trying but failing to locate Mr. Johnston, Mr. MacPhail finally located him after reading the above-mentioned story. Though we don't see ourselves as being in the reunion business, Golf Course News is glad to have been of service.

THE PLEASURE WAS ENTIRELY OURS

To the editor:

Please accept our sincere thanks for your Tee Sponsor donation at the 1994 Scholarship & Research Tournament [Sept. 20, Cape Arundel Golf Club, Kennebunkport, Maine].

This money will go a long way in helping a future turf student's education and diagnosing turf problems.

Again, thanks for your contribution.

Patrick E. Lewis, CGCS
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president

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