

The conditioning judgment call

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in worse and worse shape for several years and began to drop. Pebble Beach [Golf Links in California] began to slide down, then the owners pushed a lot of money into maintenance, and two years ago it went back up to Number 2."

Despite its "craginess," Cypress Point [in Pebble Beach, Calif.] gets good numbers in conditioning "because people understand the nature of that beast," Whitten said. "We're concerned about the areas you are supposed to play. We don't care if rough is dry and brown."

Referring to *Golf Digest's* article "Places To Play 1994-95," Colonial Charter's Staughton said to the magazine's president: "To have someone call my golf course 'a dog track' is obviously taken as a slap in the face. My staff is taken aback, upset, and disgusted by the comments. *Golf Digest* has damaged my integrity and reputation..."

In its brief five-year history Colonial Charters has hosted the Myrtle Beach Open, Myrtle Beach Invitational and Carolinas Open Championship once each; Carolinas Senior Championship three times; and Carolinas Junior/Senior Championship and NCAA Big South Conference Championship four times each. "I hardly think 'a dog track' would be allowed to host the above tournaments," Staughton said.

Whitten said the one thing that concerns him is equating condition with green speed. "A lot of our panelists think if a green Stimps at 12 that's great conditioning. Others think 12 is ridiculous," he said.

Some superintendents complain courses that spend the most for maintenance automatically get higher rankings. "That's one main reason so many modern courses are getting ranked so highly," Doak said.

There probably is some truth to that charge, Whitten admitted. "Eights and 9s go to big-budget courses. Sixes and 7s are excellent for other courses. It's not that these courses have an unfair advantage. They are spending the money to meet the demands of their clientele. The Vintage Club probably is the most immaculately maintained course in the world. I've heard they allocate \$1 million just for flowers. But it fell off the 100 Greatest list. So, if it were simply money spent, Vintage Course would be No. 1.

"There is a check-and-balance."

Golf Digest panelist and superintendent Terry Buchen, a *Golf Course News* consultant whose Double Eagle Golf Club in Galena, Ohio, Whitten called "micromanaged," said the poll does not put too much stress on conditioning.

"I can see right through things

like aerification," he said. "The big thing I notice is an exaggeration—if a course is well maintained one year and not the next. Most are usually consistent, or they get better. Certainly the top 10 are good consistently. The only time they get worse is because of bad weather."

Buchen said he does take a course's maintenance budget into account, and tries to talk to the superintendent and play the course with him. "He knows more about the course than anyone. I pick his brain about maintenance, membership and

design objectives."

Yet, for all the dispute over rating a course's condition, architect Jeff Brauer of GolfScapes in Arlington, Texas, said: "The truth of it is, the average panelist would be subconsciously including it somewhere... Maintenance is important. But, on the other hand, when I played Royal Melbourne a year ago it wasn't in great condition, but I was able to see its qualities of greatness. You mentally factor in the [au natural] conditioning of courses in Scotland or Australia.

Nicklaus Golf realigns GolfTurf

HONG KONG—GolfTurf, the agronomic wing of Jack Nicklaus Golf Services, is undergoing a personnel shuffle, but rumors of its demise are wrong, according to a company spokesman.

Nicklaus Communications Director Andy O'Brien confirmed Tyge Shields, Jay Sprohl and John Hamilton have left the company. President Ed Etchells, who has been mainly based in the

United States, will take on more international work, O'Brien said. Etchells will also continue to work with courses he has spent a long time with stateside.

John Scott, who has been involved in a number of Asian projects, will oversee most of the domestic work, O'Brien said.

Nicklaus maintains offices in Singapore, Manila, New Delhi and here.



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