

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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PALMER KICKS OFF EXPO

Arnold Palmer addresses attendees at the inaugural Golf Course Expo, which drew 1,500 public-access decision-makers to Orlando, Fla. For a complete rundown on the show and conference, see pages 10 and 62.

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USGA, wildlife groups cooperate on research

By MARK LESLIE

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Extensive research investigating golf courses as ecosystems will be undertaken as early as this fall, thanks to funding from the U.S. Golf Association (USGA) and enthusiastic support from several environmental organizations.

After a meeting here with environmentalists, Ron Dodson, president of the Audubon Society of New York and chairman of the USGA Wildlife Subcommittee, said: "The col-

lective agreement of all those attending was that instead of spending so much time looking at particular species, we should be looking at golf courses as ecosystems.

"And we should focus our attention on ecosystems where there are many golf courses and lots of potential for new courses to be built — like Florida, California, New England and the coastal mid-Atlantic region."

Enthusiased by the input

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Summit illustrates need for image-building PR campaign

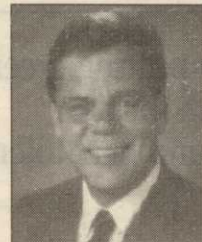
By HAL PHILLIPS

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — The recent Golf Summit yielded this stark realization: Poor public image stands as the single largest hindrance to golf industry growth.

If image isn't everything, it's darn close. Many still consider golf a pastime of rich, white males. Whether this assessment is less accurate than it was in, say, 1970, is irrelevant. The public at large has this perception, and it's particularly damaging because it adversely affects golf's other two major obstacles: the environment and player development.

This became crystal clear during Golf Summit '94, the two-day strategy session sponsored by the National Golf Foundation (NGF) here in November. In response, Summit attendees agreed that golf

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Joseph Beditz



Pinehurst Plantation is one of the private clubs in the Golf Communities USA portfolio.

Golf Communities USA bucks public trend

By PETER BLAIS

ORLANDO, Fla. — Golf Communities USA President Warren Stanchina has always run against the tide.

When everyone was building private golf course communities in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Stanchina was buying and selling daily-fee facilities. "I usually made money," said the head of the Orlando, Fla.-based firm.

Now it's the 1990s. The consensus is that daily-fee developers are the

king and private course developers the jesters. While some may view Stanchina's recent purchases of several high-profile private course communities as the acts of a fool, he plans on laughing all the way to the bank.

"The United States is fast becoming a two-class country, the rich and the poor," he said. "That's why affordable, private courses will boom in the late 1990s. There are simply too many up-

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The Ratings Game

What's fair, and has it affected design?

By MARK LESLIE

The good, the bad and the ugly. The dramatic and the costly. The bells and whistles — and foghorns. Golf course rankings have helped create them all.

"We accept some of the credit for elevating standards of golf architecture — which is good for the game and the business — and some of the blame for the escalating costs of architecture and, therefore, golf," said *Golf Digest* rating guru Ron Whitten.

"A lot of courses are built to make a great initial impression," said *Golf* magazine rating coordinator Tom Doak, himself a course architect. "Unfortunately, the surge of popularity of rankings has tended to obscure [the fact that] a golf course is not built so someone goes there once. Does the course have lasting value? Is it going to be better to play the 10th time than the first? Or is it going to get old really fast?"

The consensus is that the mere existence of the *Golf*, *Golf Digest* and other course rankings has meant more competition between architects — and devel-

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Should
Conditioning
Be Judged? p. 44

Mark Leslie photo