

# Golf Course Marketplace

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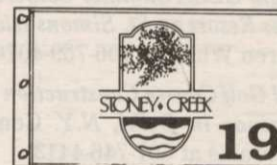
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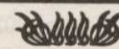
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## Golf tax case

Continued from page 1

have their days in Collier County Circuit Court, and lawyers for Quail Creek are hoping to gain relief through state statute.

"What I'm trying to do now is fight the battle in the Florida Legislature, trying to put golf courses in a different tax category," said Larry Farrese, the Naples-based attorney representing Quail Creek, who noted that Illinois and New York already have such laws on the books. "The difference of opinion on these appraisals is substantial. At Quail Creek, we had a difference of \$3.4 million."

The case stems from assessments conducted by the Collier County Property Appraisers Office in 1993, when the county valued Quail Creek at \$10.4 million. The club retained Harrisburg, Pa.-based Golf Property

Analysts and received a second opinion of \$7 million — a serious discrepancy, especially for a member-owned club.

Abe Skinner, lead appraiser for the Collier County Property Appraisers Office, declined comment on the Quail Creek matter, citing the pending lawsuits brought by the other 11 clubs.

According to Farrese, there are three basic ways to assess golf course property:

- The Cost Method, whereby one estimates what it might cost to build the facility — course, housing, clubhouse — then depreciate to what it might cost today.

- The Market Method, whereby one takes note of recent golf course sales in the same market, then makes adjustments to reflect the particular attributes of the course in question.

- The Income Method, whereby one simply determines the income generated by the property.

"The county just used the cost approach, and that's why it came in with such a high number," Farrese opined. "When a developer builds a course, he puts a lot of money into amenities so he can attract real-estate buyers. Lots on the course are worth more than those that aren't. When he sells the lots, he transfers the golf club to its members.

"That's what happened at Quail Creek. The developer gets his \$10 million back. But the members don't get the value of all the lots."

Farrese said his client feels the county should have used a combination of the three methods to determine fair market value. He added that, in its assessment, Golf Property Analysts used all three approaches but emphasized the income method because that's the way management companies appraise golf course properties.

According to Farrese, the Florida Department of Revenue suggests use of the cost approach for two very practical reasons: 1) It's the easiest method and the state has more than 1,100 courses to appraise; and 2) Assessments tend to run higher, which means more tax revenues.

"We have major philosophical differences as to how the county appraises these properties," Farrese said. "Having used the cost approach, the county didn't depreciate the courses at all. We feel very strongly they do depreciate — you have to replace greens, tees, etc.

"The county should have used all three approaches and placed some weight to all three, instead of putting all the weight on one approach, which we believe is the worst approach given a choice."

While the remaining 11 courses weigh their chances in court, Farrese and Quail Creek

have taken their case to the politicians in Tallahassee.

Illinois' Green Belt legislation is the model statute for Farrese and Quail Creek. In Illinois, golf courses have been placed in a lower tax category because they're considered green space. For developers, it's more a disincentive to build strip malls than an incentive to build golf courses.

In New York, legislation was spurred by municipal assessors valuing courses as if they were being sold for another use, the most expensive possible use. The golf course in question argued successfully that it should be assessed as a golf course only, not a future use.

In Maine, legislation allows golf courses to sign an agreement barring any future development on the site. By preserving the open space in perpetuity, golf courses are granted sizable tax abatements.

**CALENDAR**

**July**

20-21 — *Field Diagnosis of Insects and Diseases on Trees and Shrubs in Long Island, N.Y.* Contact New York State Arborists Ass'n at 518-783-1322.

21-22 — *Sports Turf Ass'n Annual Field Day in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.* Contact 519-763-9431.

25 — *Midwest Regional Turf Foundation Regional Turf Field Day in West Lafayette.* Contact 317-494-8039.

26 — *University of Georgia Turfgrass Field Day in Griffin, Ga.* Contact 404-228-7300.

26-28 — *Turf Producers International Summer Convention in Omaha.* Contact Doug Fender at 800-405-TURF.

30-Aug. 1 — *International Lawn, Garden and Power Equipment Expo in Louisville, Ky.* Contact 800-558-8767.

**August**

2-3 — *Minnesota Turf and Grounds Foundation Expo '95 in Mendota Heights, Minn.* Contact Scott Turtinen at 612-473-0557.

3-5 — *Turf Diagnostic Course in Ithaca, N.Y.* Contact Joann Gruttadaurio at 607-255-1792.

6-8 — *Georgia GCSA Summer Conference at Sea Palms Resort on St. Simons Island.* Contact Karen White at 706-769-4076.

8 — *Annual Golf Course Construction and Design Seminar in Delhi, N.Y.* Contact Dominic Morales at 607-746-4413.

16 — *Ohio Turfgrass Foundation Field Day in Columbus, Ohio.* Contact Julie Guenther at 614-261-6750.

17 — *Michigan Turfgrass Field Day in East Lansing.* Contact Kay at 517-321-1660.

23 — *Turf Talk '95 in Chandler, Ariz.* Contact Garden West at 602-233-2966.

**September**

7-8 — *Southwest Horticultural Trade Show in Phoenix, Ariz.* Call 602-966-1610.

19-21 — *Virginia Tech Turf and Landscape Field Days in Blacksburg, Va.* Contact David Chalmers at 703-231-9738.

**November**

9-10 — *Golf Course Expo in Orlando, Fla.* Contact Golf Course News Conference Group at 207-846-0600.

\* For more information contact the GC-SAA Education Office at 913-832-4430.

**Siena College study**

Continued from page 3

defining what species are present and their level of diversity. This will be performed from 1995-97. "A golf course habitat could potentially attract a different species than if the land were not managed," Woolbright said. "One of our goals, then, is to increase native species of plants and wildlife."

• Long-term monitoring of populations and processes, like stream flow and chemistry, to determine the effects of management practices. "We need to look specifically at water chemistry changes during times of application. We will work very closely with Schuyler Meadows to time our studies with their management practices," Woolbright explained.

• Experimental manipulation, beginning in 1998. "Once we know everything that is there, where it is and how it reacts to management practices, we could recommend alternatives and methods we think would have a beneficial effect," Woolbright said. "And we would measure the effects of changes in those practices."

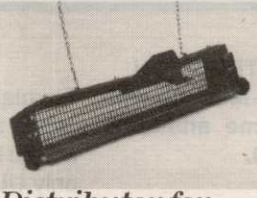
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## ADVERTISERS' INDEX

Cir.#	Advertiser	page
121	18th Green Bent Grass	28
133	Anderson Instruments	41
115	Aquamaster	20
111	Aquatrols	16
120	Aquatrols	26
119	Club Car	25
155	Colorado Lining Co.	44
154	Continental Bridge	44
124	Cushman, Ransomes America Corp.	30-31
130	Deltran Corporation	37
109	E-Z-GO	12
152	Eagle Golf & Landscape Products	44
164	Enwood Structures	45
151	Excel Bridge Mfg.	44
137	Flowtronex/PSI	46
127	Fore Par	34
157	Formost Construction Co.	44
116	Fox Valley Systems	21
—	Golf Course Expo	47
153	Harrington/Harco Corporation	44
139	Jacobsen	48
117	Jacobsen	22-23
156	Jesco Products/Pinhigh	44
110	John Deere	14-15
168	Kirby Markers	45
107	Kubota	9
105	Lofts, Inc.	6
150	Master of the Links	44
163	Master of the Links	45
129	Miles Inc.	36
—	National Golf Foundation	32
167	Pavelec Bros. Construction	45
136	Pennington Seed	42
165	Precision Small Engine	45
161	Precision Tool Prod. Co.	45
162	Quail Valley Farms	45
145	Rain Bird *	10-11
106	Regal Chemical	7
114	Regal Chemical	20
131	Regal Chemical	38
122	Restroom Facilities	28
108	Rohm & Haas *	10-11
112	Smithco	17
126	Standard Golf	33
160	Steadfast Bridge Co.	45
101	Tee-2-Green	2
103	The Thinking Superintendent/GolfLink	3
134	The Thinking Superintendent/GolfLink	41
104	Toro Comm'l. Prod. Div.	4-5
166	Trims International Software	45
132	Ty-Crop	40
118	Verti-Drain/Emrex	24
135	Water & Turf Restoration	41
113	Yamaha	18-19
158	Yard Edge	44
128	York Bridge Concepts	34

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CIRCLE #168

## Siena College study

Continued from previous page

Schuyler Meadows seems a perfect property for this type of study. It contains marshland, a creek, a pond, forest, forest edge and grassland. "It's a natural," Salinetti agreed. "We share the same woods and streams with Siena, and New York Audubon is nearby as well."

The Audubon's role will be communication, public relations, funding, dissemination of research results and, to some extent, providing interns to help with the study. Salinetti, whose club was one of the first members of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, credited his members for supporting the proposition. "I think private clubs need to realize that you have a very strong obligation to your community and you need to be working toward fostering a good-neighbor relationship," he said. "We're trying to act responsibly. If we are doing something that is negatively impacting our environment, we will work to find a better solution."

"It's an exciting cooperative agreement," Woolbright said. "Historically, environmentalists and golf course people have not had as cooperative a relationship as they might. But, if you look at what's happening in this country and around the world, the remaining pristine natural areas ... are dwindling fast. If you look at most regions — particularly the Eastern Seaboard — golf courses are becoming more and more an important large fraction of the remaining semi-natural habitat available."

"So we need to start paying attention to these refuges ... rather than trying to rely on undisturbed natural areas as sanctuaries. I don't think the [dwindling] process is going to slow. But the golf courses are still going to be there. So how can we manage them so they can serve an improved function for maintenance of habitat and species?"