

Expo Development Track addresses an ever-changing market

By PETER BLAIS

ORLANDO — Profit centers, the environment, planning, financing and public/private partnerships. These are all matters developers and operators of public golf courses didn't have to worry about just a few years ago.

But the golf industry has changed dramatically in the past decade. The golf boom of the 1980s was great for the cash register. But as with any growing industry, success brought with it greater governmental scrutiny and increased competition.

How to deal with these and other factors affecting public golf development will be the focus of the **Development Track** at this year's Golf Course Expo scheduled for Nov. 9-10, here at the Orange County Convention Center. Golf Course Expo is the nation's only conference and trade show geared toward public-access golf course superintendents, developers and general managers.

"Golf course development has become much more specialized as the years have gone by," said Barry Frank, vice president of consulting for the National Golf Foundation. The NGF is organizing the Development Track for the second annual Expo.

"Developers who prepare themselves to meet

new challenges will be more successful," Frank said. "The speakers and sessions we've assembled will leave attendees much better prepared to meet those challenges."

The first of those speakers, course architect Dr. Michael Hurdzan, will follow Thursday morning's keynote address from fellow architect Pete Dye and his family. Hurdzan will speak from 10:15 to 11:15 a.m. on *The Value and Trends in Golf Learning Centers*.

Hurdzan has designed some of golf's most famous courses, including Devil's Pulpit and Devil's Paintbrush in Caledon, Ontario, named the best new courses in Canada in 1992 and 1993 by *Golf Digest* magazine. The Columbus, Ohio-based designer also worked as a golf course superintendent and a course builder before becoming a course architect.

"Golf has long suffered from an image problem that it was a rich, white man's sport," Hurdzan said. "It's a mistaken perception, but that's what many people believe. One of the reasons they feel that way is they haven't been exposed to the game. Learning centers will help improve the game's image by exposing more people to golf."

"Practice centers are also good business. A well-designed facility will be attractive to 100 percent of



Dr. Michael Hurdzan



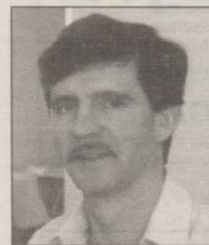
Kathy Milthorpe

the population rather than just the 10 percent of the population that plays on regulation courses. And practice centers will help the game grow."

Stuart Cohen, president of Environmental & Turf Services Inc., will wrap up Thursday's Development Track with a one-hour discussion of *The Current Environment of Environmental Permitting* beginning at 12:30 p.m.

At his Wheaton, Md.-based firm, Cohen is responsible for supervising and conducting field and computer risk assessments for turf chemicals used on golf courses. Cohen received the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Special Achievement Award for work in groundwater contamination by pesticides and the EPA bronze medal for the ethylene dibromide groundwater assessment.

Jack Mathis, president of Golf Plan Group, opens Friday's NGF session speaking from 10:15 to 11:15 a.m. on the *Importance of Planning Your Golf Project*. Mathis has organized many multi-million-dollar projects during his 20-plus year career in course planning, development and design. His company works directly with course developers,



Stuart Cohen

Hiers added to Expo speaking program

ORLANDO, Fla. — Tim Hiers, certified golf course superintendent at Collier's Reserve in Naples, will replace Double Eagle superintendent Terry Buchen as a speaker at Golf Course Expo here, Nov. 9-10.

With Buchen unable to speak, attendees will hear a litany of money-saving tips from Hiers, who last February became the first individual to ever be awarded the President's Environmental Award from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. Under his leadership, Collier's Reserve became the first Audubon Signature facility in the world.

Winner of the first-ever John James Audubon Steward and the Florida Region Environmental Steward awards, Hiers will share a number of ways to save money on the course and in the maintenance complex while conserving the environment.

builders and architects throughout the creative planning and government approval phases.

"Planning and programming run hand in hand," Mathis said. "Proper planning and programming won't guarantee success. But improper planning and programming will guarantee failure."

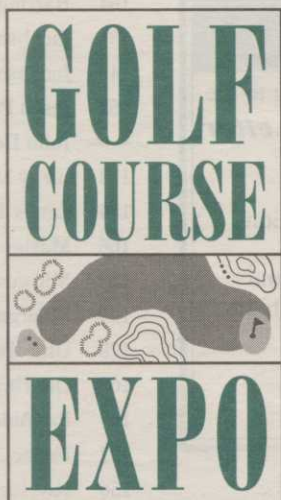
Funding Methodology: Public Sector Options and Private Sector Options will be the topic for speakers Gregory Fairbanks and Kenneth Reece from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Fairbanks is vice president of investment banking for Miller & Schroeder Financial in Columbus, Ohio. He has more than 10 years experience in the securities and finance industries and has been financing municipal courses since 1989.

Reece is senior vice president with NationsBank's commercial banking division covering Raleigh, N.C. and the greater Wake County area. During his 22-year career with NationsBank, Reece has provided financing for all types of golf course projects throughout the Carolinas and Virginia.

The final Friday session runs from 3-4 p.m. and features Ladies Professional Golf Association Director of Finance and Administration Kathy Milthorpe and Consolidated Development's Bill McMunn. They will speak on *Public/Private Partnerships*, especially as they relate to the public-access, 36-hole LPGA International in Daytona Beach, Fla.

The development of the LPGA's new home reflected the combined efforts of the LPGA, the state of Florida, landowner Consolidated-Tomoka Land Co., the city of Daytona Beach and the Buena Vista Hospitality Group, according to Milthorpe.

"This type of cooperative effort is becoming more popular because of the difficulties municipalities and private developers have in going it alone," Milthorpe said. "We'll discuss how this partnership came about, some of the successes we've enjoyed and the difficulties we encountered."



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Audubon, allied associations target public-access courses at Expo

Continued from page 1

planning to exhibit at the Expo. The United States Golf Association (USGA) Green Section, American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA), Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBA), National Golf Course Owners Association and other groups will also be present.

"Public golf represents the vast majority of golf activity in the U.S.," said Jim Snow, national director of the USGA Green Section, "and we are anxious to get the word out to these facilities about what we offer. We want to have as big an impact as we can on the conditions the public golfer has to enjoy."

"It's important to be at the Expo to make sure we're known in that market," said Phil Arnold, executive director of the GCBA. "More and more courses are public-access and, right now, that is driving the industry forward. Whereas, four or five years ago it was real-estate, now it is the stand-alone, public, medium- to high-end public course. Obviously, as long as the construction industry is going forward, my members are benefiting."

"From the 100 years golf courses have been built in this country, it's been a long, slow trend toward more public golf courses and less private," said Jeff Brauer, president of the ASGCA. "There is nothing that I see to contradict that trend. I'm certain that's the wave of the future — to an even greater degree than what it is now."

"There may be certain periods of time — such as the 1980s — when construction of private courses accelerates relative to public courses. But I think we've demonstrated that public courses are the most financially feasible and we've even seen public courses used to sell housing lots, which is a relatively new trend. They make an excellent front door. And they provide valuable recreation assets for the entire community."

In a 90-minute meeting at 5 p.m. Nov. 9 at the Orange County Convention Center, Dodson will speak to current and potential members about the international Audubon

program. Shelly Foy, Florida coordinator for the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP), will give an overview of her state's many projects. And Nancy Richardson, senior ecologist and director of the Audubon Signature Program, will speak on that program.

In its second year, Golf Course Expo is the only national conference and trade show geared solely toward superintendents, owners, managers and developers of public-access golf facilities. Along with a trade show, the Golf Course News-sponsored event presents concurrent educational tracks dealing with development, marketing and management, and maintenance. Keynote speakers will be the Pete Dye family and Club Corporation of America founder Robert Dedman.

"Working with public-access courses is important," said Dodson, "because our ultimate goal through all our programs is to inform the public about the attributes of a well-sited, well-managed golf course and the role that they as golfers can play in being stewards of the environment..."

"Working with publicly accessible golf courses broadens our ability to work with people from all walks of life and all interest levels. So it's important to us from an educational perspective as well."

Only about 10 to 15 percent of the 1,700 golf courses belonging to the ACSP are public facilities. Dodson feels that is because of the misconception that it is an expensive proposition. Quite the opposite, he said, adding that he and the other speakers at the Audubon meeting will illustrate the many cost savings that can be made by initiating environmental measures. Snow said about 25 percent of the courses that call in Green Section agronomists for consultations are public. Many public course superintendents may have the idea that paying a USGA agronomist is beyond their means. But Snow explained: "We charge by the half-day. Courses in one area could band together and call us in. We can hit three courses in one morning sometimes."