

GOLF COURSE NEWS

THE NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

A UNITED PUBLICATION
VOLUME 7, NUMBER 9
SEPTEMBER 1995 • \$4.50

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Chemical Update

In the News: Relative toxicity; GCSAA working with EPA; 2,4-D cleared; Namacure restricted 3,4

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Practitioners cite success with ceramics

By MARK LESLIE

Arnold Palmer, who wants nothing but the best for his home course, has taken the plunge with porous ceramics. Old buddy Gary Player has, too. And arguably the most agronomically knowledgeable golf course architect, PhD-carrying Michael Hurdzan, has been an engineer on the putting-green-sans-peat train for years.

Now, even as the debate over organics-vs-ceramics in greens mixes boils in the golf industry, more superintendents, architects and builders are venturing into the world of custom-designed root zones.

"I think there is no question porous ceramics have physical characteristics that can be used to amend a sand to

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Warren Grant photo

BREATHE IT IN

Mountain Air Country Club in Burnsville, N.C., is the latest design from Pete Dye disciple Scott Pool. Mountain Air ranks as the third-highest golf course east of the Mississippi River. In fact, it boasts both the highest nine holes, not to mention the highest airport runway east of the Mississippi. For story, see page 31.



STRAIGHT UP, ON THE ROCKS

Keith Foster (right) and Thomas Patrick chart their new desert course. For story and photo, see page 31.

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DEDUCTION REDUX

Private clubs suffer under new tax code

By PETER BLAIS

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — More than a quarter of the nation's private golf clubs experienced a drop in membership sales and one-third reported a decline in gross food and beverage revenues one year after the federal government eliminated the income-tax deductibility for club dues and reduced deductions for business entertainment, according to a National Club Association (NCA) study.

The Government Relations Education Fund surveyed NCA-member city and golf and country clubs to determine what economic changes they had experienced since 1993,

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Par-3 development gains popularity, viability

By PETER BLAIS

New golfers need a place to learn the game. Developers can't find reasonably priced land for larger facilities.

The solution: Build more par-3 golf courses.

That's just what's happening as the shorter layouts are springing up as both additions to existing courses and as stand-alone facilities throughout the country.

According to National Golf Found-



Barry Frank

ation figures, the number of new par-3 openings increased from seven in 1989 to 24 in 1994. The most-recent figure represents 6.3 percent of the 381 courses opened last year.

"In a lot of cases, a par-3 makes sense," said Barry Frank, vice president of NGF Consulting. "You don't need much land, somewhere between 15 and 50 acres depending on the layout

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GOLF COURSE



EXPO

ORANGE COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER
ORLANDO, FLORIDA
NOVEMBER 9-10, 1995

CONFERENCE PREVIEW:
MARKETING & MANAGEMENT
SEE PAGE 46

Public-access boom pushing existing courses to upgrade

By J. BARRY MOTHES

ORLANDO — Upgrade. Upgrade. Upgrade.

Get used to that word. It just might be the golf industry mantra for the rest of the decade, and into the 21st century. Consider the following items from less than a week's worth of national news clippings:

- A \$2.3 million upgrade is ongoing at the Salishan Golf Links, a 30-year-old resort course in Gleneden Beach, Ore. Holes have

been remodeled, a new irrigation and drainage system is being installed, and an 18-hole putting course is planned.

- The 27-hole, daily-fee Galloping Hill Golf Course in Union, N.J., opened in 1928, has embarked on a \$4.8 million upgrade that includes a

new automated sprinkler system, fairway reconstruction, new tees and greens, and new cart paths.

- The Golf Course Com-

Continued on page 38



Expo "upgrade" panelist Rees Jones

Tax changes

Continued from page 1

the year in which the latest deductibility rules occurred.

Golf clubs fared much better than city clubs, which have been struggling for the past few years. For example, total gross revenue at private golf clubs grew 4 percent between 1993 and 1994, compared to just 0.8 percent at city clubs. While the demand for golf facilities protected the country club market from the adverse effects experienced by city clubs, private clubs didn't benefit from the tax law changes either.

John Kinner, general manager of the Woodlands Country Club in Falmouth, Maine, sees it more as a business and cultural shift away from the city and-

ward the country club market.

"City clubs may be laying some of the blame on the tax changes," he said. "But they have been dying slowly for the past 20 years. Corporations aren't looking to get involved in controversial perks for their employees. Buying a membership for key employees at a men's only city club doesn't sit real well with the human resources department."

Jerry Gelinas, a long-time ClubCorp marketing executive and president of recently formed Jerry Gelinas & Associates, explained the city club/country club differences this way.

"City club memberships have long been a perk provided by corporations," he said. "It was part of an executive's job to eat there with clients. But corporations have been cutting city club memberships to

save money for some time. The deductibility changes have just sped up the process.

"Companies have offered to subsidize a portion of their employees' city club memberships or asked them to take over the whole thing themselves. Many employees have chosen to just leave the club. That's taken 10, 20, 30 members away at a time. Small business owners and professionals have been picking up some of the slack. But they join one or two at a time. So the general trend at city clubs has been toward diminishing membership numbers.

"Some companies give their employees several memberships split between city and country clubs. When they cut that back to just one, employees frequently choose to stay with the country

club rather than the city club because of the extra benefits for their families.

"Also, unlike city clubs, most country club memberships are not corporate. At least 75 percent of our [ClubCorp's] memberships are individually owned. People are choosing to keep them because they enjoy the country club atmosphere. There's been minimal loss in the individual membership area."

According to the National Club Association study, 29 percent of private golf clubs reported a decline in membership size between 1993 and 1994. That is up slightly from the 25 percent reporting a drop-off in 1993, the year before the deductibility changes. On the other end, 23 percent reported membership increases in 1994, up from 21 percent a year earlier.

Average golf club food and beverage sales jumped 3.7 percent, from \$1.236 million in 1993 to \$1.281 million in 1994.

"Most companies we deal with have responded to the changes by bumping up their F&B budget at the home office," said the Woodlands' Kinner. "It's what the market demands. If they don't do it, they may lose out to their competition."

Added Gelinas: "Food and beverage profits have been nibbled away at. But it hasn't been a big deal. And corporate outings continue to be big money makers."

Other golf/country club figures from the survey included:

- The number of meals served increased for more than half the respondents in 1993 and 1994.
- Eight percent in 1993 and 11 percent in 1994 reported staff reductions.
- More than two-thirds made a change in dues or initiation fees for members. Most increased dues or fees. Some offered limited-time discounts on initiation fees.
- Forty-five percent expanded membership development campaigns.

Bartering for advertising

Continued from page 35

interested in getting its sales people onto a top-quality golf course where they could play and close deals with potential advertisers. A match made in heaven.

"We were able to barter rounds during off-peak hours in exchange for commercial spots touting the improvements at Cranbury during Friday, Saturday and Sunday tournament coverage," Katz said. "We saturated the area within a 30-mile radius."

As a result, rounds increased by a third through the first half of the year. BCGM is happy. The cable company is happy. And the course owner is definitely happy.

"We expect to make back the money we spent on capital improvements within three years," Katz said.

When determining how many rounds to swap for advertising, Katz recommended sticking to a 2:1 ratio in the course's favor. "Never include among your outlay hard costs such as merchandise or food and beverage," Katz said. "Also, whereas you would waive green fees, you should usually make cart fees mandatory. When applicable, simply cite that carts are leased on a revenue-sharing basis, and exceptions to cart fees contractually out of bounds. It makes for an accounting nightmare."

BCGM has worked out other trades, Katz noted, including tee times for direct-mail drops, seasonal memberships for equipment leases, group or corporate outings for insurance premiums and instructional clinics for fertilizers.

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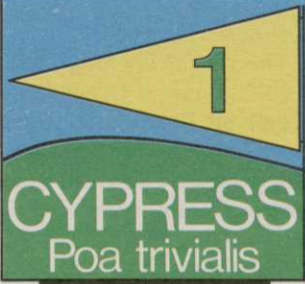
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