

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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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-

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Expo "upgrade" panelist Rees Jones

Par-3s

Continued from page 1

and other features, like wetlands. And it serves a purpose in the golf education pyramid. A new golfer goes to a practice range to learn the basics and then advances through par-3, executive and regulation layouts."

The Mississippi state park system anticipated that many beginning golfers would be attracted to the new courses it had planned for Percy Quin and John Kile state parks, according to Steve Forrest of Art Hills and Associates. So, along with the regulation-length layouts, Hills was commissioned to develop a par-3 track at Percy Quin and Bob Cupp to do the same at John Kile.

Hills also has a three-hole, par-3 teach-

ing loop under construction around the perimeter of the practice area at the Family Park Golf Course near Milwaukee. A similar three-hole teaching loop is planned as part of a Hills golf facility under construction in Newark, Ohio.

"I don't know if I'd define it as a trend, but we are seeing more and more par-3s included in new projects," Forrest said. "You're more likely to see it if the developer has some extra land. And you'll likely see even more as they become more economically feasible."

"Developers didn't request this type of facility 10 years ago. We're seeing it more and more with daily-fee and municipal layouts that want to attract junior and beginning players."

Par-3 layouts are hot items in the Waterloo, Iowa area. The city Parks Department is planning a new nine-hole, par-3

track adjacent to its South Hills regulation-length layout. Nearby Cedar Falls hopes to do the same at Pheasant Ridge.

"Our courses are full and some groups are starting to feel uptight about getting on them," said Waterloo Golf Course Coordinator Dean Fagerland. "We realize such a facility could be a major benefit for our beginner, junior and senior golf outings."

Waterloo Park Planner Bill Bachman, a professionally trained landscape architect, will likely design South Hills' new holes. The Parks Board has expressed interest in the project and Fagerland hopes it will approve the proposal this fall allowing construction to begin next spring.

"There are other par-3s around," Fagerland said. "But most just head out from the clubhouse, turn around and come back. Not much thought was given to their design. This will be a first-class,

par-3 with well-designed holes."

Overcoming the pitch-and-putt mentality many people have regarding par-3s is one of the biggest obstacles to their development, agreed Fagerland and others. They point to the many high-quality, par-3 layouts at some of the most prestigious golf venues.

The top-ranked course in the world, Pine Valley in Clementon, N.J., has a new Tom Fazio-designed, par-3 track, noted designer Lester George of Richmond, Va. Augusta National's par-3 hosts a major shoot-out every year just before the Master's Tournament. Developers of Alabama's Robert Trent Jones Trail included "some of the greatest par-3 courses I've ever seen" at many of their locations, Frank added.

"Golfers sometimes look down their noses at par-3s," said the NGF executive, a single-digit handicap player. "But they are a great place to sharpen your game. Joe Lee recently redid the greens here at Palm Beach Par-3 Golf Club. It's a beautiful course located between the ocean and Intercoastal Waterway. It gets constant play at \$18 to \$20 a round."

That largely untapped market for beginners, juniors, seniors and expert golfers looking to hone their skills is attractive to developers, George said. George is currently involved with four, what he terms "alternative" facilities, including a par-3 track at Richmond's veterans hospital and an executive course in New Braunfels, Texas, near San Antonio.

"Many of our clients look at par-3s as an additional profit center," George said. "But golfers want something more than a pitch and putt with round greens."

What they want is often U.S. Golf Association-spec putting surfaces, water features and bunkers, Frank noted. Those cost money, usually at least \$750,000 for an 18-hole layout. Because of the longer payback for that kind of investment, the developer is committing the property to golf course use for an extended period. That's different from a driving range, which many developers consider an alternative land use until real-estate values make their property more attractive for residential or commercial use.

"You can open a range for \$300,000, run it for three to five years and then use it for something else," Frank said. "Developers aren't building par-3s with the intent of doing something else with the land in a few years. It's too expensive."

Coore, Crenshaw on board in Georgia

CUSCOWILLA, Ga. — Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw have been selected to design an 18-hole championship course on Lake Oconee here— their first significant design work in the Southeast.

The newest golf community in the Lake Oconee area, Cuscowilla is the vision of entrepreneurs William M. Harrington, Peter Bailey and German businessmen Heinz Wilhelm-Nathe and Michael Huber.

Crenshaw and Coore plan to create a golf course based on the principle that strategic golf is the most rewarding and enjoyable style of play. It will ramble naturally over 600 acres of rolling countryside blessed with stands of hybrid pines, fertile meadow lands and 6-1/2 miles of Lake Oconee shoreline. According to Coore, the Cuscowilla site lends itself to the construction of a variety of wonderful holes.

Cuscowilla's master plan provides for a limited number of home sites and cottages, most of which are lake-oriented.

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