

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

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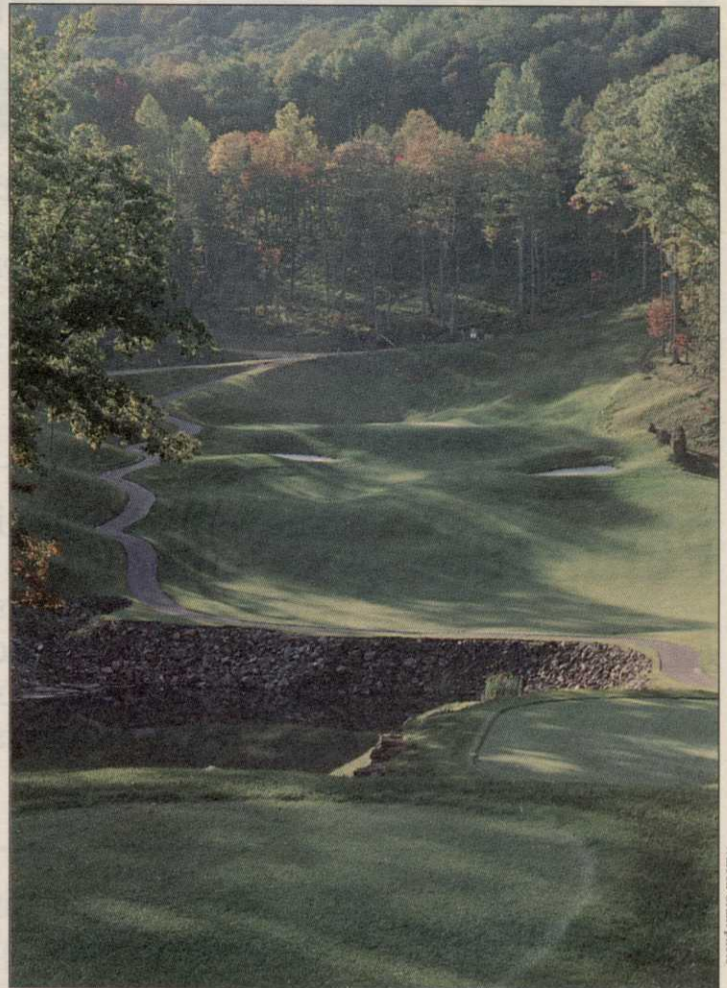
By MARK LESLIE

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

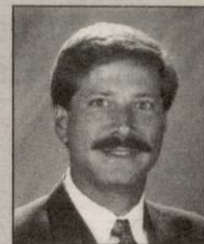
By PETER BLAIS

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



Expo "upgrade" panelist Rees Jones

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

- The Golf Course Com-

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## Upgrade/Upscale

Continued from page 1

mittee in Allentown, Pa., is considering \$750,000 in improvements over three years to the Allentown Municipal Golf Course, including a new irrigation system, new cart paths, and two new ponds to reduce flooding. Upgrading is something almost no course operator can afford **not** to consider.

"There are many golf courses that could benefit from some enhancement," said Larry Hirsh, a golf course appraiser in Harrisburg, Pa. Hirsh will be one of three speakers addressing upgrading/upscaling here at Golf Course Expo, Nov. 9-10. Joining Hirsh will be course architect Rees Jones and Dave Johnson, chief

agronomist with Dallas-based GolfCorp, operator of 41 daily-fee courses nationwide.

Hirsh, who has completed more than 100 course assignments in the last five years, insists every course has its own specific upgrading issues. "I've yet to use the same spreadsheet for two cases," he said.

Jones put it succinctly. "Private courses might restore because members love the course. The daily-fees are the ones that have to do it to compete. I'm not sure *upgrading* is really the word. Sometimes it's *restoring*. Regardless, you're going to see it more often."

Hirsh said one common bottom-line principle in upgrading is an old standby: contribution.

"We try to apply that to any upgrade," he said. "The question is,

'Is it going to contribute as much to the property value as the cost incurred?' That gives you an idea whether the upgrade is feasible. There may be cases where it isn't, but you still feel you need to compete with other courses. You must get a sense of your marketplace."

Added Jones: "With daily-fees, an owner must be careful not to incur debt service that forces him to raise fees above the competition. In Orlando or Scottsdale, where you have a different client every day, it doesn't matter. But in non-resort areas, an architect must be very careful."

Courses can improve greens without overwhelming costs and extended labor that interrupt play, Johnson explained. "Besides," he said, "if you don't have

good greens you're not going to have any customers."

Salishan's upgrade is an effort to keep up with the times and competition. "Golfers are more sophisticated nowadays," said Hank Hickox, president of Salishan Lodge Inc. "This is our 30th anniversary, and it is time for change. We have tried to reflect the opinions of our customers in our improvements."

Salishan has always done well in course rankings, in part because of excellent promotional work. But there was a feeling the course could improve. Architect Bill Robinson of Florida has introduced mounding on holes that lacked definition and focal points. Certain tees have

been changed for playability. New drainage will hopefully make year-round play a reality. A new 18-hole putting course measuring 340 yards has 18 holes with undulations and curves.

While many course operators automatically convert upgrades into higher greens fees, Salishan won't raise prices. Green fees will remain between \$30-\$40.

That exemplifies a distinction between upgrading and upscaling. Upgrading is making improvements to the course and facilities. Upscaling is an upgrade specifically intended to allow increased green fees. The two are closely related, and sometimes interrelated. But virtually any course can—and in many cases, should—consider upgrading. Upscaling, on the other hand, is a riskier, more aggressive venture having more to do with testing the limits of what golfers are willing to pay and meeting the conditions they expect.

The proposed upgrade at Allentown Municipal, of which \$350,000 is pegged for a new irrigation system, is considered critical to its future and competitiveness.

Designer Daniel J. Schlegel of Ault, Clark and Associates said one proposal is to change the course from a three- to a five-tee system, which would attract all levels of golfers.

When most course operators think "upgrade," the focus is usually on the course. But Hirsh said there are other things to consider.

"Something we fail to look at in this business is that it's a business, not just a piece of real estate," Hirsh said. "It is a business that's very management intensive. You could not do a thing to the physical facility, but upgrade your people and you still have done an upgrade. You see the result of bad management in the shape of the facilities."

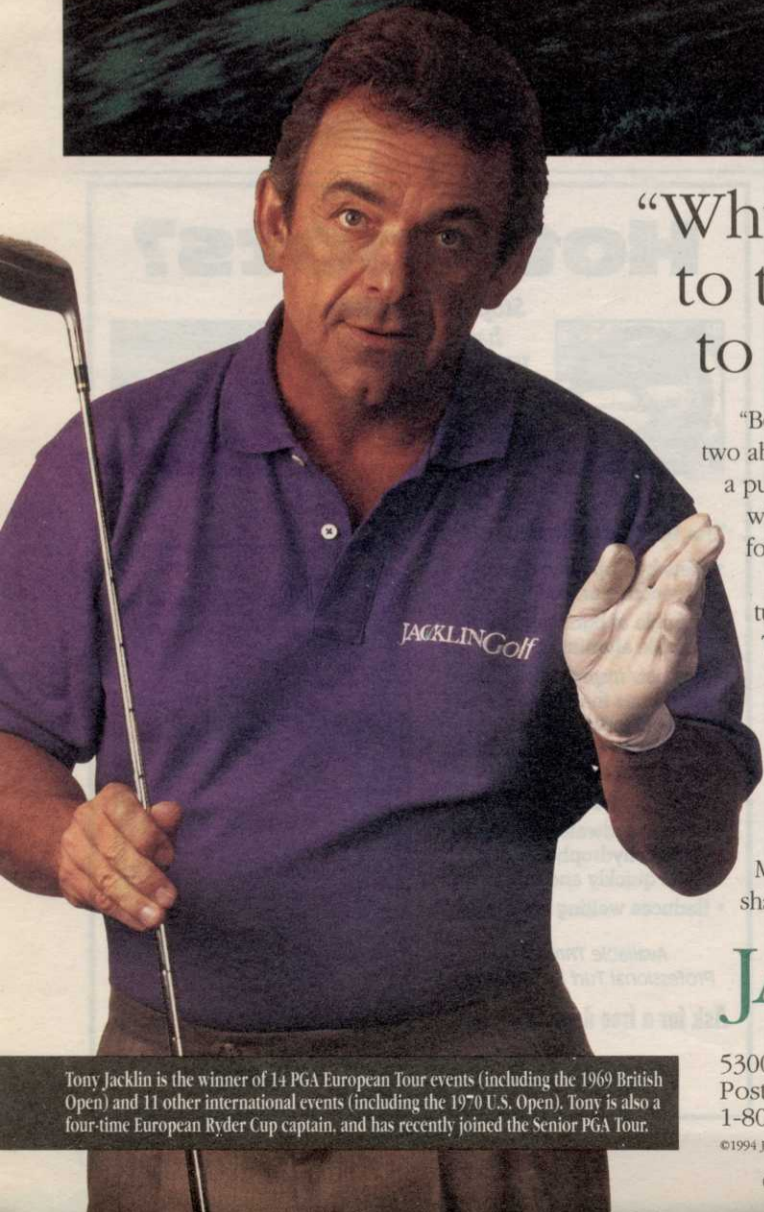
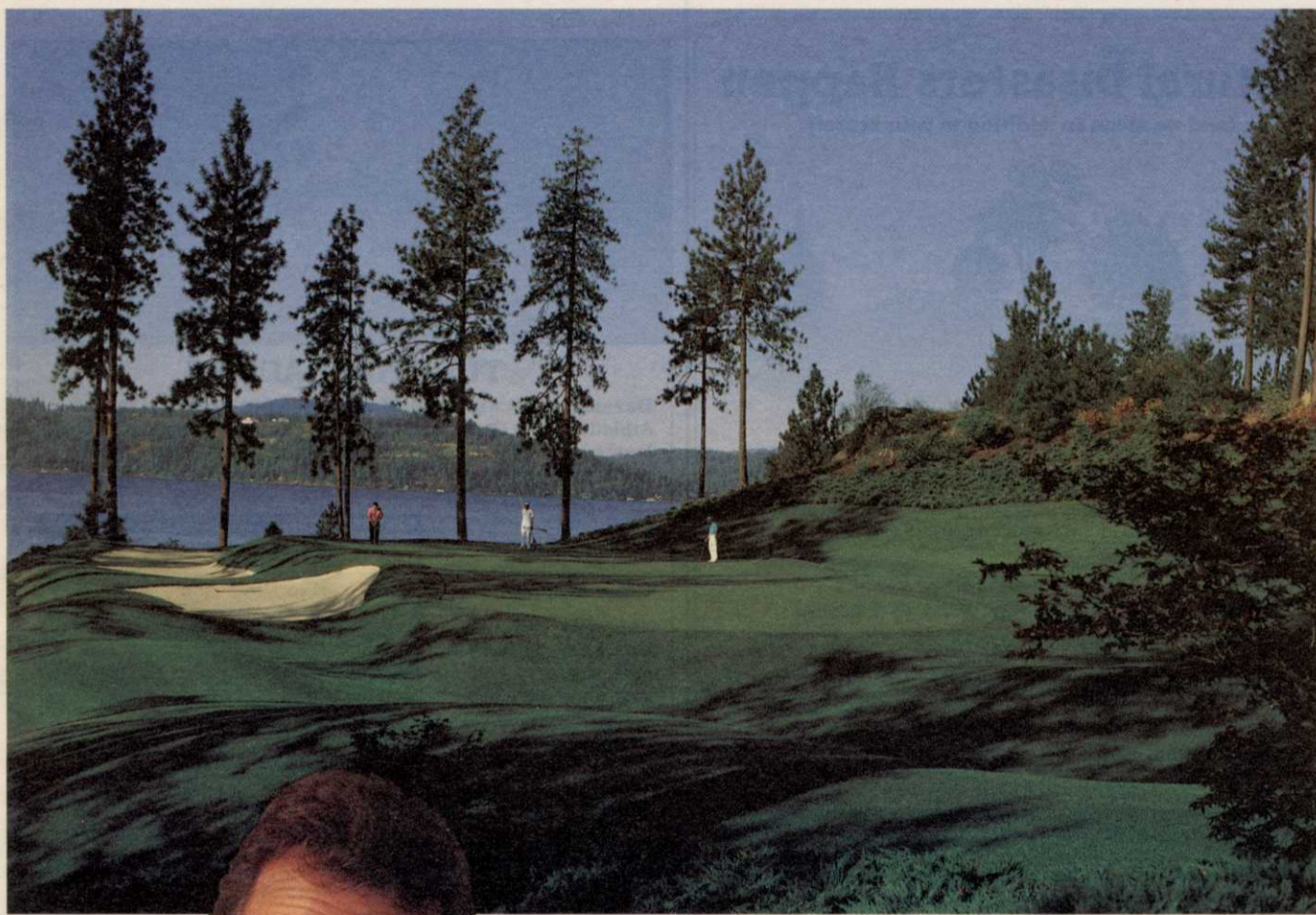
Not just older courses benefit from upgrades, said Jones, whose recent efforts include The Equinox in Vermont and Duke University Golf Course in Durham, N.C.

"I think the nice aspect of today's designs is we're building lower-profile courses without the bells and whistles that golf magazines told us we should in the 80s," he said. "It's easier and less expensive to restore these courses..."

"You can accomplish the task by rebuilding the greens to USGA specs, restoring or redoing bunkers that have been removed. In the 50s, when my dad originally designed Duke, they didn't have enough money for any fairway bunkers."

Industry experts and specialists like Hirsh, Johnson and Jones always come back to the putting greens and fairways and tees, the true essence of any golf course.

"Fifteen or 20 years ago the only thing you could do was rebuild your greens," said Johnson. "Now, with developments like deep-tine aerification and Verti-drain, you can pretty much modify the soil profile and end up with the original greens in better shape."



## "Why JacklinGolf pays me to take a club to their grass."

"Being a professional golfer for 32 years now, I know a thing or two about golf courses. Like how to make the ball roll smoothly on a putt. Or how to outsmart those tricky contoured greens. But when it comes to the precise science of growing the best grass for the course, I have to admit, I'm not the expert.

"That's why I trust my friends at JacklinGolf. They've got turfgrass solutions down to a science. You see, the JacklinGolf Team is made up of a tremendous research staff of professionals, like plant breeders, agronomists and scientists. So you know you can count on highly specialized assistance whenever you're making those all-important turfgrass decisions.

"From site analysis to troubleshooting to tailored recommendations, JacklinGolf is there to help.

"Now, I can't say they can offer you tips on your golf swing. Maybe that's why they hired me. Or, come to think of it, we do share the same name..."

# JACKLINGolf

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CIRCLE #136

Tony Jacklin is the winner of 14 PGA European Tour events (including the 1969 British Open) and 11 other international events (including the 1970 U.S. Open). Tony is also a four-time European Ryder Cup captain, and has recently joined the Senior PGA Tour.