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CIRCLE #140

## THE PUBLIC ARENA

# Golf Course Expo Management Program designed to help owners keep pace

By HAL PHILLIPS

**O**RLANDO, Fla. — Golfers may enjoy the proliferation of public-access courses across the country, but course owners and managers see nothing but increased competition in an already tight marketplace.

The Management & Marketing program at this year's Golf Course Expo, scheduled for Nov. 9-10 here at the Orange County Convention Center, was designed with the following figures in mind: In excess of 330 public-access facilities opened for play in 1994; more than 1,200 have come on line since 1991. The unique education sessions at Golf Course Expo have been coordinated to help owners and managers set their facilities apart — aesthetically and monetarily — from this pool of new kids on the block.

On Day I, following a keynote address from architect Pete Dye and his family, conference attendees will split up into three separate tracks: Agronomy, Management & Marketing, and Development. The purchase of one conference registration offers access to all three programs, allowing attendees to pick and choose their disciplines.

The Management & Marketing track kicks off the morning of Thursday Nov. 9, with a seminar on "Group Marketing Dynamics", led by Charles Callaghan, the architect of Florida's most recent golf success story. Five years ago, the First Coast of Golf didn't exist. However, by pooling their marketing and advertising resources, the 26 golf courses in greater Jacksonville created a powerful regional identity. Under Callaghan's leadership, First Coast is now recognized nationally as a golf hotbed by travel agents, tour groups and individuals looking for low-key golf-destination alternatives to better-known but more congested locales.

While computerization in the pro shop/clubhouse is hailed as an agent of efficiency, the results are often difficult to identify on a spread sheet. During Thursday's midday session, "Yield Management Strategies", experts will dem-

onstrate how computerized cart management and tee-time reservation systems will positively impact the most important sheet in the business: the tee sheet. Led by Mike Tinkey, head of the NGCOA's Smart Buy Program, this session will feature Jim Keegan, whose firm, Fairway Systems, specializes in tee-time networks for municipal courses. Keegan will share the lecturn with Jay Troutman of Par Business Systems, a tee-time reservation provider that caters more to daily-fee and resort facilities.

Day I concludes with an interactive general session on perhaps the single most important issue for public-access golf courses today: upscaling (see story page 1). Of those courses opened in the 1990s, the great majority fall into the upscale, daily-fee category. Experts agree: Existing courses must compete by offering comparable design, management and agronomic conditions; and those intent on standing pat will do so at their peril. Speaking and answering audience questions on this subject are renowned architect Rees Jones, who has extensive experience leading upscale renovations; Larry Hirsh of Golf Property Analysts, a firm committed to helping owners translate course improvements into increased property values; and David Johnson, head of agronomy for GolfCorp, which has responded to this industrywide trend by embarking on agronomic upgrades at all 41 of its daily-fee courses.

Friday morning — following a keynote address by Robert Dedman Sr., founder and chairman of Club Corporation International — Day II of the Management & Marketing track opens with a seminar addressing crucial "Safety and Staffing" issues. On-course subjects such as crew liability, workers' compensation and innovative shift management will be handled by Cal Roth, director of golf course maintenance operations for the PGA Tour's Tournament Players' Club (TPC) network of courses. Clubhouse issues will be addressed by Debi Means, a senior associate attorney with the law firm of Page & Addison. Means will prep owners on understanding the range of liability, controlling workers' benefits, creating operations documentation, and securing easy, effective release documents from golfers.

Friday's final two sessions target clubhouse revenue centers and how to enhance them. Brett Moore, vice president of development for The Antigua Group, will tell owners and managers how inventory and display decisions can help increase sales in the pro shop. As an executive with one of America's hottest golf attire manufacturers and the former manager at one of the nation's top 100 pro shops, Moore brings big-picture vision and a practitioner's common sense to the daunting prospect of "Competing With Off-site Wholesalers".

In the track's final session, "Range and Bar Management", Gregg Gagliardi will discuss the art of turning profits in these two vital areas. "When I came here, we lost something like \$4,000 a year in the bar," said Gagliardi, the general manager and pro at Lansbrook Golf Club in Palm Harbor, Fla. "Last year we netted more than \$100,000... If you want to make money in the bar and range, you have to treat them as totally separate entities."

For more information on how to register for Golf Course Expo, call the Expo Hotline at 207-846-0600.

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