

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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ALL IN THE FAMILY

Robert Trent Jones Sr. (left) has teamed with elder son Bobby to form a new architectural entity, RTJ Golf Ventures. For story, see page 37.

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Image enhanced but golfers insist on 'green' look

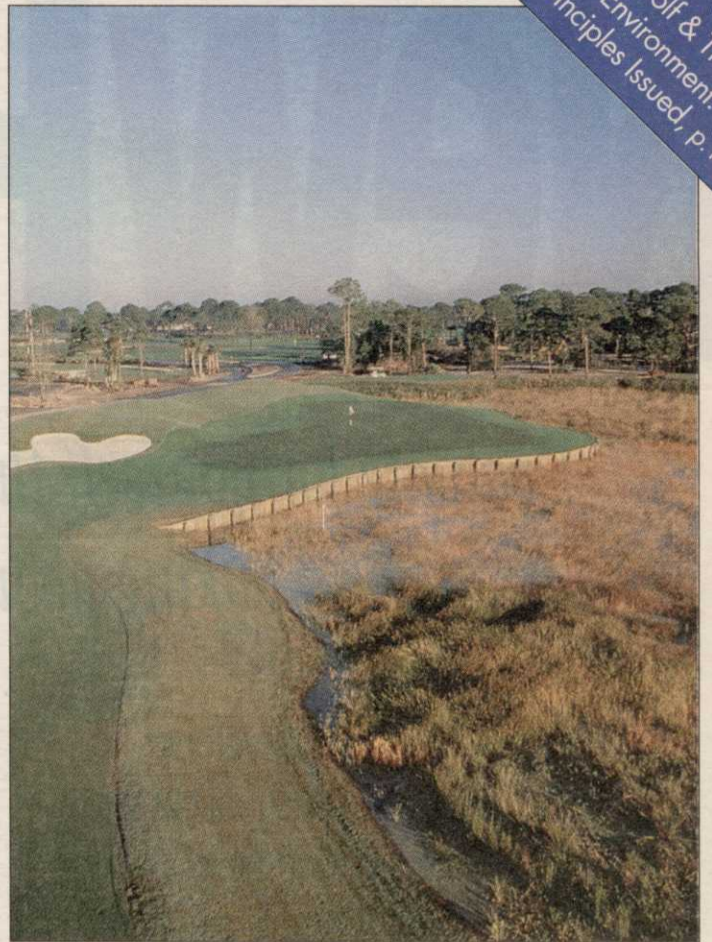
By PETER BLAIS

ORLANDO, Fla. — Most golfers view superintendents as trained professionals and the person most responsible for course conditions — news course managers should find encouraging considering national efforts to elevate their image.

Disturbingly, however, few golfers recognized the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) as the superintendents' national organization. Also troubling was the unwillingness of most golfers to accept poorer playing conditions in exchange for reduced chemical and water use on their courses.

According to a recent survey of golfers conducted by the National Golf Founda-

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SENSITIVE STROKES

Architect Ron Garl worked sensitively around wetlands at the newly opened Indian River Club. Located in Vero Beach, Fla., Indian River is only the third course in the world to be granted Audubon Signature status. The course also embodies the Environmental Principles for Golf Courses recently issued at the conference on Golf & The Environment (see page 16).

Golf & The Environment: Principles Issued, p. 16

STUDY SHOWS:

Name designers pull higher dues and green fees

By PETER BLAIS

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Private courses designed by signature architects command higher initiation fees and monthly dues while signature architect-designed daily-fee facilities charge higher green fees, according to a preliminary review of a study performed by a Pennsylvania course appraiser and a graduate business student.

The point of the study is to eventually help developers determine the potential benefit of hiring or not hiring a signature architect in specific markets, and perhaps the difference in hiring one signature ar-

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Griffiths, Brauer face off on course costs

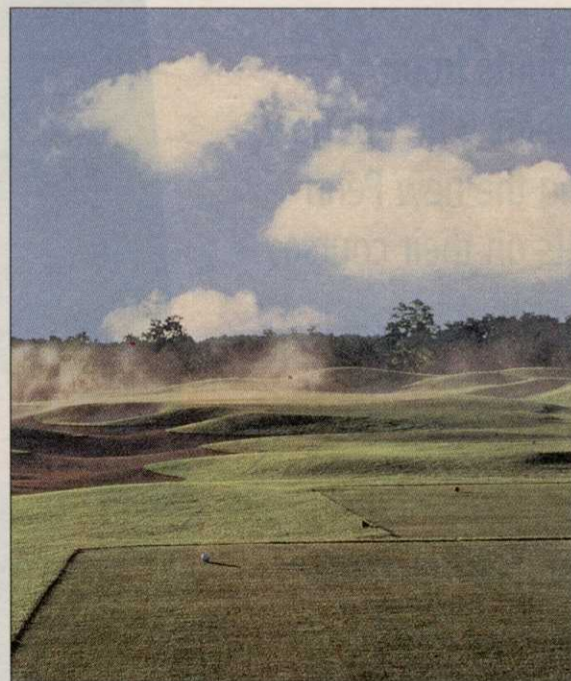
By MARK LESLIE

Worried the cost of golf is starting to drive people from the game, the incoming and outgoing presidents of the American Society of Golf Course Architects have presented arguments that would lead developers to make harsh choices about their projects.

Picking sides in a point-counterpoint atmosphere, Past President Jeff Brauer of Golfscapes in Houston and new President Denis Griffiths of Braselton, Ga., agreed construction costs have escalated too high but disagreed over the cure.

"Ten years ago there were few upscale daily-fee projects," Griffiths said. "Everyone today is doing

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Shiun Golf Club in Nigata, Japan, a new design from incoming ASGCA president, Denis Griffiths.

Ciba-Sandoz deal creates new firm: Novartis

By HAL PHILLIPS

Consolidation in the chemical trade continues apace, as Des Plaines, Ill.-based Sandoz Agro and Greensboro, N.C.-based Ciba — both divisions of enormous Swiss-owned pharmaceutical and life sciences conglomerates — have agreed to join forces, creating a \$6 billion agrichemical giant.

The new entity will be known as Novartis, providing Bill Liles, head of Turf & Ornamental for Ciba, his fourth corporate identity in a decade. First it was Geigy. Then came Ciba-Geigy, fol-

lowed by Ciba. Now, it's Novartis.

"I've got a lot of business cards," Liles said with a laugh. "But people have to realize, these mergers always take more time than you would expect. The Ciba-Geigy mergers took three years. From the Ciba side, we will be there to service our products and we will have the product there to serve the marketplace. It will be business as usual."

Ciba products include Banner fungicide, Primo plant growth regulator and

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GOLF RANGE SEMINAR SET

MIDLOTHIAN, Va. — Forecast Golf Group, Inc. will conduct a Golf Range Development Seminar at Crystal City Marriott in Arlington, May 18 and 19. The May 18 classroom schedule is from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The second day will consist of a field trip to an award-winning driving range. Topics to be covered include: market analysis, site selection and evaluation, approvals, leasing, design, construction, equipment, business plan, financing, operations, and financial performance case studies. For further information, contact Forecast Golf Group, Inc. at 804-379-5760.

Point-counterpoint: Brauer & Griffiths

Continued from page 1

upscale daily-fee. I think we'll hit a wall [of those courses] before long. Most of the older golf courses are saturated, and I think we're starting to price people out of golf.

"The upscale golf course phenomenon has been great for the industry. But that translates to \$35 to \$50 green fees, and that is out of reach for a lot of people."

"My high-end budgets [of the past] have become my low-end [budgets]," said Brauer. "Clients' like-to-haves have been transformed into gotta-haves. Irrigation costs have doubled and we've added more curbing, more cart paths, sod, wider clearings and the grassing that goes with it... And drainage costs have gone from \$50,000 to \$250,000."

"Greens construction and irrigation system prices have skyrocketed," Griffiths added.

But where can costs be cut, and, if so, will that harm the developer in the end?

Brauer and Griffiths disagree about the difference between the quality of a \$1.7 million and a \$3.2 million golf course and what economic impact it has on those two imaginary courses.

Saying that in the last five or six years his firm has designed only one golf course that cost under \$3 million, Griffiths added: "I don't think the sacrifice in quality of golf is as significant as we make it out to be between a \$1.7 million and a \$3 million course."

CARS AND CART PATHS

But Griffiths' prototype \$1.7 million course is built without cart paths, and Brauer countered: "Whenever I've built a course without full paths, they've been added later. If I hear anything from past clients, two years later they say they should have put in full paths. The market demands cart paths. And those paths pay for themselves in a couple of years."

"Not since the 1990s arrived have we not recommended cart paths," Griffiths said. "It's a dollar-driven issue. But, again, it adds to the green fee."

"Also, if I build a course without cart paths I can always add them in the future when I have the finances. At least I have the course in the ground."

THE 'LOOK'

"To me, the new courses have to compete on the perception of quality," Brauer said. "And you only get one chance to make a first impression. You can't go back to those days of great [Donald] Ross golf courses without paths and irrigation. Today's golfer expects more."

"But it's the wrong perception to say, 'If I don't have USGA-spec greens and wall-to-wall irrigation I'm getting less of a golf course,'" Griffiths said. "The look of a \$1.7 million and a \$3 million golf course can be very much the same."

True, Brauer said, "shaping doesn't cost that much."

"To make this [\$1.7 million project] work, it takes a reasonable site," Griffiths said. "We can massage and finesse the routing, and we can really minimize the cost. But if we're struggling on 120 acres with 20-percent slope it just isn't going to work."

"One reason costs have gone up so dramatically is because we're building on such difficult sites."

"Yes, if you do bad routing you can lock yourself into some big money, as opposed to, say, \$130,000 [in clearing costs]," Brauer added.

•••

Griffiths assembled costs for constructing two proposed golf courses, reducing expenses in such ways as shorter cart paths, fewer sprinklers and less sod.

"I budgeted according to the standards I want," he said. "But I may not be able to afford some things, USGA-spec greens, for instance. Less than 10 percent of the golf courses in the country have USGA greens."

One thing both men agreed on: The best time to build a golf course is today. Tomorrow it's going to be more expensive.

Griffiths' \$1.7M Method unveiled

Denis Griffiths spelled out his method for building a \$1.7 million course. These guidelines, he said, will not suit all situations and most often will be in less densely populated areas where land is less expensive, average weather conditions support turfgrass growth and annual play is not expected to exceed 35,000 rounds.

The guidelines follow:

- Select a buildable site with minimal limitations and ample acreage suitable to golf.

- Find property that is not completely wooded to reduce clearing costs.

- Lay out the course to take maximum advantage of the site characteristics and minimize disturbance.

- Secondary clearing can be done by the maintenance staff during off-season as the course matures.

- Minimize earthwork, topsoil and erosion-control requirements by fitting the course to the terrain and using existing contours for the majority of the fairways.

- Use a combination of drainage techniques, including positive surface drainage, more frequent storm occurrence data for pipe sizing, grass-lined water courses, farm swales and sheet drainage.

- Locate greens in areas conducive to growing turf and provide positive-draining putting surfaces. Select the type green construction that best fits the budget and course program using materials that are readily available and cost-effective.

- Do not compromise shaping on features, in that way creating a product similar to upscale, resort and private facilities.

- Limit sand bunker construction, using grass bunkers, with the opportunity to convert some to sand later.

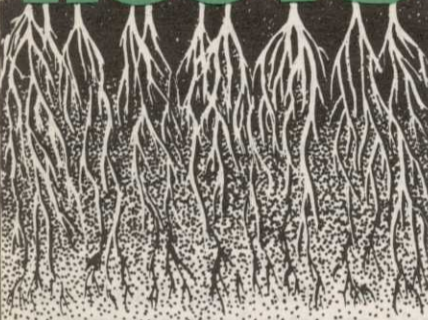
- Use the best available on-site topsoil to plate positive surface-drained tees. Do not limit the area or number of tees.

- Reduce turf areas if possible without affecting playability. Do not modify grassing specifications to save cost by extending grow-in.

- Use locally available sod with flexibility in type and purity.

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Dye Int'l designs Desert Pines GC

LAS VEGAS, Nev. — Ground has been broken on the new \$12 million Perry Dye-designed Desert Pines Golf Course on land formerly known as Nature Park.

Cynthia Dye McGarey of Dye Designs International will landscape the golf course. McGarey will help create a pine forest on the course featuring thousands of specimen pine trees ranging from 10 to 35 feet in height.

The 100-acre course is scheduled to be completed by December. It will be 6,800 yards long and feature nine holes on water. There will also be a lighted driving range, a state-of-the-art golf academy and restaurant/banquet facilities. The course will have large greens, short green-to-tee walks, and special forward tees for juniors, ladies and seniors.