

Lack of GCSAA input doesn't sit well with Asian supers

By ROB GLUCKSMAN

HONG KONG — Last year, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) announced it had relinquished its booth-sales role at Golf Asia, leaving the organization to concentrate on an associated educational seminar, the sixth Asia Pacific Golf Conference, scheduled for March 20-24.

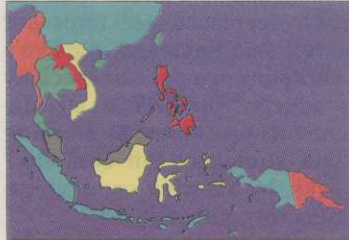
However, the seminar's paucity of maintenance-related topics has some Asia superintendents disillusioned.

"It costs me more to send

someone from my staff to Singapore, put him up and feed him for four days, than it does for me to go to Orlando for a week," said one superintendent and GCSAA member. "I can't justify this agenda to my green committee. No way anybody from here's going this year."

"GCSAA's got hundreds of members out here in Asia, and they just keep on screwing us. And they're missing one hell of an opportunity to do a lot of good."

Following annual changes in format, the consensus among



Golf Asia attendees in 1995 was that GCSAA was just starting to get it right. Last year the show offered a combination of brief, basic overviews for local superintendents and assistants with little formal training; and a number of

in-depth programs for trained superintendents, including sections which offered certification credit.

This year's show is a dramatic change. The keynote speaker will be Bob Hawke, former prime minister of Australia and an avid golfer, who will be followed by individuals primarily in the management industry speaking on topics ranging from clubhouse management to course etiquette.

The list of "recommended attendees" ranges from developers to journalists, but does not include maintenance personnel.

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The range of speakers in many ways parallels that found at the first Hong Kong and China Golf Conference and Show, held in mid-November at the Hong Kong Exhibition Centre. Organized by Stephen Allen — a former vice president at Connex who had managed Golf Asia until he left the firm last year — the HK conference included discussions of environmentally friendly golf courses and development options, featuring several well-known speakers including Robert Trent Jones Jr. and J. Michael Poellot.

Thanks in no small part to the US\$880 entrance fee for the two days, the conference began with fewer than 50 attendees in the 600-seat auditorium and finished with eight (Trent Jones Jr. attracted 36 and Poellot 32), though organizers claimed a large number of paid participants had not shown up.

The show section of the Hong Kong exhibition was only marginally better, with many architects — the core of the show — and equipment companies noting that traffic was minimal. The redeeming feature was that the estimated 600 or so who attended over the three days were largely serious about the industry; though, by the same token, many were already customers. Some exhibitors found good leads and several took a "wait-and-see" attitude.

They didn't have to wait long: Stephen Allen has announced his Hong Kong and China Conference and Exhibition will be held this year in Shanghai, where there are now two courses, another 10 in development, and perhaps 20 on the drawing board. With fewer than 50 golf course projects in southern China and the government's ongoing crack-down on land development, several exhibitors were left to wonder what the fuss had been about.

"I haven't seen anything here that makes me think we're missing the boat by not going into China," said Bill Cornwell of Pacific Golf, a development and construction company.

Wilbur-Ellis takes Asian initiative

BANGKOK — With the purchase of Siam Source Trading Ltd. through its international arm (Connell Bros.), Wilbur-Ellis Co. (WECO) of San Francisco has immediately become a player in Southeast Asia.

WECO had been looking for an entry into the Asian industry for years. When Source — a trading firm which represents Vigoro Industries, PBI/Gordon, ADS drainage, Parkway Research, and several other companies in Thailand — approached it concerning a joint venture, WECO responded with the offer of a buyout. Source's principals accepted.

For more information on the merger, contact Hugh Parker by fax at 011-662-391-5556.