

Rounds are up! No, they're flat

Before you get all worked up, let me reconcile what appears to be a contradiction here in the pages of *Golf Course News*. I know what you're thinking: "That simply isn't possible!" Well, you're right.

On the front page this month we published a story regarding an increase in golfer participation and rounds played, according to a just-released National Golf Foundation report. Yet on page 47, in the Management Section, we published a "man-on-the-street" set of responses to the following question: "Assuming rounds and participation levels will remain relatively flat over the next 10 years, how will you compete for market share in your areas of business?"

Rounds and golfers did increase during 1995 — comforting news following a 1994 decrease in both categories. However, rounds played and participation **have** remained flat for the better part of five years. Certainly, they have not kept pace with the golf course stock, which has jumped by nearly 15 percent since 1990.

This is why we posed our rather pessimistic question to management company executives, who have seen this disparity in supply and demand result in frenzied competition for the daily-fee golf round. If course openings continue at their record-setting pace — and judging from the number of facilities under construction, there's no reason to believe they won't — it will only get more competitive.

By the way, we plan to pose similarly compelling questions to management company representatives on a monthly basis. If you have any suggested queries, contact us via e-mail at hphillip@biddeford.com, or fax to 207-846-0657.

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It had to happen sometime: A major shoe manufacturer has finally hooked up with a maker of spike alternatives. Softspikes and Reebok International will team to provide the golfing consumer with a ready-to-wear spikeless golf shoe, i.e.

Continued on page 41



Hal Phillips,
editor

Good deeds making a dent?

Truly, have we bridged the gap, proven the point and affirmed it with environmental bureaucrats, that golf courses are indeed good for the earth's health? Have the national Golf & The Environment Summits, the state wetlands hearings, the small-town public land-use meetings finally educated folks who heretofore wouldn't even listen to golf's claims of white-hatted good-guymanship? Has all this made a dent in the cerebral armor of even staunch no-growthers?

Well, maybe that last bit's going too far. But apparently progress has and is being made — perhaps even as you read this column. Look over your shoulder: You may not see a Sierra Clubite weeping over the tale of how well-served the snail darter is by a local golf course; but he may be considering that possibility. And a year ago the thought had no chance to even exist in that person's gray matter. He/she would have dismissed it outright, and probably with a curse.

But listen to Maine Department of Environmental Protection Director of Policy Development and Implementation Brooke Barnes:

"Whether it's golf or the paper business, the environmental ethic really is becoming part of corporate America. That's our experience. These corporate people we deal with aren't just talking the talk, they're walking the talk. It's refreshing and it makes our job easier."

Got an example, Mr. Barnes? Yes, you say? And a paper company at that? Naw, come on!

Listen again: "The Cinderella story I think of is International Paper Co. in Jay," Barnes said. "They were hit with massive fines in the early '90s, and they basically went from a real environmental 'bad actor' into an absolute leader. They are way, way out in front trying a lot of new, innovative technologies, going beyond compliance, instituting pollution-prevention programs that are cutting emissions by 60 percent. It's exciting. It can happen. It's a success story all the way around."

Now, if a state environmental official, whose "mission" is "to protect the environment," says this about a paper company... I mean, it just boggles the mind to think how highly thought-of golf courses could be in some circles — even the circles that in



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

Continued on page 14

Letters

NTEP FUNDING RAISES QUESTIONS

To the editor:

Thanks for printing my letter concerning the proposed cancellation of funding for the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This letter generated a flood of letters to USDA officials supporting NTEP. We are very appreciative of the support of so many in the turfgrass industry [see follow-up story on page 15].

Your editorial brought up an important point concerning federal funding of programs important to "special interest groups." What programs should the federal government fund? Isn't the general public telling their congressional representatives that we need less and more efficient government? Initially, I struggled with these same questions.

Concerning funding of NTEP, the following information is important:

1. The USDA provides NTEP with less than 10 percent (\$50,000) of its operating budget. The remainder is funded by entry fees charged to companies or individuals that test grasses through NTEP. About 50 percent of this money is given back to the university scientists (in the form of research grants or contracts) who test grasses for NTEP.

2. The funding by USDA for

Continued on page 14

WEB OVER-SITE

To the editor:

I appreciated reading the article on Internet marketing ["Marketing on the 'Net' wave of golf's future," *GCN* May 1996]. However, there were two errors in it about our on-line website mentioned therein.

First, the correct address is <http://www.iquest.com/michigangolfer>. Secondly, it's incorrect to say that the content is "golf courses only." In fact, our print edition of *Michigan Golfer*, now in its 14th year covering golf, is also found on this website. Such content as an exclusive Q&A with Corey Pavin, the treacherous greens of Oakland Hills, a feature on "spikeless" golf shoes, a preview of the Ford Senior Players Championship, and golf travel in Ireland all may be found there in current or archived form.

I enjoy reading your informative newspaper. You do a fine job on covering diverse subjects and topics in the industry. Continued success.

Terry Moore, editor
Michigan Golfer
Grand Rapids, Mich.

A WORD ABOUT OZONE

To the editor:

I read your article regarding ozone systems and golf course ponds with some interest. The article left much unsaid and contained quotations which might

tend to confuse or misinform your readers. The article states that a one surface acre lake would require 5 to 10 horsepower of surface aeration. Otterbine has recommended 1.5 horsepower per surface acre for the 17 years that I have been employed here. How this requirement could have been overstated from 300 to 600 percent is of question.

Further the article refers to the relative efficiencies of bottom-diffused aeration or ADS. The relative efficiencies of any bottom aeration system are related to depth. As the air bubble rises to the surface, it will tend to entrain water and circulate from bottom to top. Secondly, the deeper the water the greater the rising air bubble's contact time and the higher the oxygen transfer rate. In fact, research indicates that bottom-diffused systems operate at peak oxygen transfer efficiencies in depths of 15 feet. For every 3 feet the depth is increased, transfers decrease a corresponding 50 percent. Hence, in 6 feet of water, a bottom-diffused aeration system is only working at 12.5 percent peak efficiencies, making a surface spray aerator far more effective and efficient.

Lastly, ozone generation is not a new concept. The first commercial application was documented over 90 years ago in Nice, France. There it was used to clean water for human consumption. There are two basic meth-

ods of generating ozone; corona discharge and ultraviolet [UV] radiation. UV radiation generation is usually achieved by passing water or air past a special type of light bulb similar to a black light. As the bulbs age ozone output drops. Corona discharge systems use a permanent electrode system.

A major problem with using ozone for lake-management purposes is the high demand for ozone in large bodies of water and the relatively short half life of ozone in water (20 to 30 minutes). Due to the high degree of biological material and runoff often found in golf course ponds, ozone demand is extremely high. Corona discharge systems are used for large volumes of water (i.e. clean municipal drinking water and municipal waste). UV systems are better suited for small volumes of water (i.e. aquariums, etc.).

As Otterbine has been in business for over 40 years and has over 5,000 golf course customers, I believe we speak with a degree of experience unparalleled in the industry. The fact that Otterbine manufactures ozone generators, bottom-diffused aerators, horizontal aspirators and surface spray aerators allows us to speak with more objectivity than a manufacturer who has specialized in one type of product.

Charlie Barebo, president
Otterbine Barebo, Inc.
Emmaus, Pa.

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NTEP letter

Continued from page 10

NTEP is indirect support only. Office and greenhouse space, seed storage, equipment storage, etc. are "rented" on paper out the money set aside by USDA. No USDA employees work for NTEP. Therefore, no federal money is actually paid to NTEP.

3. This elimination of funding for NTEP does not save taxpayers one dollar. The money normally given to NTEP would be redirected into "higher-priority" research such as Integrated Pest Management, genetic resources and sustainable agriculture.

4. The USDA has had a relationship with the turfgrass in-

dustry since the 1920s. Many people may know that the USGA Green Section was initiated with the USDA when the USDA's research facility was located at the Arlington Turf Gardens (where the Pentagon currently stands). This funding has dwindled over the last two decades to a proposed zero dollars in fiscal year 1997. Please keep in mind that during this same period most states have increased funding of turfgrass research.

5. Federal funding for other aspects of the green industry has not dwindled but increased dramatically over the last decade. A new, state-of-the-art, 50,000-square-foot greenhouse facility at the USDA's Beltsville, Md.,

facility was built with joint funding from the green industry and the USDA. At Beltsville and the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. (as well as other locations in the United States), several million dollars annually are dedicated to research on ornamental, nursery and floral crops.

This partnership between NTEP, USDA and the private sector is what many feel has made NTEP successful. Private industry has supplied most of the funding, NTEP has provided the expertise and the federal government has given support in the form of facilities and an unbiased, neutral organization. This unbiased neutrality lends NTEP data the credibility needed

for consumers to believe and utilize this information.

Why doesn't NTEP fit into USDA priority areas such as IPM and sustainable agriculture? What is it that taxpayers want from their government? Less government, accountable government, efficient government? My feeling is that the general public wants government that works, whether at the local, state or federal level. After working at this government facility since 1978, I know what inefficiency looks like but I assure you it is not NTEP.

Without federal funding, would NTEP survive? Most likely, because there is a large need for the work we do. Can it be accomplished as well in an-

other location? Possibly. The larger issue here is the relative non-importance the USDA places on the turfgrass industry. Are we not worthy of at least token support? How come research on orchids and poinsettias is more important to USDA than turfgrass? As pesticide and water issues on turfgrass become more critical to the urban population, who can deliver a national perspective based on sound science to politicians and the general public?

Thanks for giving me this opportunity to clarify some issues related to NTEP. *Golf Course News* is an excellent publication that I enjoy reading each month. Keep up the good work!

Kevin N. Morris
National Program Coordinator
NTEP

Leslie comment

Continued from page 10

the 1970s and '80s decried the mere suggestion that nine holes be built near their back yard, or, for that matter, the desert (especially the desert).

Now, listen: I realize my example here is just this one government environmental agency — Maine's DEP. But it's not insignificant that these folks are seeing the light (that the business community consists of people who live and breathe the same air, walk the same fields and woods, and don't want to rape God's green earth) ... just as developers are seeing the light that being kind to the environment is beneficial to business.

Yes, this new relationship "doesn't mean our answer is always going to be yes," said Barnes, "but we're certainly willing to work with you."

Writer and philosopher George Santayana said before he died in 1952: "Government is the political representative of a natural equilibrium, of custom, of inertia; it is by no means a representative of reason."

Along this line of thought, I have railed in the past against this silly government action and that foolish regulatory notion. If this change in Maine and some other states is indeed part of a nationwide shift in directions, perhaps it is time to re-think my point of view. All hail the evolution of thought in this realm! (on both sides).

...

An interesting aside: Among the Unabomber's possessions was a copy of Vice President Al Gore's book "*Earth in the Balance*," with several parts of the text underlined and with margins filled with copious notes. This was reported by the *Washington Spectator* which discovered that the Gore tome was omitted from the FBI's report to the public. You might remember Dr. Eliot Roberts' review in these pages of this diatribe of a badly mis- and uninformed politician.



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