

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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Winter hangover lingers in Midwest

Crown damage, desiccation rampant

By MARK LESLIE

Superintendents from Minnesota and Michigan to Iowa and Illinois were up against the wall this spring, their courses belted with desiccation, crown damage and direct low-temperature kill that set season openings back weeks.

"Instead of having March, April, May, we're having March, March, March," said Bruce Williams of Bob O'Link Golf Club in Highland Park, Ill., president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA). "Harsh winter kill seems endemic from Colorado through Kansas, Iowa and areas like that."

"When we first started

greening up in late April — which is very late for us — all the high spots came out green and all the low spots were dead stone-cold dormant," said Dick Stuntz of Alvarado Country Club in Lawrence, Kan., attributing damage to a snowmelt that froze again. "Guys with ryegrass fairways lost it. For those of us with zoysiagrass, the loss isn't large but it will be a terribly slow recovery."

While Jerry Faubel of Saginaw (Mich.) Country Club was "very fortunate and escaped damage" because he added drainage in key areas last year, the former GCSAA president said: "Courses throughout

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Jacksonville restoration still in limbo

By HAL PHILLIPS

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — An extremely complicated turf war has developed here concerning property that used to be a golf course, and may be again. Officials at the Florida Communities Trust (FCT) in Tallahassee will decide this month whether the city of Jacksonville will retain funds to restore a golf course on a controversial urban parcel known as Blue Cypress.

Once a privately owned golf facility called University Golf & Country Club, the Blue Cypress land was

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Survey: Benefits on the rise

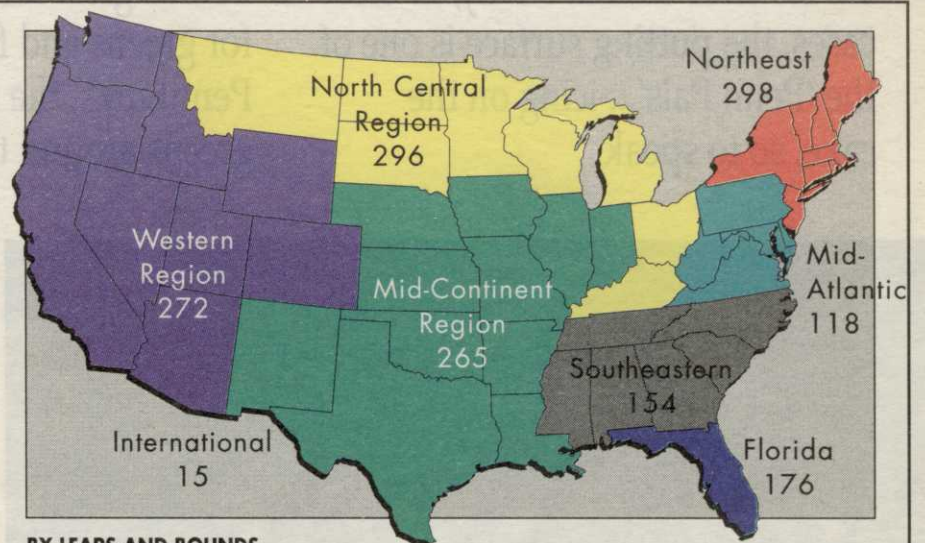
By TERRY BUCHEN

Since this decade began, I have been taking a random survey of superintendents regarding the fringe benefits they receive. I have some interesting results to report.

The first question I usually ask is whether they benefit, in both wages and fringe benefits, as a result of their most recent job change. The answer is an overwhelming "yes". Most supers believe they are underpaid and the only way to improve themselves professionally is to make a job change for more money and benefits.

Everyone willing to share the "before/after" comparison of their most old/new jobs enhanced their total package significantly. The average tenure of a super prior to the 1980s was 10 to 12 years. Today a super will stay 4 to 5 years until a better opportunity

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BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS

Just five years old, the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System, as administered by the New York State Audubon Society, has experienced astounding growth. For an update on one of golf's most striking environmental success stories, see page 15.

Palmer Mgmt. has grand expansion plans

By PETER BLAIS

ORLANDO, Fla. — Arnold Palmer Golf Management, operator of 17 courses nationwide, plans to eventually bring as many as 500 courses under its management wing through a variety of mergers, acquisitions, and other arrangements, according to company President Peter Nanula.

Palmer Golf recently launched its campaign by reaching an agreement with Pennsylvania-based Toll Brothers Inc., a leading developer of luxury homes, to operate courses at Toll Brothers' developments and jointly acquire troubled resi-

dential golf communities nationwide.

Palmer-managed Bay Hill here also hosted a summit meeting in March when the heads of 15 management companies with portfolios ranging from five to 30 golf facilities discussed the topic of consolidation within the management industry. The recent acquisition of 43-course Golf Enterprises Inc. by National Golf Properties, the real estate investment trust established by the founders of giant American Golf Corp., was also a major topic.

Nanula told the Orange County Busi-

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Jacksonville melee pits Audubon groups, gov't against one another

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subsequently sold to another private concern, Ralph Simmons, who apparently bled the operation nearly to death. Faced with the prospect of unwanted development on the land, the city of Jacksonville purchased the property in 1993 using funds from FCT — a government agency charged with buying environmentally sensitive parcels for purposes of preservation.

The original management plan called for nine holes, a driving

range, soccer fields and hiking trails. But the city has amended the plan to include 18 holes.

City Councilor John Crescimbeni, in whose district Blue Cypress resides, has promised that any new golf operation would be managed under the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System's Signature Program. However, environmental groups — including the local Duval Audubon Society, Jacksonville Land Trust and Sierra Club — have opposed the plan, arguing

'I have no objection to the city being in the golf business. But I do object to the city using FCT funds, which are set aside for environmentally sensitive lands...'

— Pat Anderson
Duval Audubon

the parcel was purchased with FCT funds for preservation, not golf course operations.

On June 18, the FCT will decide whether golf fits the envi-

ronmentally sensitive bill.

"I have no objection to the city being in the golf business," said Pat Anderson of Duval Audubon. "But I do object to the

city using FCT funds, which are set aside for environmentally sensitive lands, to purchase golf properties. The land was purchased under a plan that called for a driving range, soccer fields, and hiking trails.

"The [former] owners of Blue Cypress pitched the land on the basis of turning it into a park. The city agreed, when the FCT gave them the money, that this would be a passive park with hiking trails. Now they've changed the proposal. I just feel it's ridiculous to propose one thing, then insist on the opposite following the purchase."

Supporters of the golf course claim the city, which needed FCT funds to buy the parcel, changed the management plan primarily because it doesn't have the money to develop Blue Cypress into a nature preserve. Crescimbeni explained the city no longer has the means to renovate the clubhouse, build four soccer fields and create a viable storm run-off system. He also noted that three city golf courses have closed in four years, displacing a bevy of golfing citizens.

One of those defunct golf courses, the Dunes Golf and Country Club, has been transformed into a park and recreation facility, mitigating the city's need for more parkland at Blue Cypress, argued Crescimbeni.

"The FCT has no problem with nine holes, which was part of our original management plan," the city councilor explained. "The FCT has a formal amendment option and, for a variety of reasons, we want to amend the management plan."

The city of Jacksonville purchased Blue Cypress for \$2.9 million, \$1.3 million of which was supplied by the FCT. The city supplied the remaining funds, \$600,000 of which came from a tax-exempt \$230 million dollar bond issue. As Crescimbeni explained, there are significant rules governing the use of anything purchased with tax-exempt bond money. For example, no entity can legally make a profit at Blue Cypress because it was purchased with these special funds.

"If we screw it up, we jeopardize the entire bond issue," said Crescimbeni. "We actually thought this was a greater hurdle than going back to the FCT. If you can't satisfy the IRS, then there's no sense in going to Tallahassee and bothering the FCT."

Enter Jacksonville-based Riverside Golf Group, the management company run by ex-touring pro and ABC golf analyst Steve Melnyk. Riverside, which suggested the city commit to the ACSS Signature Program, has been involved in the Blue Cypress situation for some time. Indeed, the firm's intentions to

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GOLF COURSE NEWS

Perfect partners for transporting people, equipment and PGM'S



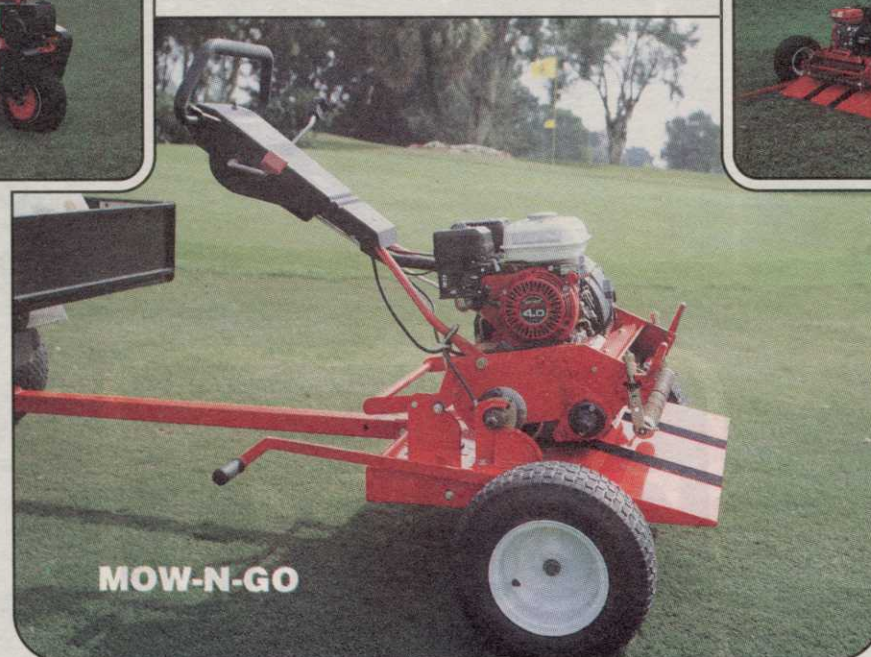
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Hirsh letter

Continued from page 10

on surrounding real-estate development (if applicable) and, if information is available, return on investment analysis.

While I realize that our results to date may be perceived as diminishing the value of "non-signature" architects, this has not been opined.

In fact, the only way to formulate such a conclusion is on a site- or market-specific basis.

We have been asked the question by several clients as to whether a "signature" architect is worth the expense. To many, our advice has been that it is not.

The results of our study show only

averages, only information from a group of architects (not one specific signature architect) and only in the markets studied.

While our study attempts to take a look at the results from different markets (some destination resorts and some primary residential markets), other markets may show different indications.

The purpose of the study is to provoke well thought out decisions on the part of developers, and to illustrate that such a decision is one that can be made objectively through research and analysis.

Another issue we have not considered is the definition of a "signature" architect.

We have tried to identify those perceived as such by the market, but it seems to me that this changes constantly. Are

Greg Norman or Ben Crenshaw now "signature" designers because of their recent successes on and off the golf course? Should Mike Hurdzan, or Jay Morrish, or Tom Doak be considered "signature" because they are well known and respected within the golf industry? I don't know the answer to these questions and only a large survey of the golfing public could answer that.

Your comments to Hal are of great interest to me as I am sure this topic and study will progress and evolve over many years to come.

As a consultant and appraiser I would love to have an instant answer to the signature architect question for my clients.

As a golfer (and *Golf Digest* panelist) I care only about the quality of the golf

experience created.

Maybe someday we could do a survey on the relative financial performances of courses by individual architects.

However, that, too, would be distorted because of the effect of decisions made by the developers and managers of those facilities. Please feel free to call me with any additional comments or questions, or just to "rap" a bit.

By the way, I played and enjoyed Stonewall and hope that if you're in the area sometime you'll call and we can tee it up. Unfortunately, since Stonewall is private and Fazio's Hartefeld National nearby is daily-fee, a financial comparison would be misleading.

Laurence A. Hirsh MAI, SGA
President, Golf Property Analysts
Harrisburg, Pa.

GCBA reprints cost estimating booklet

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — The Golf Course Builders Association of America has reprinted its Guide to Estimating Cost for Golf Course Construction, the first printing of which was released in February.

The 18-page document contains descriptions of 25 phases of construction, with charts showing their average costs in four regions of the United States. Worksheets for estimating the cost of a project are included.

They are available for \$25 from GCBA at 920 Airport Road, Suite 210, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514; 919-942-8922.

Jacksonville melee

Continued from previous page

buy or lease Blue Cypress were rendered moot by the IRS rule forbidding for-profit activities on land purchased with tax-exempt bond sales.

"Finally, and less attractively for us, we've discussed a qualified management contract with the city of Jacksonville — 15 years, whereby we won't participate in the gross revenues or profits of the project," said Melnyk. "Of course, all this is premature because the FCT has to sign off and then it goes back to the City Council."

Crescimbeni noted that if the golf course is restored, an open bid for the course management contract would be mandatory.

The situation is further complicated by two of the city's other golf facilities, the now-defunct Dunes and Mill Cove. The Dunes closed several years ago but has subsequently been transformed into an extremely successful non-golf sports complex, according to Crescimbeni.

However, golfers that may have played at the Dunes and Blue Cypress have moved over to another city golf course, the busy Mill Cove, which is owned by the Jacksonville Port Authority (JPA) and leased to an operator, Wayland T. Coppedge. Not surprisingly, Coppedge — worried his surging revenues at Mill Cove will dip if golf at Blue Cypress returns — has joined Duval Audubon and the Sierra Club in opposing the golf restoration.

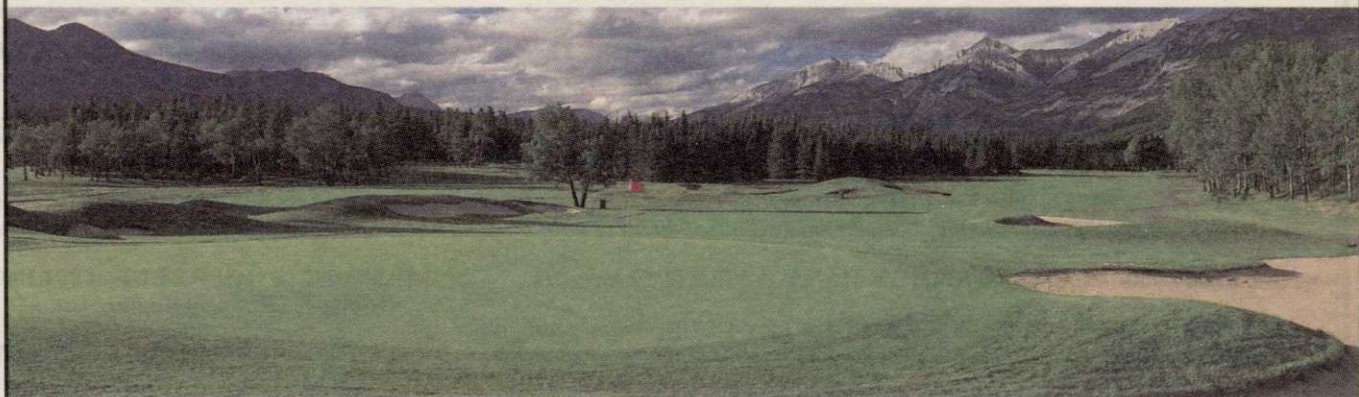
So, even if the FCT okays golf development at Blue Cypress this month, and if the IRS is satisfied Blue Cypress will not be run for profit, expect a full-blown cat fight in City Council chambers come July.



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