

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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Scotts has named its Tradition of Excellence winner, and the TPC Network has honored its best 15

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Frank dialogue earns industry respect from environmental activists

● 'Green' principles make debut in N.C.

By HAL PHILLIPS

PINEHURST, N.C. — The strength and breadth of relationships forged last year at Pebble Beach will be tested this month when representatives of the golf course industry and environmental movement meet here at the second Golf and the Environment Summit, March 10-12.

This year's attendees will review and, ideally, approve a set of "environmental principles" formulated

over the past 12 months by representatives of the golf course industry working with environmental activists. The principles are designed to guide — not necessarily regulate — golf course siting, development and maintenance practices.

"It's important to remember, these principles have been put together by a consortium of people of both sides," explained Ted Horton, vice president of

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● GCSAA debate a turning point?

By PETER BLAIS

ORLANDO — Golf made real progress in its ongoing confrontation with the environmental movement by providing opponents a public forum here during a debate led by Harvard law professor Arthur Miller at the recent International Conference and Show.

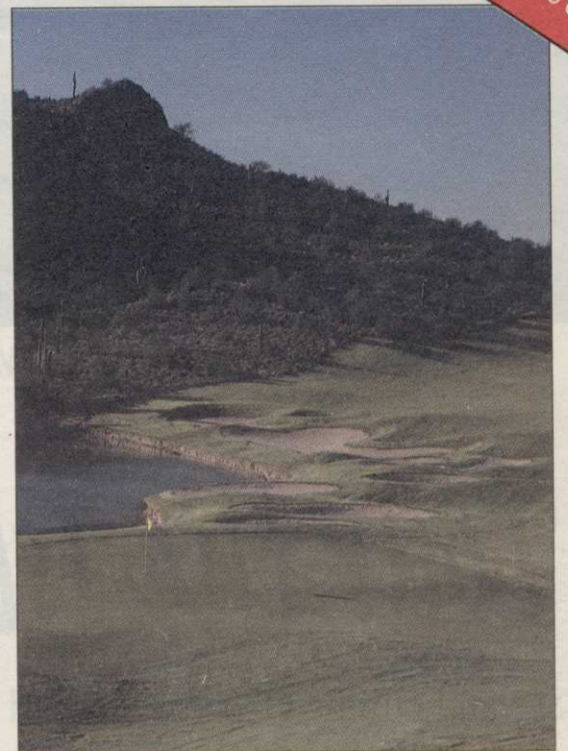
"I attended a [GCSAA] panel discussion at last year's conference and there wasn't a single environmentalist on the stage," said Todd Miller of the North Carolina Coastal Federation. "It was a simple case of preaching to the choir. But the environmental movement is well represented here. The GCSAA has come a long way in trying to understand both sides of this debate and is to be commended for that."

In terms of PR, has golf turned a corner?

"Absolutely," said Sharon Newsome of the Na-

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Technology View
Computer-aided golf management, pp. 38-42



WHERE EARTH & SKY COLLIDE

A dramatic backdrop is only half the story at Scott Miller's Eagle Mountain Golf Club in Scottsdale, Ariz. Eagle Mountain is one of two daily-fee, Miller-designed tracks to open this year in the Phoenix area. For stories, see page 43.



BUILDERS HONOR CORNISH

Architect Geoffrey Cornish accepts the Don Rossi Award from outgoing GCBA President Jim Kirchdorfer in Orlando. For story, see page 33.

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Arthur Miller leads the roundtable discussion on environmental matters during the GCSAA show in Orlando. Architect Michael Hurdan (left) and superintendent Tim Hiers were among the panelists.

TIFs may hold \$ promise for municipalities

By J. BARRY MOTHES

WYANDOTTE, Mich. — An economic development tool traditionally used by cities to build downtown parking garages and revitalize neglected neighborhoods was used by city officials here to help build a championship-caliber, urban 9-hole golf course and riverfront park.

The tool is known as tax increment financing, TIF for short, and it may hold some promise as a mechanism for cities aiming to build courses within defined development dis-

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NGP's David Price

Convinced that bigger is better, NGP acquires GEI

By PETER BLAIS

DALLAS — National Golf Properties' (NGP) proposed purchase of Golf Enterprises Inc.

(GEI), one of the country's largest course management companies, is the latest example of the mergers/buyout mania rocking the golf business.

"This is the best route for us to ensure optimum shareholder value," NGP's Chief Financial Officer John Berndsen said of the \$58 million would-be deal. "We're part of the ongoing consolidation occurring in the industry."

GEI owns, leases or contracts to manage 43 courses in 17 states. The agreement calls for GEI to sell its 20 owned golf properties to NGP — a real-estate investment trust established by the founders of American Golf Corp. (AGC) — and merge immediately thereafter with a newly formed AGC subsidiary. That subsidiary, which will retain the Golf Enterprises name, will

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Environmental General Session debate brings sides together

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tional Wildlife Federation.

Others representing the environmental movement were Mark Massara of the Sierra Club in California; Curt Spalding of Save the Bay (Narragansett) in Rhode Island; and Rich Budell of the Florida Department of Agriculture.

On hand for the golf industry were Tim Hiers, superintendent at Collier's Reserve Country Club in Naples, Fla.; Michael Hurdzan of Hurdzan Golf Course Design Inc. in Columbus, Ohio; Peter Leuzinger, superintendent at the Ivanhoe (Ill.) Club; Thomas Hoogheem of the Monsanto Co.; and Dr. Frank Rossi, a researcher at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Miller's remarks were one of the few conciliatory gestures made during the often tempestuous debate.

"The awards are great," said Spalding, referring to the Environmental Steward Awards, which were presented just prior to the debate. "But unfortunately, not all superintendents and golf courses are Environmental Steward Award winners or care that much about the environment."

Added Miller: "I would like to see the award winners coming to our North Carolina courses. But we don't. What we too often see is land cleared and runoff allowed to run into the ocean where it can destroy oyster beds."

Hiers quickly countered: "Superintendents don't stay around long in this business if they have dead fish and birds around their property."

The Sierra Club's Massara conceded that environmentalists usually have fewer problems with superintendents than they do with course developers and chemical suppliers. Developers spend so much money prior to breaking ground for a golf course they become wedded to a site and unwilling to consider alternatives, he said. Noting the Sierra Club's fights to keep golf courses away from the California coast, he said: "Golf courses simply are not an appropriate use of land in coastal zones. Unfortunately superintendents are held hostage by chemical companies and real estate developers. We should be working on improving the environment at the nation's 17,000 [closer to 15,000 according to the National Golf Foundation] existing courses rather than building new ones."

Hurdzan noted that golf courses take up less than 2 percent of the landscaped acreage in the United States and that those acres are usually maintained by college-trained professionals.

"I'm more concerned about the homeowner who tries to keep his lawn green by throwing chemicals he knows nothing about on the grass," the architect said. "Golf courses are a

preservation of open space, not a usage of space."

Added Hiers: "We built our course on 448 acres of pristine property and there is more wildlife on it now than there was before the course was built."

Communicating success stories, like Hiers' course, to the public at large has been a shortcoming of the golf industry, Rossi said. The environmental movement had a big head start on the golf industry with tragedies like

the chemical release that killed hundreds in Bhopal, India, and the devastation to the Alaskan coastline caused by the oil spill from the Exxon Valdez.

"Environmental groups were able to point to these events at local meetings and the superintendent was simply plowed over when he tried to defend his course," the professor said. "We got off to a late start. The most important people we have now are those who can articulate the positive things about their courses and the industry. We also need to bring the golfing community into the debate. Golfers

speaking for the industry could be even more persuasive."

The debate inevitably turned to the role of the press.

"The press tends to sensationalize things," Budell said. "Golf course development has been one of the most emotionally charged issues discussed in Florida."

Spalding made it clear Rhode Island environmentalists were ready to use the press to get what they wanted. Frustrated over what he called his group's inability to get representatives from private clubs along Narragansett Bay to even dis-

cuss his group's concerns regarding runoff, he said, "We'll go to the press with our story and use it responsibly if the golf courses won't listen to us."

Leuzinger and others from the golf industry encouraged the audience to use the press and other public forums to deliver golf's beneficial message to the public.

"I think we can make friends with the environmentalists now that we have facts to back up our arguments," the Ivanhoe Club superintendent said. "We can work together on solutions to any problems we encounter."



President's Award honors USGA

ORLANDO, Fla. — The U.S. Golf Association (USGA) was presented the 1996 President's Award for Environmental Leadership at the International Golf Course Conference and Show by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. The President's Award is presented based on exceptional environmental contributions to the game of golf — contributions that further exemplify the superintendent's image as steward of the land.

"With the serious challenges facing the game today, the entire industry is indebted to the USGA for its commitment to producing hard data regarding the environmental impact of golf and golf course management practices," said GCSAA outgoing President Gary Grigg.

"We're delighted the GCSAA has taken this opportunity to acknowledge the USGA's consistent efforts to promote sound environmental stewardship," said Thomas W. Chisholm, chairman of the USGA Green Section Committee.

High expectations for Summit encore

Continued from page 1

resource management at Pebble Beach Co. "Some will say it's too much, and some will say it's not enough.

"But there's restriction to everything we do. We're finding that perhaps the dealing up front, the talking in advance, ends up getting the job done a lot easier — easier than getting solidly behind something and so entrenched that no one can backtrack without losing

face, or losing money."

Added Sharon Newsome of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF): "I hope we can use this conference to educate people. Whether or not it's accurate, environmentalists believe that people buy land to build a golf course, then work with the architect to ensure the course does the least damage possible.

"One of our principles says: Before you buy, find out whether there are sensitive wetlands or species that would make it difficult to build."

Other principles deal with sub-

jects ranging from water consumption to course infrastructure, pollution prevention, integrated waste management and use of indigenous plants.

The goal, Newsome said, is endorsement of the principles by a broad spectrum of interests, i.e. the U.S. Golf Association, NWF, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and Sierra Club.

In theory, a united front will emerge from the Pinehurst summit. This cross-section of interests will buttress efforts to influence the average golfer, who ultimately drives the industry's development and maintenance practices.

"Sometimes, when a superintendent wants to do the right thing, the marketplace won't let him," said Todd Miller, executive director of the North Carolina Coastal Federation. "We realize there's a lot of interest among elements of the golf industry in doing the right thing. There is enlightened leadership. But there are barriers to overcome.

"I think it's essential that we change the attitudes of golfers who demand certain maintenance practices."

Added Newsome: "One of the most important things golfers can do is re-evaluate the way they look at the golf course. We have to de-emphasize the 'Green Is Better' attitude."

An important outgrowth of last year's Pebble Beach conference was the demystification and debunking of stereotypes. Superintendents discovered environmental activists aren't necessarily radical nongrowers, while folks like Miller and Newsome discovered most supers are genuinely committed to conservation and preservation.

The summit, facilitated by the Salt Lake City-based Center for Resource Management (CRM), will try to further this discovery of common ground.

"At first I was a little concerned that dialogue would result in more polarization," said the CRM's Paul Parker. "Clearly there are differences in opinion, sometimes sharp ones. We don't want to ignore them; we want to deal with them in ways that are productive.

"Part of this is to educate each other. This process is about dialogue and enlightenment, which helps everyone make better decisions."

"A few years ago," added Newsome, "I got the impression the golf industry thought it best not to talk to environmentalists. That is what has been so great about this process. It has made people realize what good work is already being done on golf courses."

Added Horton, "I really believe that before Ranger Rick writes something down now, he might give us a call."

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