

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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

GCSAA Wrap-Up

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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.

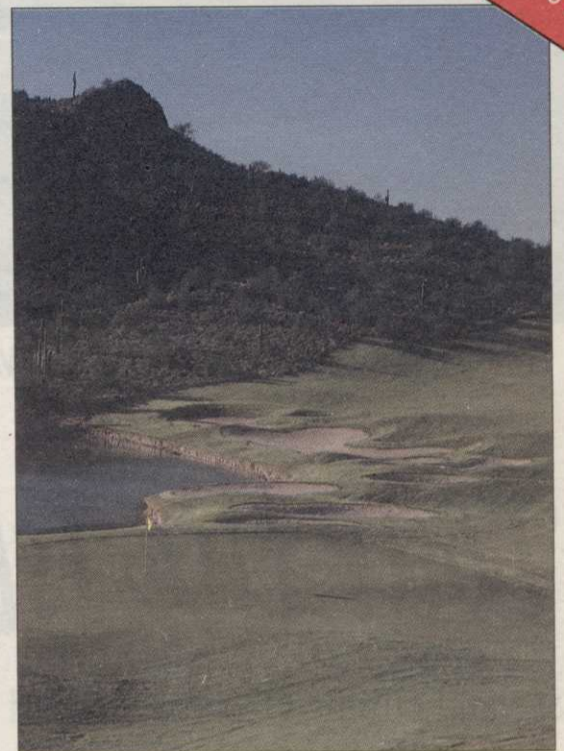
"I attended a [GCSAA] panel discussion at last year's conference and there wasn't a single environmentalist on the stage," said Todd Miller of the North Carolina Coastal Federation. "It was a simple case of preaching to the choir. But the environmental movement is well represented here. The GCSAA has 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 GCBAA 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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TIF financing

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tricts. Through TIF, cities working with developers can use increased property tax revenues in a defined district to pay for improvements within that area.

Wyandotte isn't the only place TIFs are being employed. In Faribault, Minn. — a 45-minute commute from Minneapolis/St. Paul — city officials and developers are planning on \$700,000 in tax increment financing to help construct a new 18-hole golf course and housing for the proposed Legacy Links project on land at the Shattuck-St. Mary's School.

TIF is initiated by a city through several steps, although laws and regulations vary greatly from state to state and change frequently. Usually the process starts when the city specifies an area or district of land for renewal and redevelopment. The city then establishes an overseeing "authority" for that land, creates a development strategy, and develops a financing plan.

Under TIF, tax values on the designated land are frozen. As that parcel or district is then improved and developed — and the tax values rise — any increased tax revenues above the frozen valuations are then returned to the city and/or the developer, according to previously agreed upon proportions in the financing plan. The city or the developer can then put those increased tax revenues to various uses including, in some states, the development of other projects for public benefit — like golf courses.

The recently-opened 9-hole Wyandotte Shores Golf Club here, just south of downtown Detroit, is one of the first TIF-financed golf courses in Michigan. The 3,200-yard, par-36 golf course and adjacent 25-acre riverfront park were built on a 100-year-old industrial site on the banks of the Detroit River. The site, formerly known as South Works, had most recently been a chemical manufacturing plant for the BASF Corp. The Wyandotte Shores course and park are considered a shining example of urban redevelopment and a model for city planners across the country.

"It's not really a new idea," said Peter McInerney, director of community development for the city of Wyandotte (pop. 31,000) and a key figure in the development of Wyandotte Shores. "It's been around going back to the 1950s in certain parts of the country. It first came to Michigan in the mid-1970s and became a classic way to finance a downtown parking structure and spur development."

McInerney estimated the city of Wyandotte was able to recapture approximately \$5.2 million through tax increment financing, money that was used to build the golf course. The golf course and riverfront park project — which began construction in 1993 and officially opened last fall — also received a \$2 million contribution from BASF Corp. and approximately \$1.5 million in state grants from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.


The potential for a city to use TIF, to finance something like a new golf course construction project, depends on state laws which vary significantly, according to Dave Wilcox of Economics Research Associates in Los Angeles.

Wilcox said TIF has been a boon for urban redevelopment and infrastructure improvements in the past two decades, especially since federal grant money has diminished. But Wilcox said TIF was not developed with golf courses in mind. He wondered whether the large amount of land required for a golf course even made it economically attractive for TIF when compared with the higher tax value of office buildings, for example.

Golf Course Marketplace

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