

# Golf is healthy, and here's why

**W**e try not to engage in a great deal of golf industry flag-waving here at *Golf Course News* because, basically, there are plenty of people to do it for us. When some media outlet takes a shot at golf, as *Forbes* magazine did in August, the legion golf-industry optimists come out of the woodwork.

Geez, did that *Forbes* article get under people's skin or what? Everyone was talking about it, faxing it to each other, discussing its pros and cons. Indeed, while I commented on the *Forbes* story last month, *GCN* Managing Editor Mark Leslie and National Golf Foundation President and Chief Executive Officer Joseph Beditz weigh in this month (see stories at right).

The article in question was anything but complimentary, of course. However, it's not my opinion that anyone on the *Forbes* staff owes the golf industry an apology. In fact, we owe Steve and the Gang a debt of gratitude. Why? Because criticism like *Forbes'* tends to induce corrective reactions like Leslie's and Beditz'. More important, it tends to result in introspection. Let's face it: That *Forbes* story made a lot of people think about the golf industry and where it's going.

I did. And you know what? Golf is healthy and about to get healthier — a fact illustrated by several developments that have only recently come to light.

As I noted last month, flat participation figures will soon feel the omnipresent influence of the Baby Boomer generation. This is no revelation, but soon there will be so many 50-year-old former peaceniks on the golf course, there won't be enough parking spots for their new BMWs.

What is new? Golf is apparently catching on with Generation X. Yes, if *USA Today's* front-page story (Sept. 13-15) is to be believed, the 18-30 crowd is beginning to see the light with regard to this fine game of ours. For this we have Hootie and the Blowfish front man Darius Rucker and REM bassist Mike Mills to thank. Some young punks may pull out their nose rings when they find out rockers dig golf, but just as many will view the game with a new, more accepting point of view.

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Hal Phillips,  
editor

# Leslie study, not exactly scientific, refutes 'Golf-is-sinking' mentality

**C**an I make a case here? While the folks at *Forbes* magazine and the National Golf Foundation duke it out (opposite page), I did a little microcosmic study of my high school classmates and unearthed a startling fact. If replicated countrywide, this fact would send investors and entrepreneurs scurrying to dump their dough into golf projects. A whopping 40 percent of the men in my Class of 1966 are golfers. That is, when asked their "hobbies and interests," they independently wrote down "golf."

(That was with no arm-twisting from me or old golfing bud Barry Hobert. No one was whispering in their ears, offering free subscriptions to *Golf Course News* or discount rounds of golf at Sugarloaf. No one urged them on with Johnny Carson-like chip-shot swings.)

I realize this is anecdotal evidence, but 40 percent is twice as many as the NGF reports in its latest participation survey of males aged 40-49. An anomaly? Perhaps, but the figure could be higher, still, than 40 percent, because many of the jocks in my class did not respond to the survey.

I called my old pal Jeff Waring, now a stockbroker in Bangor, Maine, and asked him about this. Jeff actually attended Phillips-Andover Academy his last three years, but he was our summertime buddy and our class claimed him as ours (something like Chappaquiddick claiming Teddy Kennedy). Anyhow, Jeff explained: "Our class was different from other classes. Most of the athletes were in the top academic division and were active in everything. Usually a lot of athletes come from the lower divisions. That same group is playing golf. Also, a lot of them are professional people and they, as a whole, are the ones playing golf."

Jeff's explanation would, indeed, belie my findings as having less clout that I thought. But Jeff, I think, is like a lot of guys my age. He quit golf for a number of years — through college and his early upward career climb — then took it back up when he reached his 40s. When did he resume the game? "When my father gave my son some lessons last August and he liked it."

Listen, my research may be anecdotal. But if nothing else, Mr.



Mark Leslie,  
managing editor

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## Book Review

By MARK LESLIE

When Ben Crenshaw called it "required reading," that was enough for me. And truly, the first book in the Tillie Trilogy is a treat. Tillie is A.W. Tillinghast, the iconoclastic and brilliant designer of such masterpieces as San Francisco Golf Club and Winged Foot. And the book is "The Course Beautiful."

Fittingly, it is published by Baltusrol members Bob Trebus and brothers Richard and Stuart Wolffe. When researching information for Baltusrol's centennial, they compiled a library on Tillinghast — a wealth of information that has translated into three books. "The Course Beautiful" will be followed in 1997 by "Reminiscences of the Links" about golf in America in the early days and "Gleanings from the Wayside" about Tillie's travels from East to West.

"Tillinghast was a prolific writer — and very funny," said Robert Wolffe, who lives in Florham Park, N.J. "He has some terrific stories, like his times with Old Tom Morris [at St. Andrews Golf Club in Scotland]."

"The Course Beautiful," Richard Wolffe added, "is essentially all Tillie's best essays on golf course



The Black Course at Bethpage State Park, another A.W. Tillinghast design.

design and maintenance and his thoughts on what makes a championship course."

TreeWolf Productions, an enterprise of the Baltusrol trio, published 10,000 copies of "The Course Beautiful."

They should sell fast.

Here we have Tillie, "the dean of American-born golf course architects," on golfers who hate playing out of dunes: "No doubt many of the hazard-shirking fraternity would declare that playing a wayward ball from such places was entirely too difficult.



What utter nonsense!

"There were and are shots that will do it; another generation knew how to play them, and it is not altogether pleasant to think that golfers of today are going soft. Possibly a

bit more of sting in the rod of golf chastisement in these, our modern times, would render it more of an achievement to break par so habitually."

On The Turn: "I was out in 39, but it took me 50 to come home!"

"Then, why didn't you stay out?"

"This wheeze and others like

the well-known Grand Army pun, each honorably ancient, were born at the Turn. In the old days, beyond recall, the halfway house was always located there, not because it happened to be the geographical center of the course, but because it was without a doubt the best place to dispense stimulants, for at the ninth-and-a-half hole elation and depression rose and ebbed to an extent only slightly less than at the 19th."

On the Home Hole: "I like to see the Home hole looming up from the teeing ground in a mighty, impressive way. When a match arrives there on even terms, let that hole reward the courageous. There is more yellow spilled all over the teeing grounds of good Home holes than any other spot on the course."

Loaded with vintage photographs and original Tillinghast sketches, this book is truly a plum ripe to pick for all lovers of the game — especially those interested in course design. Topping them all, Tillie spells out and diagrams his philosophy in building, at the least expense, the sand bunkers for which he became most and lastingly famous.

(Available via the *Golf Course News* Bookshelf: \$34.95)

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