

Development program addresses market realities

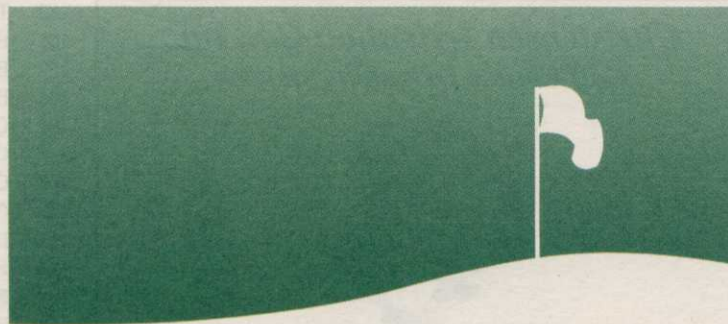
By HAL PHILLIPS

CHICAGO — Golf course developers continually search for that perfect piece of land: 150-plus acres, affordable, accessible from a large urban area. Problem is, prime sites are harder and harder to find. And more golf courses being developed each year; the National Golf Foundation foresees another 450 openings this year, following on the heels of a record-breaking 468 in 1995.

The Development Program at October's Public Golf Forum was formulated to address, in depth, the primary issues facing developers today — however sobering they may be. For overly optimistic, unrealistic discussions of the current golf development market, go somewhere else.

There are difficult issues at play in the current market, but speakers in the Public Golf Forum's Development Program will address them with candor and innovation. Further, many of today's development opportunities are tied to existing golf facilities. Indeed, many developers are course owners looking to expand. Accordingly, the Public Golf Forum Development Program will address the educational needs of both existing owners and from-scratch developers.

The Public Golf Forum, sponsored by *Golf Course News*, will be held Oct. 27-29, here at the Lincolnshire Marriott. The Forum is the only education con-



PUBLIC GOLF FORUM

A NATIONAL BUSINESS CONFERENCE AND EXPO FOR SUPERINTENDENTS, OWNERS, MANAGERS, AND DEVELOPERS OF PUBLIC-ACCESS GOLF FACILITIES

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ference and trade show serving public-access owners, managers, superintendents and developers. For information on attendance, call the Golf Course News Conference Group at 207-846-0600.

• Following a keynote address by touring pro and course designer Peter Jacobsen, the Development Program begins Monday morning, Oct. 27, with a session on "Golf Course Renovation." Architect Bob Lohmann, principal of Lohmann Golf Designs, Inc. of Marengo, Ill., will lead the session. A veteran of the highly competitive Chicagoland golf market, Lohmann will concentrate on the keys to upgrading an existing design, allowing it to compete with the ever-growing number of competitive courses.

• There's a rule of thumb in the golf management business: New operations often do not turn a profit until the third owner. Don't let this happen to you. Monday's second session, "Golf Demographics: Evaluating Opportunities," will demonstrate how an understanding of population thresholds, niche marketing, customer targeting and competitive course densities can make or break a project. The speakers include Mike Rippey, president of North American Golf, and Donald Wizeman, president and CEO of International Resort and Golf Resources and the man responsible for developing much of Myrtle Beach, Williamsburg and the Gulf Coast.

• Discussions of golf course financing too often concentrate

on funding from-scratch developments. However, during his discussion of "Golf Course Financing," Michael Zmetrovich — director of Golf Services Group at Landauer Associates — will address funding opportunities for new developers and existing owners looking to expand. He'll also touch on sources specific to public-access development; explain rates, terms, conditions, risk profiles and loan types; and describe how to put together a development package that will attract financing.

• The harsh reality of site selection in today's market will be addressed during Monday's final session: "Landfills, Mines and Quarries: Reclaiming Unwanted Land for Golf Development." Through case studies, architects Keith Foster and Dick Nugent will illustrate how marginal sites can be rehabilitated for golf course development. Foster, for example, recently transformed an abandoned quarry in San Antonio, Texas, into an award-winning design. Meanwhile, Nugent's Harborside Golf Center — located on a former Chicago landfill and slag heap — has drawn praise from environmentalists, civil engineers and golfers alike.

• Day 2 of the Development track will begin with "Permitting from A-Z," a thorough discussion of local, state and federal permitting requirements led

by Ron Boyd, president of the Williamsburg Environmental Group. While he will update recent changes in the federal permitting process, Boyd will concentrate on minimizing the need for excessive permits through effective, responsible planning.

• Many owners looking to expand their 18-hole operations face a dilemma: What's more efficient, a 9-hole or 18-hole expansion? How will maintenance costs be affected (i.e., when do economies of scale kick in)? Which expansion will most benefit their outing businesses? Do they really have enough land? During "Expanding Your Course: From 18 to 27 or 36?" these and many others questions will be answered by speakers Roland Bates, president of Golf Realty Advisors, and course designer Jeffrey Brauer, president of GolfScapes, Inc. and immediate past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects.

• An important but seldom-addressed issue is "Developing Maintainable Courses." Sure, the mounding is dramatic, but can a crew tend to those mounds without committing 30 man-hours a week? This and other dilemmas of design will be discussed by Bill Coore, a former superintendent and current partner with Ben Crenshaw in the design firm of Coore & Crenshaw. While Coore will field questions in an informal, interactive discussion with his audience, he will also address how public-access design factors can incorporate profit considerations.

PEORIA, Ill. — Having opened two original designs this summer, Lohmann Golf Designs, Inc. of Marengo, Ill., will also direct the renovation of Mt. Hawley Country Club and the Country Club of Peoria, two prestigious golf clubs located here.

A noted renovation specialist, Lohmann will speak on the subject of course renovation during the Public Golf Forum, a conference sponsored by *Golf Course News*. The event is scheduled for Oct. 27-29, at the Lincolnshire Marriott in Lincolnshire, Ill. For more information on the Public Golf Forum — the only conference and trade show for owners, managers, superintendents and developers of public-access golf facilities — call the *Golf Course News* Conference Group at 207-846-0600.

Mt. Hawley will celebrate its 75th anniversary in 1997. The renovation of the club will entail rebuilding 18 greens, adding fairway bunkers, and regrassing all fairways with bentgrass. The project calls for the excavation of three new ponds, expansion of existing ponds, and the addition of new drainage and irrigation lines. Construction will be undertaken by Landscapes Unlimited of Lincoln, Neb.

In preparation for next year's 100th anniversary at the Country Club of Peoria, Lohmann will direct the complete reconstruction of all 18

Practicing what he preaches

Forum speaker Lohmann puts renovation skills to work in Peoria



Lohmann-designed Broken Arrow GC in Lockport, Ill., opened for play this summer.

greens, some of which have deteriorated from agronomic and sub-soil problems. The work will be carried out by Construction Co. of Plainfield, Ill.

Both courses were closed Aug. 1, and will remain closed for the duration of the season.

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In other Lohmann Design news, two original designs have opened to the public: Piper Glen in Central Illinois

and Broken Arrow southwest of Chicago.

The Broken Arrow Golf Course, located in Lockport, has opened for play less than 30 miles from downtown Chicago. Broken Arrow was developed as part of a new residential community on a 533-acre site.

"In addition to its 18-hole regulation golf course, Broken Arrow offers a 9-hole double green golf course, the first

of its kind in Illinois," reported Bob Lohmann. "On the combined 27 holes, we created 22 man-made ponds to add to the natural setting and make the course more challenging."

The \$5 million Broken Arrow course also includes a full practice range and putting greens. A pro shop and snack bar opened this year, and long-range plans include a 25,000 square-foot conference center.

Broken Arrow is managed by Crown Golf Properties and owned by Agie Chen. Greens fees with a cart are \$42 Monday through Thursday and \$47 Friday through Sunday. The residential area is being developed by the Robin Hill Development Co., and will include more than 1,500 houses, townhouses and multi-family units.

Piper Glen is a golf course/residential development situated on 395-acre site in Springfield, Ill. The 18-hole regulation course opened to the public on June 1, and has averaged 700 rounds a week. Greens fees with a cart are \$34.

The \$2.5 million course includes a full practice range and greens. A 5,000 square foot clubhouse is scheduled for completion by 1998. Construction is underway on some of the 400 home sites planned for the golf course community, and land has been set aside for office and commercial development.