

Amid flag-waving, a couple caveats give industry pause



Hal Phillips,
editor

It's always an education to report on the previous year's course openings (see story page 1), as reactions never seem to match up with the data — good or bad.

The 442 facilities unveiled during 1996 constitute the second highest total in history, trailing only 1995's total of 468. However, several people I interviewed for this month's story could hardly believe the 434 figure was accurate. Of course, I assured them the National Golf Foundation (NGF) numbers were reliable — I mean, a course either opens or it doesn't. If anything, the number is low, as certain new course owners surely failed to inform the NGF of their activities.

In any case, several architects I interviewed for the story asked how many courses are currently under construction. When I answered, "more than 800," they were somewhat incredulous.

"Well, that's a healthy number," said one. "But it's hard to believe when I have construction firms calling me looking for jobs."

Another said: "I just don't believe that number. If it's that busy, why are construction people writing my office to get work? Also, there are a lot of architects out there who are really struggling. I guess the market is better for those of us who have established reputations. But the up-and-coming guys are having a real tough time."

Most of the architects interviewed for this story admitted they, too, had fielded calls from course builders eager for work. They also agreed that touring professionals dabbling in design have taken work away from "legitimate" architects.

Two troubling indicators in a sea of rosy market outlooks.

•••

Ron Dodson, the president and force behind Audubon International, will chuckle when he reads Barry Mothes' interesting trend story on the proliferation of golf courses on or near airport properties (see page 59).

In the story, a developer notes that course placement is crucial to airport projects, as birds have been known to dangerously fowl up (!) jet engines. Indeed, a Federal Aviation Administration employee testified at a hearing that a golf course proposed for land adjacent to a Sacramento-area airport would attract too many birds, making it dangerous for air traffic!

When it comes to the contention that golf courses are natural havens for avian populations, Audubon International

Continued on page 30

Sadly, back-40 18 gets deep six

My favorite golf course is shutting down. I say "favorite course" in terms of concept. I never actually saw Bob Spiwak's Whispering Rattlesnakes Golf Course — only photographs and word pictures from its creator. Bob built Whispering Rattlesnakes on his Back 40 in Winthrop, Wash., because he plain loves to golf and plain loves to hike and canoe the land made by the Creator.

A teacher-gone-rustic, a philosopher and freelance writer/photographer, Bob in 1986 turned a bit of wilderness into a bit of wilderness with 18 tees and nine small putting greens. One signature hole carried 64 yards over a pond to a little 16- by 38-foot green; and the other required a chip shot to an island green. The longest hole was a 100-yarder from a 20- by 40-foot tee area set back among trees straight-away to a sharply banked 2,200-square-foot green. We're talking Penncross, Penneagle and SR19/SR20 bentgrass greens here — one of them built to official USGA specs — not your backyard push-up mush.

Bob — whose story on another Washington state development appears on page 59 — then opened this 860-yard walk in the woods to Winthrop-area folks for the Mazama Invitational, an annual charity fund-raiser that attracted more than 70 golfers and raised a good deal of cash for the Montessori School. Friends, neighbors and compatriot photojournalists came from as far away as Maine to visit Bob and play Whispering Rattlesnakes.



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

Wiffi Smith, an LPGA star of the late 1950s, who as an amateur won the U.S., British, French and Mexican Amateurs, visited Whispering Rattlesnakes, became fast friends with Bob and took the title of teaching pro for the course. How many courses can match that catch?

All the while, Bob has mowed every second or third day and otherwise cared for the course. He had a 1973 Toro walk-behind greens mower. He gained agronomic knowledge. And, nearly from the start, he learned he would rather "superintend" these nine greens than play them. Indeed, the time it took caring for them often precluded him playing them.

Well, Whispering Rattlesnakes is silent. All but two holes are closed. Bob is using those two to teach beginning and intermediate golfers and returning the rest of the land to native habitat (The island-green hole is now a Japanese meditation garden, very sparsely planted with a false creek flowing through it).

The people of Methow Valley are in mourning, as witnessed by the January cover story in the local *Okanogan Ruralite* entitled: "So Long, Whispering Rattlesnakes."

I recall a tale or two from Bob about these nine "children." And so I mourn, too. I wish this time were not over for Bob Spiwak.

Continued on page 37

Letters

JAKE LOYALTIES DIVIDED DURING PLAYOFFS

To the editor:

Everyone at Jacobsen was truly entertained by the recent Green Bay Packer/Carolina Panther NFC Championship game. Everyone except the folks in charge of Jake's computers.

The game drew special interest because Jacobsen has its headquarters in Racine, Wis. (Packer Country), and a manufacturing facility and parts distribution in Charlotte, N.C. (Panther Country). The week prior to the game, fans on both sides began sending "friendly" e-mail messages on the company system regarding the projected outcome of the contest.

All well and good until one Packer Backer decided to broadcast color photos. As one former computer source said: "Wow, when that file hit the server, you could probably hear it all the way down in accounting."

Shortly after the Packer Photo Essay made its way to hundreds

of users, the coaches from Jake's computer team put out an APB: "No more big files!!!"

Short ones were okay and the rivalry continued.

Funny thing happened on Monday, Jan. 13, after another lopsided Packer victory — the e-mail from Charlotte was pretty quiet. All you heard was a little meow!

John Mielke
Jacobsen Division of Textron
Racine, Wis.

Ed. — When this issue of Golf Course News went to press, the Super Bowl had not yet been played. Because the GCN staff is entirely comprised of Patriots fans, we wanted to take this belated opportunity to taunt golf industry Packer fans across the nation. Indeed, we have it on good authority that Jacobsen's computers were not bogged down by color photos. In reality, the offending employee crashed the computer trying to send an enormous block of cheese as an e-mail enclosure. So there.

CLEAT MANUFACTURER ADDRESSES TRADEMARK ISSUE

To the editor:

On behalf of Softspikes®, Inc., I want to thank you for the continued coverage *Golf Course News* has given to the spikeless movement and, in particular, to Softspikes, Inc. We are proud of our contributions to help make golf a better game, and we appreciate your efforts to educate the golf industry about this major story.

I did want to bring to your attention the fact that we are concerned about the use of our trademark, Softspikes®, as a generic term (i.e., "soft spikes" or "softspikes").

Softspikes, Inc. pioneered the category of plastic cleats and we remain the leading brand in that category. We manufacture plastic cleats, not "soft spikes." To help your readers better understand the difference between our products and those of our competitors, I ask that *Golf Course News* only use our trademark to

refer to our brand of cleats. By example, you might say "Softspikes® brand plastic cleats," "Softspikes® plastic cleats" or "Softspikes® cleats" in any story or mention of our products.

You should refrain from using soft spikes, softspikes or soft spikes when referring to the classification of products or when referring to any of our competitors' products. The classification is plastic cleats.

I hope this helps clarify the correct use of our trademark and how it should be used when it concerns our company's products.

Kelly Elbin
Softspikes, Inc.
Rockville, Md.

Ed. — We prefer and endeavor to use "spike alternative" or "plastic cleat" whenever possible. However, when quoting sources in stories, trademark protections often go the way of kleenex and refrigerators — the price paid by market pioneers.

GOLF COURSE NEWS

THE NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

Publisher

Charles E. von Brecht

Editorial Director

Brook Taliaferro

Editor

Hal Phillips

Managing Editor

Mark A. Leslie

Associate Editor

Peter Blais

Editorial Assistant

J. Barry Mothes

Contributing Editors

Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG

Editorial Advisory Board

Raymond Davies, CGCS
CourseCo

Kevin Downing, CGCS

Willoughby Golf Club

Tim Hiers, CGCS

Collier's Reserve

Dr. Michael Hurdzan

Hurdzan Design Group

Mary P. Knaggs

James McLoughlin

The McLoughlin Group

Kevin Ross, CGCS

Country Club of the Rockies

Brent Wadsworth

Wadsworth Construction

Editorial Office

Golf Course News

Box 997, 38 Lafayette Street

Yarmouth, ME 04096

207-846-0600; Fax: 207-846-0657

hphillips@golfcoursenews.com

mleslie@golfcoursenews.com

pblais@golfcoursenews.com

ADVERTISING OFFICES

National Sales:

Charles E. von Brecht

Box 997, 38 Lafayette Street

Yarmouth, ME 04096

207-846-0600; Fax: 207-846-0657

cvonb@golfcoursenews.com

Western Sales:

Robert Sanner

Western Territory Manager

2141 Vermont

Lawrence, KS 66046

913-842-3969; fax: 913-842-4304

Marketplace Sales:

Diana Costello-Lee

207-846-0600; fax: 207-846-0657

Public Golf Forum Sales

Michael Lafaso

207-846-0600; fax: 207-846-0657

Subscription Information

Golf Course News

P.O. Box 3047

Langhorne, PA 19047

215-788-7112

United Publications, Inc.

Publishers of specialized business

and consumer magazines.

Chairman

Theodore E. Gordon

President

J.G. Taliaferro, Jr.



Copyright © 1997 by United Publications, Inc. All rights reserved and reproduction, in whole or in part, without written permission from the publisher is expressly prohibited.

Dr. Rossi heads Maine contingent

ROCKPORT, Maine — Talks by Dr. Frank Rossi of Cornell University and Golf Course Mechanics Association President Brian Alfond will highlight the 1997 Maine Turfgrass Conference and Show at the Samoset Resort here, March 5-7.

Following a full-day session on "Calibration and Safety of Pesticide Application" on March 5, Rossi will speak on "Enhancing Freezing Stress Tolerance with Plant Growth Regulators" and "Selecting and Establishing Bentgrasses."

Alfond will appear with others to lead a full day of sessions for mechanics on March 6.

Q&A Niemczyk

Continued from page 19

products that are coming onto the market in the next few years?

HN: There's an interesting family of treatments called the biorationals. One is a toxin produced by a bacteria called *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt). Micogen produces a product called M-Press. It isn't registered yet, but it seems to work well on some grubs.

RhoMid has a product called Mach 2 that is supposed to be registered in January. It is a molt-accelerating compound called halo fenozide that speeds up the molting process causing the insect to die. American Cyanamid and Rohm & Haas have formed a joint company called RhoMid to market the product. It controls grubs, but is also effective on sod webworms, cutworms and billbugs. It is encouraging that we can target pests and not harm earthworms, mammals and other beneficial organisms.

DowElanco has a fermentation product called CONSERVE that it will market soon. It is effective against cutworms and other grass leaf-eating insects.

We've known for some time that an extract from the nut of the neem tree nut that grows in India and Burma has insecticide qualities. It also provides cutworm control by disrupting the molting process. Scotts markets such a product called Turplex that works well when the label is followed.

Leslie comment

Continued from page 16

But I sure do admire him for the 5 Ws of this enterprise of his. He struck out to play the game he loved and found a prize greater than the game. He never made a dime on Whispering Rattlesnakes... never intended to... it was simply a chore of love. I hope he finds another. There is another back 40 somewhere that could use that kind of caretaker.

Have you got one?

GOLF COURSE NEWS

Connecticut superintendents elect Napier, others

WOODBIDGE, Conn. — At its annual meeting, the 300-member Connecticut Association of Golf Course Superintendents elected John Napier of the Stanley Golf Course in New Britain, president for 1997.

Vice president is Anthony Grosso of Pautipaug Country Club in Baltic, while Brian Skelly of Old Lyme Country Club is serving as secretary and Peter Pierson of

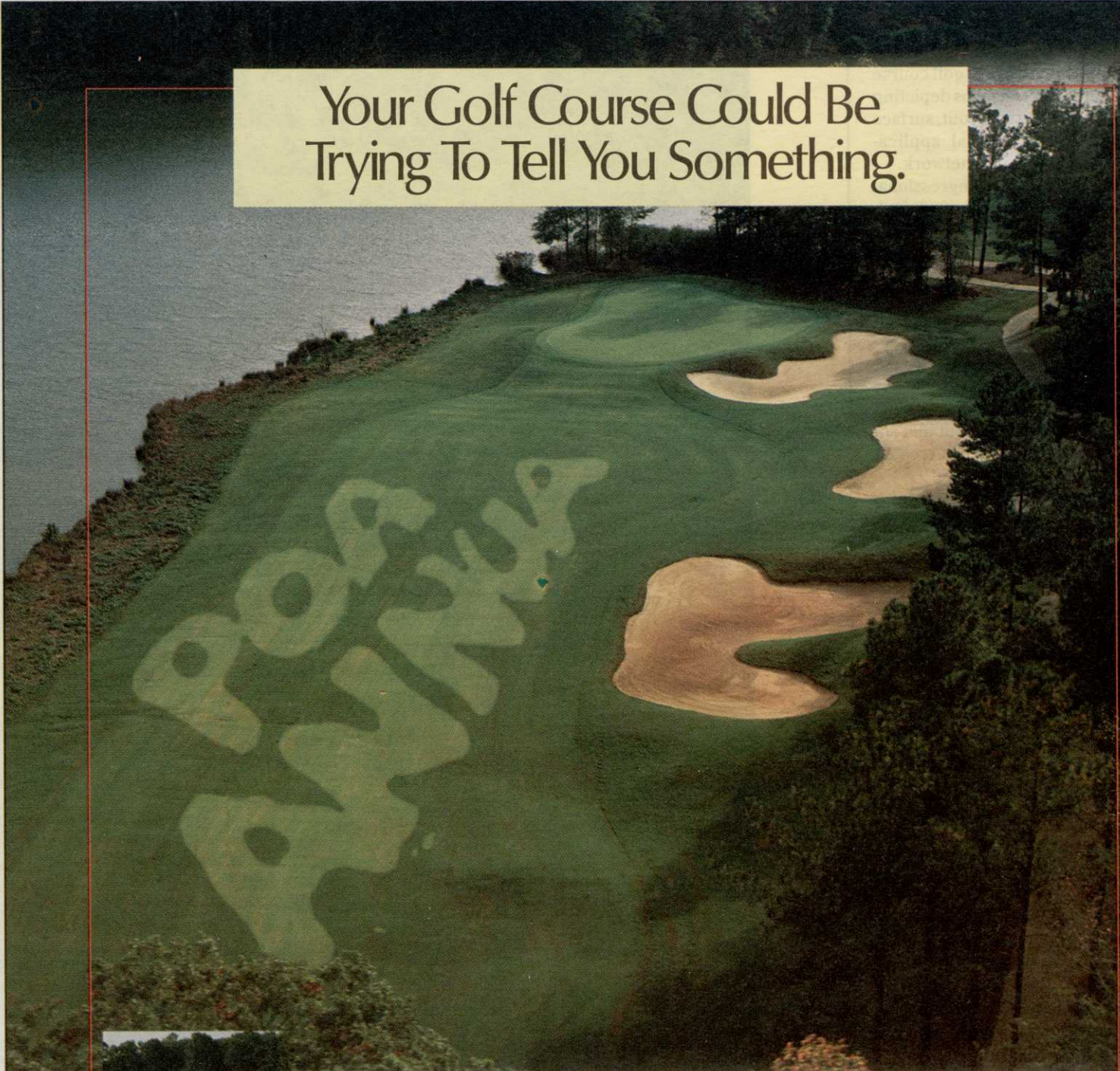
Pequabuck Golf Club is the association's new treasurer.

Elected as directors to serve two-year terms were: Dennis Houle of Redding Country Club; Les Kennedy Jr. of The Country Club of Waterbury; and John Motycke of Skungamaug River Golf Club in Coventry.

Continuing to serve on the board of directors are Greg Bradley of Farmington

Woods Country Club in Avon; Scott Gennings of Wallingford Country Club; and Jud Smith of Orange Hills Country Club in Orange.

Philip Neaton of Black Hall Club in Old Lyme will continue to serve on the board as immediate past president. Owen Regan of Tee & Green Sod, Inc. was voted to serve as commercial representative to the board.



Your Golf Course Could Be Trying To Tell You Something.



It needs PROGRASS® Herbicide. PROGRASS is the surest way to get *Poa annua* (Annual bluegrass) out of your turf and keep it out.

By attacking *Poa annua* (and 12 other weeds) with both preemergence and postemergence control, PROGRASS lets you design a control program that fits your particular situation best:

complete renovation, gradual conversion or preventive maintenance. Properly managed, PROGRASS protects ryegrass, Kentucky bluegrass, creeping bentgrass, tall fescue, and even dormant Bermudagrass overseeded with rye, from *Poa annua* infestations.

Even if *Poa* has a grip on your course, it's never too late for PROGRASS. But it's never too soon, either.

Prograss EC
HERBICIDE

 **AgrEvo**
A company of Hoechst and NOR-AM

Read and follow label directions carefully. AgrEvo USA Company, Wilmington, DE 19808 © 1996

CIRCLE #126/GCSAA BOOTH #1522