

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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GCN HONORS BUILDERS OF THE YEAR

MacCurrach Golf Construction, whose principal Allan MacCurrach is seen here with client Arnold Palmer, has been named the Golf Course News Small Builder of the Year for 1996. SAJO Construction earned top honors in the large builder category. For stories, see pages 56-57.

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Openings top 400 mark

A Matter of Course:
1996 Openings

Daily-fee	337
(18-hole equivalent...)	233.5
Municipal	53
(18-hole equivalent...)	40.5
Private	52
(18-hole equivalent...)	39.5

Projects currently
in construction: **850**

Openings scheduled
for 1997: **657**

Promising project pipeline makes '97 slowdown unlikely

By HAL PHILLIPS

File this one under "Business cycle be damned."

The golf course industry witnessed the arrival of another 442 facilities during 1996, fending off the downswing predicted by optimists and skeptics alike. Openings have climbed a steady parabola since 1990. Despite a slight decline from the record 1995 figure of 468 openings, observers view last year's formidable production with a combination of glee and disbelief.

"I continue to be amazed by the boom



The Class of '96: Nicklaus-designed Hualalai Golf Club on Hawaii's Big Island was among 442 new openings last year.

in new course construction," said Lansing, Mich.-based architect Jerry Matthews. "I suppose I say that because I've been in this business for 30 years. It goes in cycles, as other businesses do. History tells us there is going to be a downswing; it's just a question of when."

Not any time soon, it would appear. According to the National Golf Foundation (NGF), more than 800 projects are in the construction phase, meaning any downswing almost certainly will not take

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Alternative spikes gain acceptance

By MARK LESLIE

NORTH BARRINGTON, Ill. — In April 1994 when Wynstone Golf Club here banned metal-spiked golf shoes, superintendents nationwide held their breath, anticipating who-knows-what reaction from golfers. Three years later, and 45 years after the United States Golf Association (USGA) first called on golfers to forsake their metal spikes for more turf-friendly footwear, the revolution is on.

"The latest estimate I've heard is that 1,500 courses have switched to alternative spikes of one sort or another," said USGA Green Section National Director Jim Snow. "I think it's certainly a very popular trend that will have a big impact."

Snow pointed out that the number of courses

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SPECIAL GCSAA VEGAS COVERAGE

Bally's Casino Resort Hotel — whose Grand Ballroom will host the Opening Session — and Hoover Dam are just two of the Las Vegas-area attractions awaiting attendees of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America International Conference and Show, scheduled for Feb. 6-12. For complete show coverage, including an easy-to-read conference and events schedule, see pages 45-55.



Ski managers: Golf key to year-round revenues

By PETER BLAIS

Skiing provides the monetary speed, but golf helps smooth out the financial bumps for American Skiing Co. (ASC), a major Northern New England ski operator that is fast becoming one of the region's major golf course owners and operators.

Although it represents just 10 percent of ASC's total revenues, golf helps even out the company's cash flow throughout the year, according to ASC Chief Financial Officer Tom Richardson.

"Golf has been very important at

Sugarloaf [USA]," noted Peter Webber, the Carrabassett Valley, Maine, resort's golf director and a member of the committee that coordinates ASC's four golf course operations. "The additional cash flow helps us through the summer. It lets us employ some of our best people on a year-round basis. It keeps the hotel rooms occupied and pulls in other summer business."

ASC operates eight ski areas — Sunday River and Sugarloaf/USA in Maine; Attitash Bear Peak in New Hampshire;

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