

Golf booms on The Strip, with no bust in sight

By HAL PHILLIPS

LAS VEGAS — Betting on future golf course development in Greater Las Vegas? Here's the tip, as in iceberg.

Fifteen separate golf course projects may open for business here during 1997, making Las Vegas the nation's premier golfing hotbed. Six years ago, there were 14 courses in Greater Las Vegas. By the end of 1997, there will be 45 — meaning a significant portion of the golf course industry will commute to this month's International Conference and Show.

"I don't know that there's a better golf market in the country right now," said Brian Curley of Landmark Land Co., which has a hand in five separate courses.

Yet golf is but a tiny chapter in the overall development story

here. Indeed, the city's fantastic golf growth pales in comparison to everything else in Las Vegas, where visitation rates have nearly doubled over the last 10 years and hotel rooms do grow on trees.

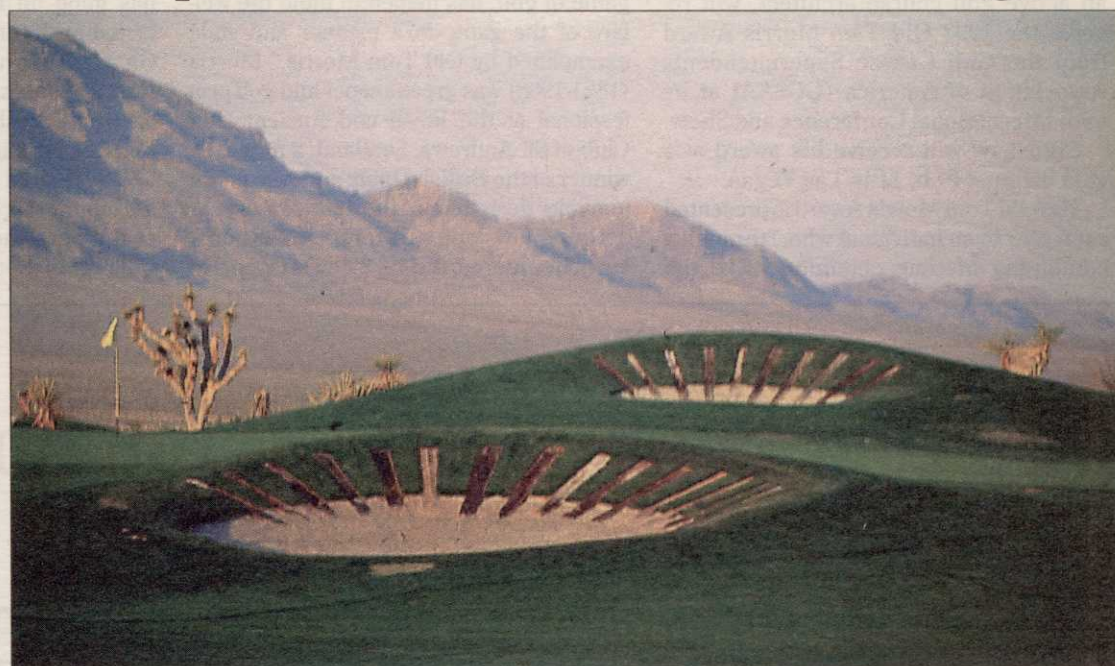
"Take a look at the skyline. Just look at all the cranes!" said Rick Norton, vice president of the National Golf Foundation. "They're expanding their [hotel] rooms significantly, which effects everything from McDonald's to golf."

That's the reality. In this boom or bust town, golf should boom for some time. The pump is primed. With 29 million visitors each year, the city's 40-odd existing courses simply cannot meet demand. With hotel capacities growing at 5.3 percent and the number of visitors growing at 7.4 percent per year, golf will have a difficult time keeping up.

"This place is something else," said Scott Tuggle, superintendent at Primm Valley Golf Club, a 36-hole Tom Fazio project in Stateline. Tuggle had been superintendent at the award-winning Legacy Ridge in suburban Denver. "When it comes to golf development, there's so much more going on here than in Denver. And Colorado was cooking! I've never seen anything like it."

To understand the golf development scene here, it's important to grasp the cultural force Las Vegas has become.

For years, gambling was the



The newly opened, Pete Dye-designed Tav-ai Kaiv track is the second of four planned courses at the Las Vegas Paiute Resort.

means and the end. Casino owners didn't necessarily want people playing golf or anything else that would keep them off the roulette tables. But developers have learned that golf and other amenities, in rounding out the Vegas offerings, have cleaned up the city's image and grown the pie. Analysts agree Las Vegas has the nation's strongest housing and employment markets, to say nothing of its staggering hotel and tourism numbers (see charts).

"How do I describe it... It's one of those 'growth begets growth' situations," said Curley, whose firm has built the first two

of four planned courses on Paiute Indian land 40 minutes out of town. Landmark is also constructing its own design at the Mojave Valley Resort in Laughlin, Nev.

"With most markets, there's a ceiling," Curley continued. "Someone looks at the statistics, the demographics, and he decides the market can stand 1,000 new condos this year. In Las Vegas, the more it grows, the more it grows. The bigger an extravaganza it becomes, the bigger an extravaganza it becomes. There's no cap, and you just don't see that in a development-type business."

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Hotel Hotbed

Year	Hotel/Motel Rooms	Percent Change
1986	56,494	
1987	58,474	3.5%
1988	61,394	5.0%
1989	67,391	9.8%
1990	73,730	9.4%
1991	76,879	4.3%
1992	76,523	-0.5%
1993	86,053	12.5%
1994	88,560	2.9%
1995	90,046	1.7%
Total Increase 1986-95		59.4%

Vegas Visitation

Year	Number of Visitors	Percent Change
1986	15,196,284	
1987	16,216,102	6.7%
1988	17,199,808	6.1%
1989	18,129,684	5.4%
1990	20,954,420	15.6%
1991	21,315,116	1.7%
1992	21,886,865	2.7%
1993	23,522,593	7.5%
1994	28,214,362	19.9%
1995	29,002,122	2.8%
Total Increase 1986-95		90.9%

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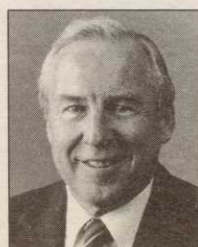


Ben Crenshaw

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The Excalibur Hotel and Casino, one of the strip's myriad first-class hotels and gaming houses.



LOVELL TO KEYNOTE OPENING SESSION

Retired Navy Capt. and Apollo 13 Commander James A. (Jim) Lovell Jr. (at left), brings his story of success, courage and motivation to the GCSAA's 1997 International Conference and Show. Lovell will keynote the Opening Session on Feb. 8, starting at 6 p.m. at Bally's Hotel in Las Vegas. After retiring from the Navy in 1973, Lovell embarked on a series of successful business endeavors involving organic lawn and garden products. More recently, he founded a communications firm, which specializes in presentations about motivation, crisis management and leadership.

Vargas, Faubel and Ward honored for distinguished service

LAS VEGAS, Nev. — Gerald L. Faubel, Coleman Y. Ward and J.M. Vargas Jr. will receive 1997 Distinguished Service Awards at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's (GCSAA) 68th International Conference and Show for their outstanding contributions to the advancement of the superintendent's profession.

Faubel, Ward and Vargas will be honored Feb. 8 at the Opening Session of the GCSAA's 68th International Golf Course Conference and Show.

Vargas, a professor of botany and plant pathology at Michigan State University, has helped enhance the superintendent's profession through his work identifying turfgrass diseases and developing models for predicting disease and timing treatments.

In the early 1970s, Vargas reported on the first resistance to a turfgrass pathogen, the powdery mildew organism, to a systemic fungicide, as well as the first resistance to the DMI fungicide by the

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