

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

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### FLOCKING TOGETHER

Birds of a feather: PGA Tour star Tom Lehman (right) will team with former Tour player John Fought on a course design project in Arizona. For story, see page 37.

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## Stress tests bear fruit

Super-dwarf Bermudas gain favor

By MARK LESLIE

BELTSVILLE, Md. — Turfgrass breeders are concentrating more on warm-season varieties than cool-season types and their work is bearing fruit, some of it extraordinary, according to the national director of the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP).

Advances are being reported on the zoysiagrass and seeded Bermudagrass fronts, yet vegetative Bermuda may prove the greatest immediate impact on golf courses, said NTEP's Kevin Morris. "Even though bentgrass is the ultimate in quality in the



FOR A SPECIAL SECTION ON SUMMER STRESS, "BEATING THE HEAT," TURN TO PAGES 30-34.



The Fazio Course at Barton Creek Golf and Conference Center in Austin, Texas, has already converted to a stress-tolerant super-dwarf Bermudagrass.

South, as some of the newer Bermudas come out that rival the bents in texture, people will move away from the bents in stressful areas," Morris predicted.

"There's a chance we have something practically as good as bent is in the North," said U.S. Golf Association Green Section National Director Jim Snow. "The goal is to get a

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## Operations biz has new Player: Gary

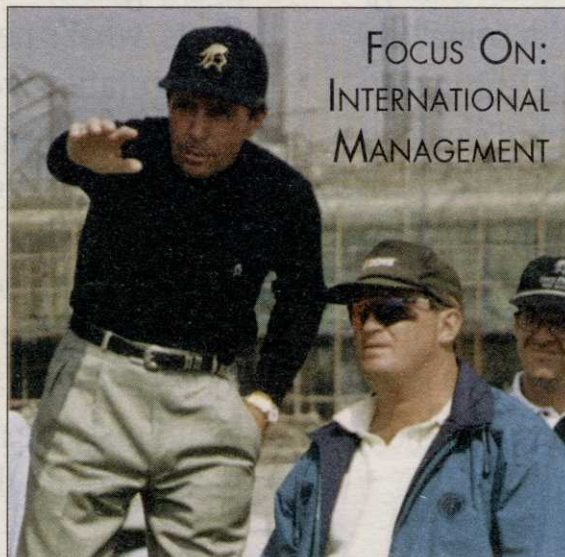
By HAL PHILLIPS

SINGAPORE — Not content with its considerable presence in the design, golf academy and club-manufacturing markets, The Gary Player Group has entered the course operations business, touting a full-service ability to develop, manage and brand its member clubs.

Unveiled here at Golf Asia '97, Gary Player Management Services (GPMS) has already signed its first club, Verdemar Golf Club, a Philippine project still in the early stages of development. However, don't read too much into the GPMS decision to launch in Asia-Pacific, where its sister course-design and academy divisions are better established, compared to the U.S.

"It's our full intention to be global," said GPMS Managing Director Mark

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FOCUS ON:  
INTERNATIONAL  
MANAGEMENT



Gary Player (at left) has added facility management to his design and club-making ventures. Above: The New Course at Portmarnock near Dublin, Ireland — one of a growing roster of courses managed by the European PGA Tour. For stories, see pages 43-46.

## Participation rates lag, compared to course supply

By PETER BLAIS

Golf's two main growth indicators, the number of golfers and rounds played, remained relatively flat at 25 million and 477 million, respectively, in 1996, according to a National Golf Foundation (NGF) report.

But while demand continued stagnant, the golf industry continued to increase the course supply at a near-record rate, with 442 courses coming on line last year. Though concerned about this seeming demand/supply imbalance, the NGF and others remain optimistic about golf's future, pegging their hopes on the continued interest of aging Baby Boomers and the newfound interest of their offspring, the so-called Echo Boomers.

"I don't think those numbers are a true indicator of the interest in the game," said Myrtle Beach, S.C. architect/developer Ken Tomlinson, who



NGF's Rick Norton

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## Golf, ecology look to curb 'Us vs. Them'

By BILL SUGG

WASHINGTON, D.C. — "Let's think beyond golf," said Audubon impresario Ron Dodson during last month's day-long symposium, *Golf Environments of the 21st Century: Integrating Wildlife Conservation Into Golf Courses of the Future*, held here at the National Geographic Society (NGS). "Our purpose in creating cooperative sanctuary systems was to create a vehicle that would lead to communication among a whole variety of individuals across the country. We are beginning to see that now. We are

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## Us vs. Them?

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beginning to see that now. We are trying to end the 'us against them' approach to promoting environmentalism."

The May 16 event, sponsored by The U.S. Golf Association (USGA) and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, was another significant step toward Dodson's goal, as participants from governmental, environmental and golf organizations heard a variety of speakers summarize the status of conservation "on course." The consensus: The concept of environmental stewardship is gaining ground, but vigilance must be maintained and research continued.

Environmental enhancement consultant Catherine Waterhouse admitted she originally viewed golf with a jaundiced eye. Yet since she began working with golf courses, her attitudes have changed. She applauded the openness to new approaches that many superintendents show. One example was the use of earthworm castings as a greens fertilizer at the Cranberry Resort in Canada: "It was a resounding success," she said, "and friendly to the environment," she said.

Reg Murphy, president of the NGS and former president of the USGA, welcomed the group and noted that species extinction is a major concern today. One out of four species could be extinct by the year 2050, less than a human lifetime away. "We should be talking about what we do to the environment, how we respond to the environmental challenges, and what can be done to help," he said.

The first step in that direction came in 1996, when The Center for Resource Management brought together representatives from the golf and environmental communities for an Environmental Summit. The result was a set of voluntary environmental principles that would chart a sustainable future. According to Curtis Spalding, director of Save the Bay — a group dedicated to preserving Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay — Summit attendees learned, "You can have good golf without compromising the environment."

When Audubon International began looking for courses to get involved with its voluntary program for wildlife enhancement in 1991, Dodson said, only 150 enrolled the first year. Today 2,500 courses in the U.S. have signed on, with 100 courses attaining "certified" status.

Another initiative, Wildlife Links, has a goal to "make golf courses part of the conservation

landscape," according to Dr. Peter Stangel of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Established in 1995, Wildlife Links funds research and provides information to golf course designers and superintendents on how they can promote the wildlife on their facilities while maintaining quality playing conditions.

"The presence of golf courses can actually improve wildlife," according to Jan Beljan, golf course architect with Fazio Golf Course Designers. "Much needs

to be done before the actual site is looked at, and erosion control is a major factor during construction. Consider using a permeable surface for golf cart paths."

While many of the speakers talked about wildlife habitat enrichment, the basic concerns for turfgrass management, chemical and water use were also noted. Dr. Charles Peacock, professor at North Carolina State University, lamented that no basic course in ecology is required in most golf course management

programs. He also concluded, "A lot of the best practices are just common sense."

Another example of common sense — The Pesticide Environment Stewardship Program — was discussed by Janet Anderson of the Environmental Protection Agency's Biopesticides and Pollution Prevention Division. This voluntary public/private relationship, formed in 1994, includes Partners (users of pesticides) and Supporters, organizations that are non-users but

involved with users.

Bill Leary, Counselor to the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks with the U.S. Department of the Interior, gave the keynote address at the luncheon. He stressed that the Department of the Interior will continue to work to protect imperiled species.

"We don't like to unleash the pit bull — the Endangered Species Act," he explained. "We would prefer to work with the developer to find compromises."

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Bill Sugg is editor of Triad Golf Today magazine in Winston-Salem, N.C.



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