

## IN BRIEF

**CLARK, N.J.** — Three Union County golf courses have joined the fast-growing list of facilities to ban metal spikes. Golfers here at Oak Ridge, Ash Brook in Scotch Plains and Galloping Hill in Kenilworth now require players to wear non-metal spikes alternatives on the courses. With newly restored greens at Ash Brook and Galloping Hill, the county decided to adopt a policy that is now shared by more than 1,200 private and public golf courses throughout the country.

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**AMSTERDAM, N.Y.** — Officials here at the 18-hole municipal Amsterdam Golf Course relied on volunteer community help this spring to clean up the course and prepare it for play. And they spiced it up with a creative incentive. Volunteers who chipped in to rake and pick up a winter's worth of leaves and fallen branches for at least three hours were given a free greens fee worth between \$14 and \$18. Similar volunteer cleanups have been held in the past, but this is the first year an incentive was offered to attract more participants. "It probably saved a week or so of work for three or four guys," said superintendent Richard Holmsby. "It was a big help for us."

## Upper Midwest market growing unabated

Wolverine state leads nation in course openings four years running: How much is too much?

By PETER BLAIS

They are five of the coldest, wettest states in the country, not exactly ideal conditions for golf course development.

And yet, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana and Wisconsin — which the National Golf Foundation (NGF) collectively refers to as the East North Central region — accounted for almost one-fourth [23 percent] of the 1996 new course openings, according to the NGF's most recent *Golf Facilities in the United States* report. Each state can be found in the NGF's Top 10 list of new course openings.

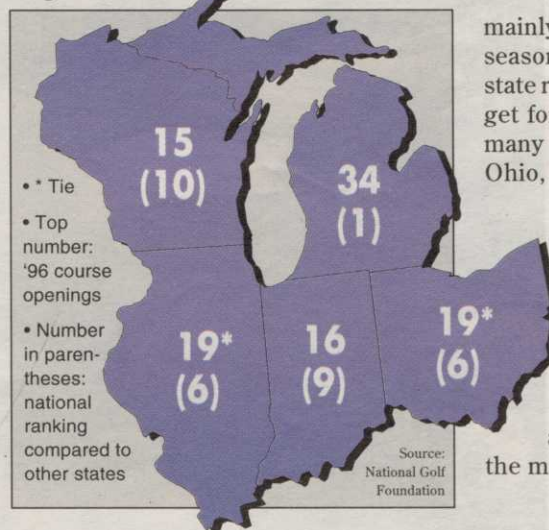
A source of pride? Yup.

A cause for worry? Ditto.

"There is concern about saturation of golf in Michigan," said John Dodge, president of the Michigan Golf Course Owners Association, whose state topped the chart for the fourth consecutive year with 34 openings in 1996. "We already have one of the highest participation rates in the country [17 percent], so bringing new golfers into the market is difficult compared to somewhere like Alabama [7 percent] where they have the demographic



The Gables Course at Lakewood Shores, a 1993 Kevin Aldridge design located in ... Oscoda, Mich.



potential to attract more people."

Two distinct golf markets exist in Michigan, urban golf in the southern cities and resort golf, mainly in the northern part of the state, Dodge said.

"Studies show there may be room for a few more courses in urban areas, like Detroit, because of the population," Dodge said. "There are an awful lot of courses opening up north, but it's

mainly a tourist area with a short golf season and no convenient air flights. The state recently doubled its promotion budget for golf, realizing we've been losing many of our best customer areas like Ohio, Minnesota, Illinois and Indiana to Southern resorts.

"Michigan is supposed to open something like 30 courses annually for the next three years. As owners, we have to do something to create more golfers to fill them."

Michigan's southern neighbors are generally more optimistic about the market for new courses.

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