

Take a kid — anyone's kid — golfing

We're bombarded with all forms of media concerning the trends changing the face of America. But how often do we really see these trends unfolding in front of our own eyes? Or better yet, how often are we able to play a part in the growth of a trend?

I don't think anyone would argue that more and more kids are picking up clubs for the first time. But let's face it, if these kids are going to keep their interest, they're going to need a little encouragement, a little preaching from the converted.

Team that encouragement with an accessible learning center (see Public Golf Forum story on cover), and we'll have a set of core golfers for the next 50 years.

Around Masters' time we were exposed to the Nike commercials depicting youngsters of all colors, all creeds, whacking golf balls down long, lush, green fairways — an uplifting symbol of golf's bright future.

Those Nike commercial images jarred a few memories.

How could I forget the first couple times my Dad took me up to Butler's Golf Course (Elizabeth, Pa.) to hold my hand through my first rounds. He gave me the crucial tips I needed to build my game — the ball most "away" hits first, don't walk in another person's line. "Keep your head down," he said. "Don't try to kill it."

The rounds with Dad increased. We started playing with his buddies from work, who loved to overwhelm me with swing and course-courtesy tips. I started taking my clubs on family vacations and lost interest in going to the beach. I was hooked.

Dad's golf missionary work encouraged me, lead me down the path to what the industry calls an "avid" golfer: one who sneaks off to the range at lunch, or to get more technical, one who plays in excess of 25 rounds a year.

To play my part, I recently donned my golf missionary's robe to give a young golfer a few of those swing and course-courtesy tips my Dad bestowed on me. Not having any kids myself, I took a non-golfing colleague's 13-year-old son out to the local course to play 9.

Ross started playing in June, and for never having a lesson, has a nice, natural swing. "Keep your head down," I heard myself saying. "Don't try to kill it."

His enthusiasm for the game is true. His eyes lit up when he crushed a 3-wood about 170 yards down the middle of the fourth fairway. I helped him with his chipping, and when we were waiting to tee off on the 8th, he used the time to hunt frogs and pull balls out of the lake with a telescopic scooper.

When we closed out the 9th, we shook hands. "Nice round," he said. Back at the clubhouse he spied three of his friends teeing off on the 1st. The three boys, decked out in Nike golf gear three sizes too big, wielded shiny metal woods. We stood and watched them tee off.

"This kid's pretty good," Ross said. The young man uncoiled into a drive, causing that high-pitched 'ting' from the clubhead. The ball traveled about 150 yards down the middle.

"Cool," Ross said.

These are the sounds of the future of golf, sounds the industry must nurture.



Michael Levans,
editor

Will the real environmentalists please take one step forward

So, The World According to Dodson has arrived: a world where Audubon International's principles of sustainable resource management are not only adhered to but are gospel — flesh of flesh and bone of bone in a development project.

With AI's venture into developing Audubon golf courses, construction and maintenance of golf courses takes a mega-step forward. This goes beyond the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System Program, which was first off the block signing up existing golf courses in the late 1980s; beyond the Audubon Signature Program, which admitted members as they began construction; and beyond even the Gold Signature Program, which registers members prior to the siting and design of a project.

Think of the significance of this endeavor. AI President Ron Dodson intends to build 100 — that's 1 with not one but two 0s after it — golf courses sited, designed, built and maintained by Audubon's high environmental standards. Thousands of acres of land around the country sitting unused, unwalked-upon, unbird-watched-upon, unhiked-upon, will be opened up to tens of thousands of people now.

This should make environmentalists, birders, ornithologists and snake-lovers happy, right?

Wrong. I predict a number of people in the environmental community will be up in arms. And if and when they go public, watch for this Biblical phrase to be fulfilled: "Their skirts will be lifted over their heads."

Yes, we will discover who are the true environmentalists. Those who, for their livelihood, try to stop any and every development on earth, will be exposed.

"We will catch flak," Dodson acknowledged.

Closely watch the National Audubon Society and Sierra Club, which have consistently bad-mouthed AI and its sister Audubon Society of New York for their involvement with golf courses, resorts, schools and others.

And while you watch, keep in mind that AI promotes reduction in the use of non-renewable resources, creates wildlife habitat, restores degraded environments, pushes golf course superintendents, resort owners and schoolchildren to be aware of the wildlife, flora and fauna around them, and much more.

Then ask National Audubon and Sierra, "What are you for?" Is it too outrageous to say: "If Organization A is against Audubon International golf courses, evidently it is anti-environment!"?

Congratulations to the true environmentalists: Audubon International, Audubon Society of New York and those scientists and lay persons who work hand-in-glove with them.

...

"Uh, Mr. President?"

"Yes, son. I'm about to tee off here, so what do you want?"

"Sir, I, uh, I, um..."

"Speak up, corporal. As a member of our nation's military police, you must learn assertiveness. What is it?"

"Sir, I must ask you to put out your cigar, or, or ..."

"Or what?"



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

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GUEST COMMENTARY

Confusion by design?

By JIM APPLGATE

We sincerely empathize with those who are about to embark on a golf course project today. Whether that project entails a renovation and redesign or a completely new design and construction. We empathize because, perhaps more than ever before in history, a would-be golf course project

Jim Applegate is president of Signature Course Design

has so many design firms, design philosophy and design fees to select from. It must be very confusing for even experienced golf developers.

The term "design firm" may be overstated and more marketing than reality, in that a golf course designer need not have large corporate headquarters and a large staff to provide professional, quality work. The nature of the business provides that a single golf course designer may consider him or herself a

"firm." However, the uninformed golf course developer may be expecting a full support team of civil engineers, land planners and construction services. Best to find out early the depth of the "firm."

We believe that the majority of those working in golf course design are doing so because of their love of golf and because they have developed a technical and artistic skill that deals with the creation of courses for the game. However, the severe competition amongst designers is forcing them to seek individual "niches," which is also creating confusion.

Our empathy for those seek-

ing our service stems from this confusion that we see in the design marketplace. Does the owner select a well known name, a well known player, an affordable regional designer, a design and build arrangement, a design and manage proposal or a hybrid of all of the above? Many other components are often presented as a part of the designer's proposal, which may include golf academies, facility endorsements, tournament production, merchandise packaging, maintenance supervision, consulting and maintenance equipment

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