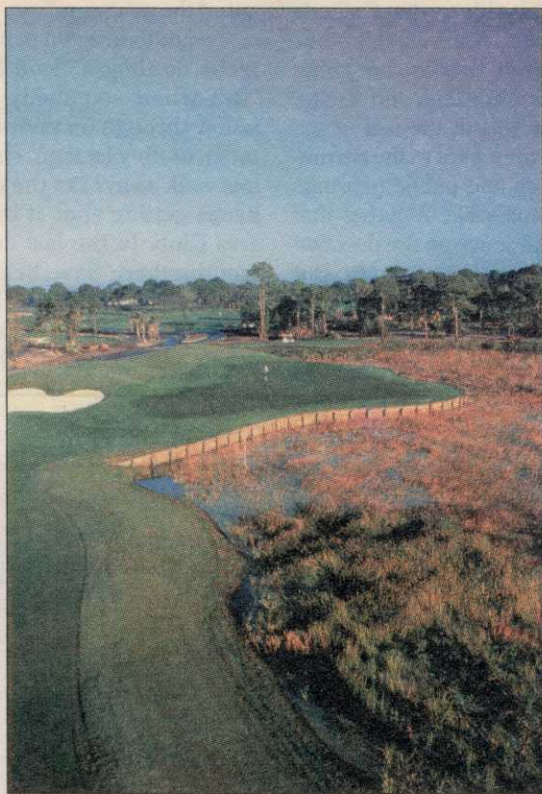


THE WORLD OF DEVELOPMENT IN '98

Much of the world has always revolved around children. Now the golf course industry has joined the rest of society — full-bore and with dedication. The overriding story of development in the past 12 months has been the full-tilt dive into building “beginners’ courses” to reach inner-city youths and others who have not had the opportunity to play the game. The new thrust is exemplified by The First Tee program, an effort spearheaded by literally the entire hierarchy of golf, from the PGA Tour and World Golf Village to the U.S. Golf Association, PGA of America and even Augusta National.

In the meantime, course construction in general continues at a 400-course-per-year pace. According to Judy Thompson at the National Golf Foundation, 396 courses had opened this year as of Nov. 4. This will be the fourth consecutive year that figure has topped 400. In October alone, construction began on 57 new courses and plans were announced for 48 others.

The boom continues all around.



The Indian River Club: an environmental winner.

Audubon cracks down on broken promises

By MARK LESLIE

SELKIRK, N.Y. — Probation. Excommunication. These terms that embody enmity are now part of the lexicon at Audubon International (AI), long a bastion of teamwork and cooperation.

While the majority of the 66 golf courses in the 4-year-old Audubon Signature Program are committed to it and swear by its effectiveness, others have fallen off the bandwagon, or perhaps were never aboard, according to AI President Ron Dodson.

Lamenting the fact that he had to, first, “place on probation,” then “excommunicate” one of the eight fully certified Audubon Signature facilities, Dodson said: “Our strongest program is only as strong as our weakest one, and we can’t allow people to make our name look weak. We already are being accused by

GCN MAY

other environmental groups of kowtowing to the golf course industry and giving away the Audubon name. But we don’t. People work for it and are proud of it.”

However, when The Champions Club at Summerfield in Stuart, Fla., did not correct some problems targeted in AI’s biannual audit, the club and the organization parted ways.

“We wrote and told them they are no longer to use Audubon International’s name or logo,” Dodson said. “They are to take their signs down and the Audubon print off the wall, and take all references to the Signature Program and Audubon International off their advertising materials and so on. More than that, we can not do.”

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Child’s Play in Kentucky

By MARK LESLIE

GCN JULY

LAWRENCEBURG, Ky. — A “kid’s course” built within the existing layout may prove a key option for golf facilities around the country, now that Bob-O-Link Golf Course has made the concept a reality.

On Father’s Day, Bob-O-Link opened its Kids Course within the 22-year-old track, thanks to owner Jack Ridge, who is also a golf course architect and president of a children’s golf-product company, Club Pro Products in Louisville.

“Golf has missed the boat,” Ridge declared. “Everybody’s mindset has been junior golf — teenagers — but no one has thought of kids up to 10 years old. That’s what separates this course.”

The idea for the Kids Course, he said, stemmed from parents who bought Club Pro clubs and bags, then asked

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Bob-O-Link Golf Course member Buddy Flora tends the 5-foot-tall flagstick for son Buddy Jr. as he puts into a Kids Course cup.

Notable Quotables

How much credit should land or design get in the top five courses in the world?



• ‘Very little is the design. Pebble Beach? Very little of the design. Pine Valley? Cypress Point? I have said a thousand times, Cypress

Point is the best piece of ground I’ve ever seen for a golf course. Take Cypress Point off that property and put it somewhere else, it’s just another golf course.’

— Jack Nicklaus, golf course designer and Tour pro

• ‘The bottom line is, this technology saves money, virtually eliminating change orders in renovations of existing courses.’

— Larry Rodgers of Larry Rodgers Design in Lakewood, Colo., concerning Global Positioning Satellites.

• ‘Donald Ross was no fool. He used all the good land back in 1917.’

— Brian Silva, golf course architect



• ‘I honestly don’t think anything unique has happened in course design in the last 20 years.’

— J. Michael Poellot, golf course architect



Certainly not your average backyard: the 2nd hole at Rich Harvest.

The back 40: Not your typical backyard

‘Seven or eight years ago, when the madness was at its height, many so-called courses were laid out over private grounds.’

— Van Tassel Sutphen in The Outing Magazine, 1906

By MARK LESLIE

The current rage of building putting greens, and entire golf holes, on a person’s property is not new, but rather a second coming of sorts. Two decades after Sutphen wrote those words in The Outing Magazine, Donald Ross laid out Overhills Golf

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Estate courses on the rebound

By MARK LESLIE

SUGAR GROVE, Ill. — Disappointed in Augusta National’s famous par-3 12th hole at Amen Corner, Jerry Rich came home to his 2,000-acre estate and

GCN MAY

built what he calls a better one. Disappointed in Augusta’s 200-yard-long Magnolia Lane, he built a Magnolia Lane of his own. It meanders across two miles.

This is Rich Harvest Links. This is Jerry Rich’s dream — a dream that grew from the idea of a modest couple of practice holes to a stunning facility that will open 18 championship-length holes this summer. Eighteen holes kept in tournament condition by a professional staff. Eighteen holes that, because of the positioning of multiple tees, can be played as five different nine-hole rotations. Eighteen holes that this 4-handicap golfer designed to display what he calls “purposefully eclectic to show the Scottish, Pine Valley and Traditional looks.”

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We're not police, says AI

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"Cannot do" because the Signature Program is voluntary, and AI is an environmental organization, not a regulatory agency.

"We're not the South Carolina Fish and Game. We're not the local planning board. We're not giving or denying permits," Dodson said.

The Signature Program grew out of the 9-year-old Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, which now boasts around 2,500 member courses, some in the far reaches of the world. While the Sanctuary System is for existing courses, the Signature Program was established "to provide a comprehensive, integrated approach to environmental planning" for developments still in the planning stages, so they could be built with Audubon's Principles for Sustainable Resource Management.

The Champions Club at Summerfield General Manager Jim Poole explained its withdrawal from the program simply: "We did not see the cost benefit of membership. We never had anybody say they played our golf course just because we were Audubon Signature status. We were Best New Golf Course in *Golf Digest* when we opened. We thought those particular accolades were strong enough to give us credibility."

Asked if the club had entered the Signature Program in 1994 because of a commitment to the environment, Poole, who came aboard last December, said: "We joined it more for marketing purposes, I guess."

He said the club, now fully owned by Fairway Properties of Cleveland, which bought it from ex-partner Riverside Golf a year ago, has not changed its maintenance regimen.

But Riverside Golf President Steve Melnyk said the split with Fairway came from "a clash of opinion about how these things should be run."

"We joined the Audubon program initially because we had an obligation and responsibility to be good stewards of the environment and this was a way for us to further that cause to a much higher level," Melnyk said. "As long as we were involved, we adhered to the somewhat fluid principles of the program."

Meanwhile, Dodson and Signature Program Director Nancy Richardson, who works from Henderson, Ky., are concerned about a case in which a golf course project joined the Signature Program, used its materials as support during the permitting process, then, after gaining approvals, pulled out of the program.

"From registration on, they did not participate in the [certifica-

tion] process," Richardson said. "The general manager said they were going to do certain things and they did not."

"Everything the National Audubon Society claimed about us, this outfit just did it," Dodson said. "They used our name. They used our materials. They waved their arms up and down and said,

'Look at this video, what Collier's Reserve did. We'll do this, too.' I'm not saying they are not going to do a nice job on their golf course. I don't know. But the fact of the matter is, they went to the permitting agency and public hearings with our materials. Whether that had any influence on the decision to permit them, I don't know. But as soon as they got through the process they decided they couldn't meet our guidelines and are now

out of the program."

"I want to brag on people who really do things," said Dodson. "But when somebody doesn't follow through on their commitment, or they let it go, should we just walk away? I'm the guy who keeps getting shot at by the Sierra Club. In the last couple of months there have been a half dozen facilities that we have removed from the Signature Program. We are taking their last

\$100 and applying it toward a year's membership in the Cooperative Sanctuary System when they open."

Officials at fully certified facilities say the program is well worth their efforts.

"Good environmental sense makes good economic sense," said Robert Swift, general manager of Indian River Club in Vero Beach, Fla., which in November

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We never said you wouldn't see unattractive spots on your course. They just won't be dollar spots.

Flat drainage pipe takes hold

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Operating on the philosophy that it is more profitable to reduce expenses through innovation than by cheapening the product, a growing number of golf course projects are installing or remodeling putting greens with a new drainage technique.

The key ingredient is a flat, perforated corrugated plastic pipe called AdvanEDGE, made by Advanced Drainage Systems, Inc.

(ADS) here. Developed in 1988 as an edge drain to be installed vertically alongside highways, AdvanEDGE reportedly has about twice the soil contact area of 4-inch round pipe, and will collect and drain water almost twice as quickly.

In the early 1990s, football stadiums began laying the pipe horizontally under the playing turf and found that this accelerated water collection from heavy rainfalls. The

concept has since spread to other recreational areas, and now golf courses.

Dr. Michael Hurdzan of Hurdzan-Fry Design here first adapted this product to the unique requirements of putting greens. David Whelchel, a project manager with Hurdzan-Fry, said anything that will make greens better and less costly to build will have bottom-line benefits to course managers.

"The flat-pipe idea just made a lot of

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Audubon

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1995 became the third course to earn Audubon Signature status. "Just about everything we've done as a participant in the Signature Program has or will have a positive economic benefit at some point as a payback.

"Everything we look at — every project, every capital expenditure, every operational decision — we have to consider on the basis of the payback. Does it enhance the value of the club, the value that our members perceive? Does it make for a better round of golf, pay for itself and bring money back to us? ... The programs we've undertaken have, by and large, demonstrated positive payback — some long-term, some short-term."

"At the end of the day, if you look long-term, I venture to say we're probably saving \$20,000 a year on water, energy, etc.," said George Kelley, co-owner of Stevinson (Calif.) Ranch Golf Club, which gained Signature status in September 1996. "I'm very surprised more developers have not joined the program. I believe they think it's like getting in bed with the big bad wolf."

"It's ironic that a golf course will irrigate 125 acres of turf, which costs a lot of money to build and maintain, and then say they don't have the money to be in the Signature Program," said Tim Hiers, superintendent at Collier's Reserve in Naples, Fla., the first facility in the country to become fully certified. "People will spend extravagant amounts of money in areas that many times will not have any benefit from Day One or forever. Or, some people will hide behind the statement: 'We don't have an unlimited budget.'"

"But, if you're a public golf course and think you can't afford to join, think about it. The intent is to use less water, pesticides, fuel, electricity, resources; to me that means spending less money. So how do you argue the program? It's because you don't really understand it."

The option of force is out. Facilities that join Audubon's programs sign no contract.

"If the program were ever required, it wouldn't work because the spirit would be gone," Hiers said. "It's a cooperative program. They want to attract people who already desire to do what Audubon wants them to do. If you heart's right and your intentions are right, you don't need a contract."

Discovering the heart of potential members perhaps is the best way to determine their membership. "There has to be some way to strengthen the commitment, but I think Audubon will have to do that in the early screening process," Hiers said.

And, indeed, Dodson said: "I'm increasingly turning down people who want to join."



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