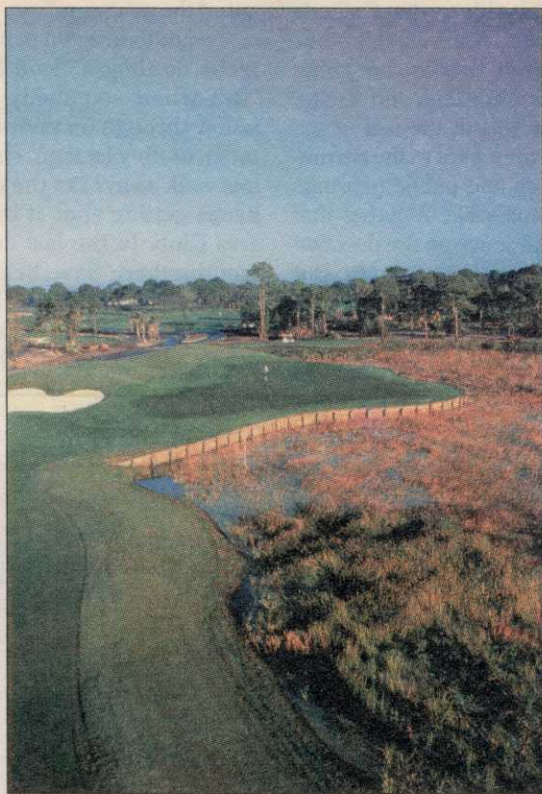


# THE WORLD OF DEVELOPMENT IN '98

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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## No normal backyard

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Course on the Rockefeller estate at Pinehurst, N.C. But in the ensuing 70 years not much was heard of personal practice greens — until now.

Today's second coming of "estate golf courses" is one of often more modest pretensions and dimensions than their predecessors. While the very wealthy operate in their own stratosphere (see sidebar), more people have the land for and can afford a single putting green, or a three- or six-hole practice facility.

"There is a big push everywhere to put in golf greens," said Rees Jones, who designed a course for an Atlantic Golf Club member across the road from the club itself in Bridgehampton, Long Island. "The impetus is not prestige. It's the love of the game. They love golf, and if they have enough property and money to do this... People landscape their yards and build patios or gardens. This is just another form of landscaping, but it's usable."

Others who have designed greens and short "backyard courses" agree.

"I think these are people working on their game, to develop their skills," said architect Ron Kirby who, when he worked with Denis Griffiths, enjoyed a 1,000-square-foot green and a handful of tees 30 yards away outside their office. "We had a tournament, The Greater Norcross Open, on it every year, and invited Tour players, owners and builders. Gary Player loved it. We'd drive with a plastic ball and putt with a golf ball."

Having designed three courses on estates along the Niagara escarpment in Quebec as "backyard improvements," David Moote said one of his clients was an elderly, non-golfing lady who simply wanted to look at a course in her back yard just to look at for its lines and aesthetics.

"This is not a prestige thing," Moote said. "The people I work for don't want the word to get out."

Estate courses run the gamut from opulent to frugal.

In recent years Mark McCumber's and Steve Melnyk's design companies helped build nine holes on Gilman Paper Co. owner Howard Gilman's northern Florida property, surrounded by endangered animals, equestrian trails and fishing.

Kirby designed "a spectacular" five-green, 13-tee course for Gulfstream jets owner Allan Paulson on seven acres in Savannah, built by Wadsworth Golf Construction Co.

Brian Silva designed a par-3 hole with a 5,000-square-foot green that can be played from 130 to 190 yards over multiple tees on the property of a Winged Foot member.

But Jim Osborn, whose Estate Golf in Greer, S.C., installs putting surfaces with artificial grass, said his greens cost between \$22 and \$25 per square foot to install. And he expects his demand this year to double over 1997, citing developers who "can now offer an amenity that was not available before, particularly with the level of performance the greens are at."

Usually given 130 or so acres of land to create regulation golf courses, the designers of these estate courses nevertheless have a soft place in their hearts for them.

"It looks really sharp," said Silva, who worked with Winged Foot superintendent Bob Alonzi on the member's practice hole. "I would kill for what he has in his back-

yard now. I would be proud to put it on any golf course."

Built on 1-1/2 acres, it contains one green — pear-shaped like those at Winged Foot — with a bunker on one side and grassy hollow on the other. The green is bentgrass and was built close to U.S. Golf Association specs. The tees directly line up with the green, but the tee to the right demands an off-angle shot.

"You can make one green play as if it's a number of different holes," Silva said. "From the regular tee you can roll the ball on. But on the right you'd have to hit a cut shot."

Jones recalled a short-game practice area

he built for a client in Nantucket, Mass., that boasts two bunkers, a chipping area, and 7,000-square-foot green. Guests are invited to a little competition from the various tees, the longest distance being 90 yards.

Carter Morrish, who designs golf courses with his father Jay, vividly recalls the "unbelievable landscaping" on a property upon the cliffs above Malibu to which he added four par-3 golf holes for highly ranked amateur Bill O'Connor. The three greens were designed to be played from both directions and the holes were from 50 to 100 yards long. The design featured rock formations, several sand bunkers

and a pond that fronted one green and pooled off into a creek.

Oftentimes, the problem with estate courses, Silva said, is "if you don't intensively maintain them, they deteriorate."

A lot of times, property owners/golfers find used equipment to maintain their courses, yet even walk-behind mowers can be expensive, Silva said, adding: "You have to spray the green, or use a granular fungicide. It will need some form of top dressing at some point. Because they don't get much foot traffic, don't get necessary top dressing, and are getting cut higher, they can thatch up."



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