

Accessibility, affordability, sustainability



Michael Levans,
editor

We've been writing about it in these pages for years. The American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) has been preaching it. Everybody in golf is talking about it. And now, finally, somebody is doing something about it.

Three cheers for The World Golf Foundation's The First Tee program.

If golf is going to continue to grow, it's going to need to need an influx of accessible, affordable, sustainable golf facilities. Through the help of The First Tee, consisting of funds donated by golf heavyweights like the PGA Tour and USGA, we just might get some.

If you haven't done so, turn back to the cover and read the story on The First Tee then turn to our Development section to read the related stories on Detroit's Belle Isle and Steve Champion's plans for his "family golf" development in Fort Worth, Texas.

This package of stories (see pages 58-59) might be the most important stuff we print this year. Everybody is jumping on board — ASGCA, GCSAA, LPGA among others — to offer funding or professional services not solely because it's good public relations, which it is, but because the industry can only benefit from an unselfish, combined effort. Everybody will win.

The industry has never seen an effort like this, and if the cards are played correctly over the next five years, it will never have to worry about concerted effort again. Developments of this nature will become commonplace, stories about Steve Champion's initiative in Fort Worth will become run-of-the-mill and the industry will have helped develop a new legion of devoted, highly-skilled golfers who learned every aspect of the game at age 6.

Tee times at the masterpieces will be booked solid in 2010 because tee times at Belle Isle were booked solid in 1998.

"Accessibility and affordability need to be the watch words for the next five years," said design guru Michael Hurdzan during an interview for the story.

Now, let's stick to this and see what happens.

Everybody is chatting about the possible Textron/Ransomes deal while word's out that John Deere's about to move into the golf car business. If you like spending time at the rumor mill, the upcoming show season promises to one of more satisfying in years.

I've had a few conversations with Peter Wilson, president and chief executive officer of Ransomes, and all we know at this point is that, as of December 22, the deal is in the hands of Ransomes stockholders (see story pg. 67).

For the record, the Ransomes and Jacobsen distributors we spoke with for the story are feeling good about the possibilities.

Ladies and gentlemen, golf's First Spokesman, Bill Clinton

Got a great idea for your New Year consideration: When Bill Clinton steps down as president, hire him as the spokesman for the golf industry. Hey, no sneers and jeers, please. Hear me out!

Here's a guy — better still, a golfer — who has maintained public support, even stayed out of jail, in the midst of all this chaos. So, just think what he could do working for an ethical, clean sport like golf.

I mean, our head of state has managed to keep his job despite Filegate, White Watergate, Travelgate, Troopergate and Indonesiagate as well as Jennifer Flowers and Paula Jones. He has survived Jocelyn Elders, Dick Morris, Web Hubbell, Craig Livingstone and Hazel O'Leary. For crying out loud, he has attained 60-percent approval rates despite Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and name-your-blunder; despite terrorists, drug dealers and spies being guests at the White House; despite his promise of a middle-income tax cut followed by a retroactive tax increase.

Heck, he even stayed afloat after it was revealed he and Hilary claimed tax deductions for used underwear they had given away.

Who better, I ask, than the man who will be The World's Most Famous Golfer (outside Michael Jordan, that is) — the ultimate spin-doctor-cum-golfer — to represent golf?

Beyond their innate bent toward high ethics, never again would anyone in the industry need to be concerned about, say, some sort of environmental accident, charge of elitism or racism, or any other politically incorrectivism.

Speaking of gaining good standing within the community, how about those folks at Belgrade Lakes Golf Club (BLGC)!

When an association of Belgrade Lakes residents needed another \$25,000 to be able to buy a mountain property and prevent its development, BLGC dropped the money in the can. It was more than a gesture, said managing partner Kyle Evans.

"We've said all along that we want to be part of the community," he said. "Only in a small town like this do you see things like that happening and we wanted to be a part of it."

BLGC partner Harold Alford, a major sports benefactor in Maine, "really loves this area," Evans said. "The land will be left open for public use — snowmobile trails, cross-country trails and hiking."

Golf course architect Rick Jacobson had an interesting take on whether there are enough good golf course builders to handle the boom in development. Featured in this month's Q&A (see page 47), Jacobson said:

"There is a concern at our end with the proliferation of new development. I guess, our rallying cry to developers would be: Consumer Beware!

Not only from the construction standpoint, but the design standpoint. Half the world's 50 million golfers are here in the U.S. and they are all armchair architects. People in every related field to golf course architecture are hanging out a shingle saying they are architects.

We've seen some unbelievable designs that were ready to proceed that had trouble written all over them.



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

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GOLF COURSE NEWS

GUEST COMMENTARY

Canadian golf management gets environmentally proactive

By MARK A. SCENNA

BURLINGTON, Ontario, Canada — In today's world, perception drives our society's opinion. Consequently, due to the lack of environmental initiatives, the golf course management industry has faltered.

It is no surprise that the public does not often equate the golf industry as environmentally proactive. Public-opinion polls

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suggest finely manicured turf is the result of an abundant use of pesticides and nutrients, unnatural to their surroundings.

This public perception can and has driven some government policies and regulations, some of which have created unnecessary burdens on the industry. The industry's developing and adopting standard environmental operating practices can go a long way in demonstrating to governments that it knows how to manage itself relative to environmental preservation.

Additionally, it assists members who may not be aware of current practices and proce-

dures. Finally, if properly promoted, development of standard procedures can demonstrate the industry's commitment to environmental preservation to the public, steering government regulations in accordance with industry initiatives.

I am very pleased to report that the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association (CGSA) has recognized the benefits of developing a standardized set of environmental operation guidelines and has addressed them by creating an Environmental Management Resource Manual.

The primary objective is to create a directory of information

sources that helps CGSA members (particularly course superintendents and assistant superintendents) address environmental management issues. In particular, the manual is to be created to ensure day-to-day operations comply with municipal, provincial and federal legislation, as well as current industry standards.

Additionally, the manual is being created to demonstrate industrywide due-diligence efforts that protect and enhance the image of the golf course management industry.

Most importantly, the Environmental Management Resource

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"Masters"

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carry shots. So, you think Mr. Nicklaus invented this design? Think again, as you read what William S. Flynn wrote in the *USGA Green Section Bulletin* in October 1927:

"America has developed a more or less stereotyped shot to the green that is the high, all-carry shot. This has been brought about, no doubt, by the fact that fairways and particularly approaches have gone unwatered during the summer when the ground has become hard. It is much simpler to play a high carry shot to a soft green which gets water than to attempt a pitch-and-run to a green with a cement-like approach."

• And, is it a new thing to have equipment changes affect course design? Here's Thomas again, zeroing in on the U.S. Golf Association's regulations levied on golf balls: "These changes ... make the problem of the constructor more confused than ever, because he must endeavor to prepare his entire course for a variable standard, and must provide, for the exasperating problem, a green which later will take care of any oval, balloon, or cannon-ball upon which the governing body may insist."

Don't you just love it?

Other insights abound, and many will take you aback. For instance, what would A.W. Tillinghast have thought about today's penchant for 7,000-yard courses? "The fetish of distance is worshipped entirely too often and there should be a quick end to it," he wrote in *Golf Illustrated* in March 1935. "Very recently, in California during one of the open tournaments, we heard a noted player asked his opinion of the course. 'It's too damned long' came the instant and candid reply — and this answer was made by one of the longest hitters in our land. And with

this note of confidence from one for whom long holes have no terrors, we are for the present content to rest our case."

Also, we hear the claim that today's golfers — especially Americans — are wimps. If so by 1990s standards, how would they have fared in 1935 when Tillinghast wrote: "No doubt, many of the hazard-shirking fraternity would declare that playing a wayward ball from such places was entirely too difficult. What utter nonsense! There were and are shots that will do it; another generation knew how to play them, and it is not altogether pleasant to think that golfers of today are going soft. Possibly a bit more sting in the rod of golf chastisement in these, or modern times, would render it more of an achievement to break par so habitually."

Obviously, Tilly thought the golfers of his day were thin-skinned about playing the ball as it lies, compared to their colleagues of the past.

His thoughts are echoed by Tom Doak, who may have penned my favorite quote in the book. In his *Play It as It Lies*, Doak said: "Modern American golf design is modeled on the same principles as our ailing criminal justice system: We build more water hazards [prisons], but they only house the disadvantaged, while the elite receive suspended sentences."

No self-respecting retrospective would leave out the great Dr. Alister MacKenzie. Here, MacKenzie wrote in the January 1934 edition of *Golfing Magazine* that any artificial lake should have a clear bottom so that balls can be recovered. "There is no thrill in driving over an ugly hazard," he said. To make his point he recalled many years ago "seeing a peppery Major at Strensall in Yorkshire, England, top three balls into an extremely muddy pond. The ugliness of the hazard and his bad play irritated him so much that he threw his club after his ball, then he threw his whole bag in and when his small caddie

began to laugh he chuckled him in, too!"

And no self-respecting collection would be without an introspective description of St. Andrews and its place in the world of golf. This one comes from Robert Hunter, who at times assisted MacKenzie and H. Chandler Egan in design, as it appeared in *The American Golfer* in January 1927:

"Where else in the world do we find a course to which all great players journey and where all ages and abilities meet and all praise with equal fervor? What other course can we all name which defies the champions and yet delights tottering old age? What other course can be played with a putter — the Swilken Burn being, in that case, the only serious obstacle — and at the same time be spoken of, by those qualified to speak, as the best course in the world..."

"Every time I visit St. Andrews my love and admiration for it increase. I should rather play that course for the rest of my life than any other I know. I should never grow weary of it; nor should I ever conquer it; and every round would whet my appetite to tackle it again on the morrow."

GUEST COMMENTARY

Canada

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Manual will incorporate the CGSA mission statement into practice. That is, the CGSA is a society committed to excellence in golf course management and environmental responsibility through the continuing professional development of its members.

A "user-friendly" theme will focus on interpreting environmental law into laymen's terms, while clearly outlining requirements of what must and should be done to be in compliance.

Due to the sheer amount of information gathered, teaching aids such as "Did You Know ..." and "Plain English, Eh!" are used to make an easy-to-read format. In addition to a glossary, numerous "Q&A" scenarios will be brought forward, as well as professional insight from industry leaders, such as golf course architects, engineers and turf advisors. In other words, the Environmental Management Resource Manual will be something the membership will use.

The manual is to be divided up into nine parts:

Section 1 — Introduction (purpose, how to use the manual)

Section 2 — An Explanation of Regulatory Requirements (i.e. municipal, provincial and federal)

Section 3 — Important Steps To Avoid Being Investigated

Section 4 — Maintenance Facility Operations (includes pesticide licensing requirements, to fuel storage)

Section 5 — Course Renovation and Redesign (includes permit requirements, to erosion control)

Section 6 — Environmental Monitoring (i.e. pesticide and fertilizer nutrients)

Section 7 — IPM

Section 8 — Environmental Enhancement Projects (i.e. Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program and the Golf Course

N.D. getting ready

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was under water for 40 days. Superintendent Mark Lindberg said the course is still recovering. One-hundred acres were overseeded with rye grass for fast growth. These have to be overseeded with the normal bluegrass/fescue mix.

"Although," said Linberg, "if it's going to keep flooding, we may keep it in rye."

About 10 percent of the roughs have yet to be reseeded. The course opened in early July, and because of the silt which remained after cleaning, "pick and clean" was the name of the game.

Course mechanic Doug Klemetson related that walk-behind, rather than triplex mowers, were used on the greens, of which only four survived the flood. He described the course as being in bowl, with a protective dike of 28 feet. Water above that level comes in from all directions, and with the river at 54 feet, there was no protection.

At the Grand Forks Country Club, where damages were in the quarter million dollar area, the pumphouse and computer system were wasted, said mechanic Dan Knoblich.

Superintendents Association of America's Steward Awards)

Section 9 — Communication (with members, media and the general public)

Sections 4-7 will conform to the following structure:

1) Introduction.

2) Regulatory Requirements to summarize how the topic is governed in Canada and by whom (i.e. municipalities, provincial bodies, or federal institutions).

3) Standard Operating Practices is the heart of each topic. Figures, tables, contact numbers for individual provinces

and discussions of all relevant issues are discussed here.

4) Colleague Examples outline what the industry has adopted from legislative requirements. Pro-active superintendents' case histories are included, as well as industry leaders' opinions on the subject matter.

The project team consists of Kirk Morrison (co-writer), President of Bel•MK Engineering Ltd., Calgary, Alberta, who has extensive experience in assembling environmental codes of practice for a number of industries, and me. A steering committee has been comprised for editing purposes and is headed by Environmental Committee Chairman Jay Leach (CGSA's Alberta director), superintendent at Cottonwood Golf and Country Club in Dewinton, Alberta, and includes golf course superintendents across the country.

Both the steering committee and writers were intentionally chosen from all sides of the country in order to create a holistic document that would have a national focus.

It is nearing its completion, and sponsorship opportunities are still available for the copy, binding and distribution process. Interested industry affiliates should contact Vince Gillis, CGSA executive director, at 905-602-8873.



Mark Scenna

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