

Two very strong voices at PGF

How many times do things work out just the way you planned?

In approaching the development of this year's Public Golf Forum, we had a couple of ideal scenarios set up for our two keynote slots — both just happened to work out just the way we planned.

We couldn't be happier to announce that Greg Norman and Dr. Michael Hurdzan will be this year's dynamic duo at Public Golf Forum, the *Golf Course News*-sponsored business conference and expo for superintendents, owners, managers and developers of public-access golf facilities on October 26 & 27 at Rancho Las Palmas Marriott Resort in Palm Springs, California (see cover story).

The idea is to open an exchange of ideas on how the industry can continue to move public-access golf ahead and help it remain the hottest trend in golf. To do this, the promotion of affordable, sustainable course design, smarter management and innovative maintenance techniques are absolutely paramount. We feel we have two of the strongest voices in the industry to kick off two days of conference sessions covering these three critical fields.

What can I say about The Shark that hasn't already been said? His designs are in play around the world, and with Greg Norman Turf up and running, he has moved into the realm of specialty warm season grasses to augment his design business.

Norman's Tour resume is hard to believe: PGA Tour all-time money winner; 83 career victories through May '98; two-time British Open winner; three-time Vardon Trophy winner; held the No. 1 world ranking for a record 331 weeks. Even with the bad shoulder his current world ranking is No. 4.

Dr. Michael Hurdzan, president of Columbus, Ohio-based Hurdzan-Fry Golf Course Design Inc. has become the guru of the environmentally sensitive public golf design.

Hurdzan's environmentally sound projects are gaining worldwide recognition. *Golf World Magazine's* 1997 Architect of the Year, Hurdzan's most recent accolade includes *Golf Digest's* Environmental Leaders in Golf Award for his work at Widow's Walk Golf Course in Scituate, Mass., America's first environmental demonstration course. With our move to sunny Palm Springs, I would expect it's going to be standing room only.



Michael Levans,
editor

Golf historians help me out. The USGA contends that today's technology, combined with a higher skill level, is slowly, but surely, pushing golf's historic venues into the far reaches of obscurity. Let's take a look at the winning scores of U.S. Opens held at Baltusrol GC. The winning score of the Open held at Baltusrol in 1903 was 307. The 1915 winning score was 297, a drop of 10 strokes. In 1936 it was 282, a drop of 25 strokes. What happened in those 33 years to bring about such a change?

In 1967 the winner shot 275. In '80 it was 272. In '93 it was 272. That's only a 3-shot difference in 26 years. One other note: The change in the winning Master's score since 1934, the first year of the tournament, has dropped about 2 strokes a round since that first tourney.

in 44 other countries.

All of us are concerned and involved with the growth and prosperity of our Royal & Ancient game. In any SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of golf development today, one of the threats would be a widely accepted mythology generated over the years — much of which is simply not valid.

Take location: which the pundits tell us is the triple secret of property success. Golf developers in particular should beware

Resist and refuse to double under

Does this country have a backbone or a wishbone? The question begs to be asked in various other ways, replacing "country" with "political party," "religion," "race," "sex" ... Let's look at the golf industry. Backbone or wishbone?

When we see or hear something we disagree with, do we wish for it to go away or that someone else will speak out, or do we have the backbone to refute, resist and refuse to double under?

When a Sierra Clubite calls a golf course a toxic dump, do we stand up, speak up and slam down the slur?

"Many of us are in search of truth," Dr. Joe Vargas of Michigan State once said. "But it's obvious there is a group of people who have an agenda, and that agenda is that golf courses are toxic dumps, unsafe places. And the National Audubon Society knew if it started certifying golf courses as being safe places, many of the people who give them money and want to believe golf courses are toxic dumps would give that money elsewhere."

Refute, resist and refuse to double under.

When a Los Angeles city councilman calls for a 300-foot buffer (and, honest, this happened) to protect the Slender-horned SpineFlower on a golf course site, do we ask the dear fellow if he has any clue that that is 100 yards and he couldn't sprint that distance in 30 seconds?

"Getting a permit [in Calif.] is like climbing Mt. Everest with tennis shoes," Robert Trent Jones Jr. once said.

Refute, resist and refuse to double under.

When a state or federal environmental agency makes a decision on a development based on flimsy reasoning and absolutely no scientific facts, do we challenge the integrity of their "little gray cells"?

"Environmentalists do not bull— me. When they tell me something, I say, 'What's your source?' They always promise to send me their source, but I never get it. It's usually hearsay or a misquote," Dr. Mike Hurdzan once said.

Refute, resist and refuse to double under.

We're seeing more and more positive signs like these that illustrate, yes, indeed, this industry does have backbone.

We wish kids would get off the streets. A couple of months ago Wadsworth Golf Construction Co. President and Mrs. Brent Wadsworth created a foundation to help do just that.

We wish more youths and others would take up the game of golf. A few months ago, the major players in the game — from the USGA and PGA Tour to the PGA of America, LPGA and Augusta National — stepped up to the plate and created The First Tee. Response around the country has been phenomenal, overwhelming officials of the fledgling program.

We wish Paul Harvey would, for once, investigate claims about golf and wildlife, golf and the environment, golf and cancer, etc., etc. before he declares outright lies to a listening audience of millions.

Well, here's the latest example of golf industry backbone. Golf icon Pete Dye decided he would take on radio icon Harvey. That is, he would downright prove him wrong ... through science ... on a real live golf course ... in the worst of situations, because runoff from a major highway will mingle with pesticides and fertilizers on the course ... and financed by private individuals so that no one on God's green earth can claim "foul" or bias.

Yes, Paul Harvey started it. But Pete Dye and Purdue University researchers will finish it. (See page 1 story.) It may seem like David versus Goliath. But, remember who won that battle.

Many have hailed Dye as the resident genius of golf course architects. We hold him up as an example of resident backbone for the golf industry.

May more of us refute, resist and refuse to double under.



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

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GUEST COMMENTARY

Appraisal is the only prudent first step for any golf development

This guest commentary follows the recent lecture given by Bryan Griffiths, a consulting golf architect and chairman of Golfconsult International, at Fairway 98 in Munich.

By BRYAN GRIFFITHS

In European Union (EU) countries, the fallout from the unprecedented golf growth in recent years has yielded valuable lessons which are the basis of this article, taken from the EU's most mature golf market — Britain; but also from personal experience with over 200 golf developer and investment clients

in 44 other countries.

All of us are concerned and involved with the growth and prosperity of our Royal & Ancient game. In any SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of golf development today, one of the threats would be a widely accepted mythology generated over the years — much of which is simply not valid.

Take location: which the pundits tell us is the triple secret of property success. Golf developers in particular should beware

of such sloppy thinking. Of course, location is one key factor but many a course in a good location has suffered problems thanks to other important reasons, recent experiences alone should show us this.

My favoured list of success factors would be compatibility (between the demand and product profile), appraisal, location and finance. As it happens, the acronym CALF is a reminder that location is not all: any golf appraisal will surely confirm this.

Although television has

changed the face of golf and led to phenomenal recent growth, the Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews (R&A) also played its part with a supply study in 1989. This study forecast that 700 more courses were required by AD 2000: but it did not warn of the pitfalls.

Feverish course building followed — 600 or so courses since then. Many were ill conceived and many are still in financial difficulties. More recently rounds per annum (rpa) have

Continued on page 66