



Dr. Michael Hurdzan

*For golf to grow we must have "bunny slope" golf courses.'*

## Impacts of boom on development

By DR. MICHAEL J. HURDZAN

By any measure, the game of golf is expanding. More players are being attracted to the game, equipment sales are at all-time highs, a record number of golf courses are being built around the world, and more total rounds of golf are being played. It is hard to imagine there can be many negative aspects to this unprecedented growth. But there are.

- People just taking up the game usually are uneducated in its rules and traditions.
- Not enough golf facilities are geared for beginners.
- The boom has brought increased environmental opposition and restrictions.
- There has been an explosion in people calling themselves golf course designers.
- Competitiveness has lessened between experienced contractors.

Since beginning golfers have garnered ideas from watching the pros on television, this has led to very slow rounds of golf by people who think they are being individually harassed by rangers because they are beginners, and they often take it personally. They see no difference between their behavior and that of professional golfers on TV. They just have to do it more often.

Having a golf course full of slow players seriously complicates the fine art of "rangering," or the more politically correct "play coordination," for there are no big gaps between groups, just bunches of little ones like cars in a rush-hour creep.

Such situations can easily lead to flared tempers and harsh words, six-hour rounds of golf, and ill feelings for the game by everyone. Such things are not good for the game, and there are few places for beginners to learn golf etiquette and have a pleasurable introduction to golf.

Another problem of the boom is that there are simply not enough golf facilities geared for beginners. Imagine the problem if alpine ski resorts only built expert trails and ignored the novice and intermediate ones. In essence, this is what the golf industry has done since the emphasis shifted to upscale facilities and virtually ignored simple, low-cost beginner courses.

Convincing golf course developers that these are desirable, profitable investments and a wise use of land is another story. The First Tee program is a great start, but it cannot possibly satisfy the entire demand. For golf to grow we must have "bunny slope" golf courses.

The proliferation of golf courses has also been complicated by increasing environmental opposition and restrictions. Some people worry that there will be too many courses, so they take on a mission to make golf course permitting and build-

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## Lakes and ponds: design, construction, maintenance

By MAC McCUNE

On nearly every golf course, water plays a major role in several ways — aesthetics, course hazards, drainage, irrigation and even, in some cases, wetland mitigation. However, lakes and ponds can be notoriously high maintenance, depending on geographic location, design and soil conditions.

Most golf course ponds are built to create a water hazard and use the dirt to elevate the course and/or greens. Because of this, the economics of spending a lot of money to minimize future problems usually isn't considered feasible.

However, most of these ponds will need major restoration work with time due to sedimentation, shoreline erosion, organic loading and a lack of proper maintenance.

When a lake or pond is constructed, an aquatic ecosystem is created that may have never have occurred naturally. Nature has a pre-chartered course for this impoundment. Unfortunately, this course is not conducive to urbanization. All lakes and ponds, whether natural or man-made,

undergo a process called eutrophication. This is the aging of a body of water and leads to its eventual extinction and transformation into a swamp.

This process may take 100 years, or only 10. The design, construction and maintenance dictate the rate of eutrophication. Eutrophication involves a filling-in process from sedimentation, erosion, grass clippings, tree limbs and leaves, and the natural succession of aquatic plant communities which develop and die annually. This organic load, combined with incoming silt, becomes deposited on the basin, causing the pond to become shallower.

If aerobic conditions are not maintained, this muck will begin to rot, causing foul odors, algae blooms, low or depleted dissolved oxygen and dirty water.

The design and construction of a pond will determine most of the future problems it will encounter. Minimizing the filling in of the pond will eliminate the need for dredging it in the future. This becomes even more important due to the

method and expense of dredging, the significant downtime, golf play alterations, foul odors and unsightliness.

Once the ponds are designed and built properly, they must be maintained just as with any living ecosystem such as a garden or even as a swimming pool.

Designing a pond is generally fairly simple once the location and soil conditions are determined, as well as any potential influencing factors like primary purpose(s), runoff, type of watershed, future accessibility, etc.

The first thing to be determined is if the pond will hold water. Soil with a Permeability Index (PI) of 25 to 40 is the most desirable. The best method to determine this is to have a geotechnical firm punch core samples down the center line of the pond. This will determine the soil type as well as any shallow subsurface ground water. If the soil falls below a PI of 20, the contractor will most likely need to line or seal the pond with either clay or bentonite (a premium grade drilling mud).

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## Multiple methods can ensure clean water, ecosystem

By JEFF ALDERMAN

COSTA MESA, Calif. — Costa Mesa Country Club in Orange County, is enjoying clear lakes thanks to a combination of innovative technologies.

Previously, Costa Mesa's lakes and ponds were filled with algae, lacked clarity, emitted foul odors, and were stagnant. They are now clear, sparkling bodies of water, where golf balls are seen by moonlight at water depths exceeding 10 feet. Algae has greatly diminished, with no chemical treatment.

The systems complement the natural aquatic ecosystem, supporting healthy, growing populations of fish and hundreds of ducks and coots.

The design augments, and operates in conjunction with, the lake's natural ecological systems using durable, low energy-consumptive systems to attain and maintain water quality and clarity. Maintenance is much easier and less frequent with lower maintenance costs.

The main components and systems of this design include the following:

• **Gravel Bed Biological Filter System:** This consists of a large gravel bed, with a pump/mechanical system. Properly sized and designed, the gravel bed operates as a natural filter, where nutrients and organic matter are digested by bacteria colonies as the water gently passes through. It also mechanically filters out particulate matter and turbidity, and has a natural appearance. The vertical turbine pumps are very efficient, and there are no expensive underground vaults.

• **Aeration System:** This consists of an air compressor which provides cool air flow, and continuous distribution tubing installed throughout the lake bottoms. This continually adds oxygen to the water, oxidizing much of the organic matter and nutrients in the lakes. Properly designed and installed systems also thoroughly mix ("turn over") the lake water column. A uniform aerobic condition per-



One of the elements that ensured clear water for Costa Mesa Country Club.

mits aquatic life to thrive throughout the lake, eliminating "fish kills" which normally occur at night, or during climatic changes.

• **Ozone System:** Operating in conjunction with the aeration system, this provides a greater degree of treatment to the lake water, giving it greater clarity. Ozone also prevents the build-up of calcium, other minerals, and matter which may tend to clog the slits of the aeration tubing, thus extending the life of the tubing and decreasing maintenance. An adequate ozone system breaks down much of the organic matter and nutrients which feed algae and "cloud" the water. Ozone also directly kills and destroys algae to some extent. The newer ozone generators are safer and more powerful, efficient, and cost-effective than those of the past.

Other, less vital, components which typically are included, are:

• **Skimmer box intakes** to continually remove unsightly debris on the water surface, eliminate stagnation "dead spots," and provide better lake-water circulation. Straining the water through the baskets of skimmers removes larger debris and particulates.

• **Lake-edge discharge "jets"** to better circulate the lake water, and to eliminate "dead spots."

• **Waterfalls and fountain jets** to give dramatic, aesthetic effects to water bodies. They also add some water circulation, and a small amount of aeration. However, the aeration benefit is very small, and is no substitute for the primary aeration systems.

Without proper treatment, the water quality and clarity of golf course lakes and water hazards is generally very poor, with a large amount of turbidity, organic matter, nutrients and algae. By contrast, successfully designed projects range from lakes and reservoirs of several acres in size, to small ponds and fountains — from newly constructed water bodies, to renovations of existing lakes. This includes the transformation of lakes which previously had appeared to have been beyond hope, as well as those which are fed by treated effluent.

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## Impacts of boom

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ing more difficult.

Every little agency seems to have its own view of how to protect the environment from golf, and little or none of it is based on science. Golf courses are erroneously seen as threats, so that the more courses are proposed or built, the more restrictions these agencies seem to conjure up.

These are not bad folks. They are very well-meaning, concerned citizens, who simply cannot justify the alleged risks over the potential benefit that a golf course can bring to their communities. So, the problem is that with increased restrictions come increased requirements for lengthy studies, expanded buffer zones and esoteric consultants. These can dramatically increase the overall cost of a course, so it no longer

can be made affordable and accessible to the majority of people who live in that community.

I have worked on many projects in recent years where hundreds of thousands of dollars were misspent to appease some ill-founded bias about golf courses, at the ultimate expense to the community. To find the reasonable middle ground will require open minds, compromise and collaboration by all parties.

Therefore, industry-wide support of the national Golf and Environment movement is essential.

Another problem spawned by the golf boom has been an explosion in the number of people offering golf course design services. Since this is a completely unregulated profession, the only thing a person needs to call himself a golf course designer is a client willing to spend money turning a piece of land into a place to play golf.

The problem is, many of these inexperienced designers do not have a clue of the long-term implications of many of the decisions they will be required to make, and some of those bad decisions could have devastating consequences. The mistakes I see most often have to do with safety, security and liability implicit in the golf business.

Specifically, crowding golf holes too close together or to property lines, not anticipating probable play zones, improper grading of land, and golf holes that might look good but play weird. The cost and liability of such mistakes will not go away and will continually and legally loom over the head of both the designer and the owner. Buyer beware.

Likewise the golf boom has reduced the competitiveness between experienced contractors, for there is so much work they can charge more. In order to satisfy the demand for getting courses built, new construction costs are rising, or new construction companies are emerging.

Former employees of qualified contractors are forming their own companies, which not only lowers the experience level of the original contractor, but usually means that the new company has only one or two people who know how to properly build a course.

If the course architect holds the new contractor to the same high standards he is used to, then the work slows down while untrained crews try to figure out how to deliver quality. This often means missed target dates or settling for a lower quality of finished product — and at a higher cost. In the long run, this might be very good for golf for many people will know how to build quality courses. But, right now it is a problem.

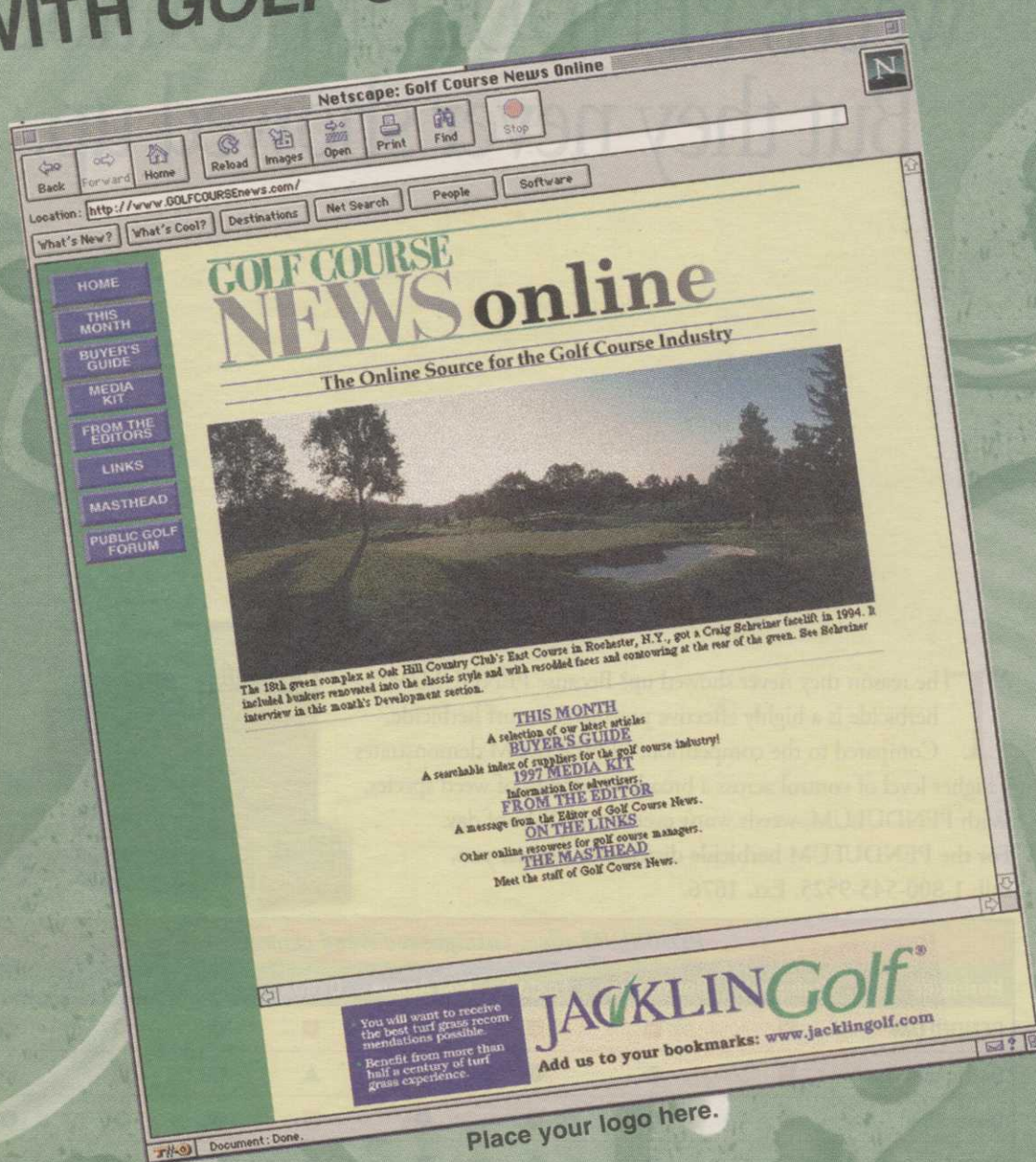
The golf boom has also meant more opportunities for golf pros, superintendents, salespeople and suppliers. Never before has there been so much opportunity for young professionals to get a "top" job, albeit at a less-prestigious course. It could be argued that this lack of apprenticeship time would erode professional standards and ethics, as well as salary levels, but that may not be fully known until the boom ends.

Like all booms, this too, will end. When it does, we will be left with more golfers playing more rounds of golf, an excess of environmental regulations, lots of designers, contractors, pros and superintendents competing for the available work, and a buyer's market for everything that is golf.

It will be a test of survival, and those with the most solid foundation and track record of quality will make it through.

Many of us saw this same scenario played out from 1975-1980 or so, and although it wasn't pretty, it was probably needed to zero out many of the negative trends started during the 1965-1974 boom. Not every cloud has a silver lining.

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