

PGF: The space between

A music professor once told me that it's not so much the notes that make a particular piece of music interesting, but the space between those notes.

When you're making out your list of reasons why you should attend Public Golf Forum, keep that in mind.

I can name two excellent reasons why you need to be there — keynoters Greg Norman and Dr. Michael Hurdzan. Those two are obviously at the top of your list.

Add our three tracks of conference sessions covering Management/Marketing (see cover story), Development and Maintenance, as well as our First Tee General Session moderated by Executive Director Todd Leiweke, and I can easily say that this year's PGF line up is the best we've ever had. Now, let your eyes gaze over page 12 and start dialing.

But outside of the structured events and sessions is another element that ends up, from what our event surveys tell us, as being absolutely priceless — the time between the sessions.

For the past three years comments about the networking opportunities have been just as "raving" as the comments on the conference content. Lunch time at PGF, I was told by a golf course architect, "is one of the best deal-making opportunities of the year."

The PGF attendee is generally hungry for knowledge. Not only are they owners, operators and superintendents of existing public golf facilities who want to boost their business, but I'm surprised at how many attendees are making their first leap into the business. These "first timers" are looking for answers, and they're not afraid to ask questions, as many of last year's speakers can attest.

If you're shy, get over it. Following a speaker into the hallway for comments and questions after a session is fairly commonplace and highly encouraged by *Golf Course News* staffers.

And if you're on the fence, let me ask you something. What is the cost of not attending? What is the cost of that one new idea you didn't implement at your course? Now take that list of reasons, ball it up and toss it. You're going.



Michael Levans,
editor

We've been extremely fortunate over the past year to have Andrew Overbeck reporting in from his travels through Asia during his Watson Fellowship. Thanks to Andy, *Golf Course News* has had the most detailed insight into the state of golf in

Asia during the economic meltdown. Even though Andy is back on U.S. soil, he will be following up on his travels and checking on the progress of all the new projects, as well as suspended projects, that he's mentioned in his pieces. We want to thank Andy for the great work and assure our readers that you haven't read the last of him.

CONTACT GCNI

Trevor Ledger /GCNI
International Bureau Chief
Goose Cottage,
Victoria Road
Market Drayton, Shropshire
England TF9 3DW
Phone: 44 1630 656833
Fax: 44 1630 656829
TLedger1@aol.com

Living labs could shake foundation

Heads up, Rachel Carsonites of the world. The list of "living laboratories" is about to get longer and, with it, the ability of American universities to produce scientific proof of the effects of golf course maintenance practices on wildlife and ground and surface water.

You want to show that golf courses are a blight on the earth? These "living laboratories" could be your key. But, be warned: They could prove the opposite. And if they do, be prepared to find another adversary, another "behemoth of big business" to stop in the planning board meetings, city councils and courts of the land.

North Carolina State University is the latest to announce it will build a golf course to serve as a laboratory as well as playing field (see page 1 story). NC State will join Clemson, Purdue and Kansas State universities and SUNY at Delhi in this elite class.

Meanwhile, Schuyler Meadows Golf Club has been serving for the last two years as a research property for the Sienna College-Audubon International Institute in Newtonville, N.Y. Dr. Larry Woolbright, Sienna professor and Institute research director, is overseeing long-term studies at Schuyler Meadows.

At NC State, as at the other schools, people "have been very supportive of the fact that this is going to be a teaching and research tool as much as it is a recreational facility," said Dr. Charles Peacock.

NC State teaching staff and students will use the new Tom Fazio-designed course to study "everything you can think of," Peacock said, later adding: "We want a model for other people to follow."

Eight to 10 years ago, people in the golf industry declared that long-term studies of this nature were sorely needed. Yet there existed no operating golf course where such research could be done. Today, that lack has been remedied. Stay tuned for the results. They could shake the foundation of the Sierra Club, *Earth First!* and others of that nature.



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

"I left here a couple evenings at 9 o'clock and it was still above 100 [degrees]," said Keith Ihms, superintendent at Bent Tree Country Club in Dallas and president of North Texas GCSA. "We peaked out at this club on July 12, it was 111."

Some of us can only try to imagine what the Texas superintendents have endured this summer. But you have to talk to them for the best word picture.

"We have earth-cracks in our rough that you could lose your leg down," said Bruce Burger at The Quarry Golf Club in San Antonio. "The rain report is scary," said Ihms. "We got 8 inches of rain in January to March and then it quit. We didn't have a spring. It was cold and then it was hot."

Meanwhile, superintendents had to be particularly concerned about their employees' health.

"We supply our staff with sun shade, helmets and water coolers for water and Gatorade. We check on them and make sure we won't have somebody fall out on us," said Mike Sandburg at Lakeside Country Club in Houston and vice president of South Texas GCSA. "There have been 20-25 deaths in the Houston area due to the heat."

LETTER TO THE EDITOR/CORRECTION

Credit where credit is due

We were very interested in reading the feature story in *Golf Course News* about Bob-O-Link "Kids Course" in Lawrenceburg, Ky. (GCN July, 1998).

Your reporter, Mark Leslie, credited Bob-O-Link and its owner, Jack Ridge, with pioneering this concept which is, in fact, incorrect. In 1997, Fripp Island Resort in South Carolina became one of the first golf resorts to offer a "kids-sized" course aimed at the 10-and-under age group.

Called "Wee Links," this children's golf program re-

ceived the "Best New Idea" award at the 1997 meeting of the National Golf Course Owners Association, and has been featured in *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune* and *Southern Living*. The Wee Links course was designed by Sean Lamb, head professional at Fripp Island's Ocean Point Golf Links, and is played on our three courses: Ocean Point, Ocean Creek and South Carolina National on nearby Cat Island.

—Charlie Bohmert, director of golf & Sean Lamb, head professional.

Edit Note: The following is a news item from July, 1997.

FRIPP ISLAND, S.C. — For children ages 5-12 who want to play golf, Fripp Island Resort in South Carolina operates a "Wee Links" program, played on the resort's three golf courses — Ocean Point Golf Links, Ocean Creek Golf Course and South Carolina National on nearby Cat Island. Available year round, Wee Links offers children a chance to play alongside adults and still keep pace with the game.

"Young golfers are often unable to compete with parents or siblings on courses designed for adults," said Sean Lamb, Ocean Point's head golf professional. "With the Wee Links course, they can build their confidence and have fun on a course designed especially for them."

Recognized by the National Golf Course Owners Association as "Best New Idea" for 1997 and featured in *USA Today*, the Wee Links course is a modified version of Fripp Island's Ocean Point adult course and was designed to avoid most of the course's hazards and common trouble areas. At 2,000 yards long, it is approximately one-third the course's normal length. Children can play from shortened tees on the course's par-3 to par-5 holes, which average 100 yards each.

Wee Links is available from 1 to 3 p.m. year round for \$10 per round. In the summer, youngsters can also get in an evening round after 5:30 p.m. Adults can play Ocean Point Golf Links between noon and 4 p.m. for \$44 and after 4 p.m. for \$35. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

GOLF COURSE NEWS

THE NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

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Editorial Office

Golf Course News
Box 997, 106 Lafayette Street

Yarmouth, ME 04096
207-846-0600; Fax: 207-846-0657

mlevans@golfcoursenews.com
mleslie@golfcoursenews.com

ADVERTISING OFFICES

National Sales:

Charles E. von Brecht
Box 997, 106 Lafayette Street

Yarmouth, ME 04096
207-846-0600; Fax: 207-846-0657

cvonb@golfcoursenews.com

Western Sales:

Robert Sanner
Western Territory Manager

2141 Vermont
Lawrence, KS 66046

785-842-3969; fax: 785-842-4304

Account Manager

Jean Andrews
P.O. Box 51

Fryburg, Maine 04093
Phone/FAX 207-925-1099

Marketplace Sales:

Jean Andrews
Phone/FAX 207-925-1099

Public Golf Forum Sales
Dean DeLuca

207-846-0600; fax: 207-846-0657

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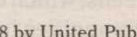
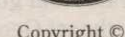
Golf Course News, P.O. Box 3047
Langhorne, PA 19047

215-788-7112
United Publications, Inc.

Publishers of specialized business
and consumer magazines.

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