

Point/Counterpoint: \$1 million versus \$10 million golf courses

POINT • DR. MICHAEL HURDZAN:

Dana, I want you to listen to why it is important to build cost-effective golf courses. We need to build low-cost golf courses and these are the reasons why:

First, why do people play the game of golf? The reason they play is not necessarily because of celebrities, or tournaments, or magazines. The reasons have more to do with the spiritual refreshment, the ethereal surroundings, the intrinsic pleasure, mental relaxation and the elusive pursuit of a game.

To find the answer to that question, we need to look at a definition written by David R. Forgan:

"Golf is a science, the study of a lifetime, in which you may exhaust yourself but never your subject. It is a contest, a dual, or a melee calling for courage, skill, strategy and self-control. It is a test of temper, a trial of honor, a revealer of character. It affords the chance to play the man, and act the gentleman. It means going into God's out-of-doors, getting close to nature, fresh air, exercise, a sweeping away of mental cobwebs, genuine recreation of the tired tissues. It is a cure for care, an antidote to worry. It includes companionship with friends, social intercourse, opportunity for courtesy, kindness and generosity to an opponent. It promotes not only physical health but moral force."

The reason I bring that up is because it says the most important part of golf is the spirit of the game, the idea of being out with your friends and being able to play the game. And, although I grant you that the prettier the surroundings the more pleasurable the experience, it isn't absolutely necessary. The most important thing is being out with your friends and being able to enjoy the game.

Nowhere in this definition does it say anything about Stimpmeters, slope ratings, golf cars, top 100 courses, or Tiger Woods. It doesn't say golf must be played on fast greens, groomed fairways and roughs, or have manicured hazards. It doesn't even say golf must be played on green grass.

If we could arrange golf courses into a pyramid based on quality, at the very top

Continued on page 66



They share an office, but not opinions: Michael Hurdzan (far left), Dana Fry (far right). Looking on are PGA Tour Pro John Cook and his sister, Cathy.

COUNTERPOINT • DANA FRY:

If a \$1 million golf course is so great, how come all the slides you show are of \$5 million and \$10 million golf courses?

There is a golf course in South Africa, obviously built by locals, that fits all the criteria of a Mike Hurdzan golf course. Number one, it's cheap. It beats Mike's budget by several hundred thousand dollars. Number two, it has dry and fast playing conditions. Number three, and this is very important if you know Mike: There are no USGA greens. Number four, it is a buzz word for Mike: It is environmentally friendly.

Seriously, although I agree with what you are saying, I don't know if it is possible to build a course for \$1 million. Because of the constraints — either physically, by the land, or by outside agencies — often it is impossible to do that.

Often on the projects we work on, we spend \$1 million on earthwork, \$1 million on irrigation, \$1 million on sod, and perhaps another \$1 million on landscaping.

I've often heard you say that what makes golf special is the environment it's played in. Most people would rather play on lush, green, visually exciting golf courses instead of a military parade field. You said yourself, there is nothing special about a million-dollar golf course.

Golf course architecture is an art form. The more beautiful the golf course, the more spiritually refreshing it becomes, and people are willing to pay for that experience.

Sometimes golf courses can be placed on such great sites that a reasonable-cost golf course can be built there and you'll find it at the top of your pyramid. Sites such as Cypress Point, Shinnecock Hills, or the Sand Hills are examples.

However, in the absence of such great topography, soil conditions and wonderful off-site views, golf courses must be made beautiful through construction and maintenance. And that takes big bucks. Let me show you what I mean.

Continued on page 70

If Pump Station Paranoia Has The Vultures Circling, We Can Rescue You.

Sweaty palms?
Dry Throat?

Gremlins in your pump station have you feeling the water pressure? Call FLOWTRONEX PSI. No one has created more industry innovations. No one gives you better, more advanced service. No one maintains over \$2 million in parts. And no one engineers a better pump station to fit your needs. So talk to FLOWTRONEX PSI. We may cost a little more. But we promise you, we won't leave you high and dry.

FLOWTRONEX PSI
Pumping Systems

(800)786-7480 (214)357-1320
E-mail: ftxpsi@flowtronex.com

© 1998 FLOWTRONEX PSI

Counterpoint/Fry

Continued from page 15

On a project in Vancouver, British Columbia, we had enormous amounts of huge rocks. How do you cheaply remove them? If there are horrible soil conditions, it costs a lot to make a final product that looks good — not \$1 million.

The other thing that's required to build golf courses on difficult

sites is lots of drainage and irrigation. We put in miles and miles of irrigation on the Vancouver course, and in many instances we spend more than \$1 million on irrigation alone, and several hundred thousand on drainage.

The Vancouver project had a 175-foot drop on the tee shot. To make the fairway somewhat playable we had to build a 10-meter-high retaining wall. The wall it-

self was unbelievably difficult to build. We had lots of bridges crossing severe slopes to get from one point to the other. On the same project, with 700 feet of elevation change, we couldn't even get trucks to the site. We had to get the sand for traps hauled by helicopter.

The first hole at Devil's Pulpit in Toronto — the first course I ever worked with you on, Mike

'I don't know if \$1 million courses are possible, but affordable ones are important. And we must continue to build our special places — although they might cost \$10 million or more.'

—Dana Fry

— the very first issue of *Golf Course News*, I'll never forget it: February 1989, had just come out and Mike Hurdzan was

quoted in the lead article saying, "You can build a golf course for \$1 million." Well, this one hole at Devil's Pulpit cost \$1 million.

On another property, Desert Willow in Palm Desert, Calif., the site literally had no features whatsoever. We spent about \$10.5 million — of which \$1.5 million was in earthwork, \$2 million in irrigation, and \$3.2 million in landscaping.

Mike, I agree with what you're saying. But there are several conditions we must keep. On the pyramid of golf courses, it's much more fun to work on those at the top, and that is where most people struggle to be all of their lives. And, playing one of those courses is a life's goal for some people.

So, I say it is inherently important to continue to construct the low-cost golf courses. I don't know if \$1 million courses are possible, but affordable ones are important. And we must continue to build our special places — although they might cost \$10 million or more. Most of us learn to play golf on affordable courses, but we aspire to play and enjoy all the richness that a golf course can give.

Providence is Still Number 1.

Leading superintendents rate Providence the best creeping bentgrass for the northern U.S. and Canada.



Seed supplied by United Horticultural Supply

"We chose Providence for its outstanding performance all over the U.S. and particularly in the Northeast. We established greens in the hot, dry summer of '95 and they have performed beautifully. Our new practice putting green was open for play eight weeks after seeding. My membership is very pleased with the quality of our putting surfaces."



Bob Miller —
The Golf Club of Purchase • Purchase, NY



Seed supplied by L.L. Olds Seed Co.

"Providence has performed as expected; with its upright growth characteristics, fine leaf texture, uniform density and color, it has truly been a winner for us. Since the day we opened, our customers have loved the consistency and smoothness of our putting surfaces."

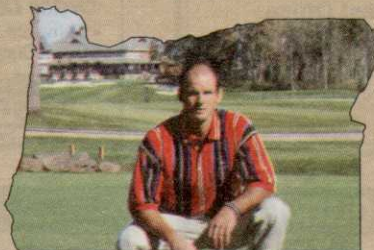


Pat Shaw —
The Bog • Saukville, WI



Seed supplied by Professional Turf Center

"This is my fifth grow in and my first with pure Providence greens. It's a very fine, upright turf. Slightly slower to establish because of our cold and rainy fall, but now that we are maturing it's showing its true colors to be a great putting surface."



Gregg Radak —
The Reserve Vineyards and Golf Club • Aloha, OR

DOMINANT & DOMINANT PLUS Creeping Bentgrass Blends combine the heat tolerance of SR 1020 with the cold tolerance of Providence, and our new SR 1119.

SEED RESEARCH
OF OREGON, INC.

27630 Llewellyn Road • Corvallis, OR 97333, U.S.A. • Telephone: 1 (800) 253-5766 • Fax: (541) 758-5305 • E-Mail: info@sroseed.com