

Births, birthdays and (golf) revivals

As the century clock clicks toward 2000, people at a number of American golf courses are dusting off their archives and celebrating 75th or 100th anniversaries. In many cases they are emptying part of their treasuries to perform lifts and tucks on the golf courses, smoothing or removing the wrinkles of old age. In some instances club members are awakening, or re-awakening, to the fact that their courses were designed by one of the famous architects of the early 1900s — so they are buffing shiny badges proclaiming that theirs was created by A.W. Tillinghast, or Alister Mackenzie, or another luminary.

Course renovation has for a long time been big business. But with these birthday celebrations — and normal “keeping up with the Joneses” remodeling everywhere — golf course renovations and restorations have reached new dimensions.

And all this at a time when record numbers of brand spanking new courses are coming on line. It is exciting times — for both the classical design devotees and those who love the modern-era courses.

Some folks, like me, fit in both those categories and are rejoicing as we tune up on new and old, links and parkland. And here in Maine — like the rest of the country — we are enjoying a rebirth of some classic courses as well as some terrific new ones (see page 25).

Last year, bad weather from California (El Nino) to Texas (drought followed by flooding) to Florida (hurricanes galore) dampened golfer participation, flattening out the game's growth numbers. So far this year, most of the nation has been blessed with good weather — a key to the success of these new courses as well as those that have undergone birthday facelifts for the new millennium.

It looks like a grand future for the grand old game. Encourage your parents, encourage your kids, encourage your spouse to take up golf and discover the creativity of the Donald Rosses and Alister Mackenzies who have gone on before us, and the Tom Fazios and Rees Joneses who are here with us today. If your game is struggling, and whose isn't, just relax and key in on enjoying God's creation in which your favorite golf course is set. And have a great rest-of-the-season.

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Greg Searle, longtime superintendent at Cape Arundel Golf Course which was opened in 1921, was reflecting on longer playing seasons and higher golfer expectations. “It's certainly a lot different in 1999 than it was in 1921,” he said. “In 1921, people golfed in July and August. Now it's April 15 to Nov. 1.”

Meanwhile, he said, “Golfers demand a higher standard, earlier, every year. If it's February and there's no snow on the ground, they want perfect playing conditions.”

Shoulder season? What's that?

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What a marketing ploy! Softspikes, Inc., the plastic golf cleat manufacturer, in May announced “the designation of June as National Cleat Changing Month.” Highlighting the program was a retail and consumer promotion that will send some golfer to the 1999 Ryder Cup matches.

Now that June is past, I can mention this blatant strategy to sell a certain product. It's like Hallmark Cards declaring Grandparents Day or National Secretaries Day. Could anyone believe card sales would not take a leap?

Continued on next page



Mark Leslie
editor

Quality product, customer service alive and well

Providing a quality product and first-rate customer service. That could be the credo of just about every golf course management firm in the world. Hardly a press release passes through this office without the words quality and customer service appearing somewhere in the text.

Management firms do a great job providing these two essential ingredients. And they have the public relations/marketing firms to remind us that they do.

But as editors, who sift through piles of press releases and answer numerous phone calls from marketing/PR firms, we sometimes forget there are many family-owned operations out there that daily strive to “exceed their customers' expectations.” Unfortunately, they don't have the PR firms to remind us.

Take Franklin Greens Golf & Country Club in Franklin, N.H., which I had the pleasure of playing over the 4th of July weekend. Those who have played the nine-hole, John Van Kleek/Wayne Stiles-designed layout may know the course by another name, Mojalaki Country Club. Gil and Lori Lambert, who purchased the property 18 months ago, changed the name to signify the new ownership.

The course plays along a ridge near the headwaters of the Merrimack River in the Granite State's Lakes Region. Opened in 1920, it still boasts the deceptive bunkering and subtle green contours Van Kleek and Stiles designed. But like any 80-year-old, Mojalaki/Franklin Greens was beginning to show signs of age.

“It had been sadly neglected for a long time,” Gil Lambert said.

The Lamberts — who operated a motorcycle business on the New Hampshire/Massachusetts border for 17 years prior to entering the golf industry — paid \$800,000 for the property. They invested another \$400,000 in clubhouse/course upgrades and \$600,000 on the nine-hole, George Sargent-designed addition that will open this fall.

“You always see someone out here working on a project,” noted one golfer I played with.

“The playing conditions just keep getting better,” remarked another.

A quality product.

There was no attendant to take my golf bag out of the trunk or valet to park my car at Franklin Greens, things I might expect at a \$100 green fee course, but plan to forego for the \$25 at a Franklin Greens.

So, while customer service may not “begin when you drive through the entrance,” it certainly did surface when I walked into the pro shop. The woman behind the register thanked me for coming to play; the mower operators stopped their machines while I struck my shots; the grill cook came by to ask how my fries tasted; and the woman behind the register offered directions that shaved five miles off my return trip home.

“They are just naturally friendly,” Lambert said when asked if he stressed customer service with his employees. “We treat our employees well and they treat our customers well.”

Customer service.

Management firms are to be commended for raising golfers' awareness and expectations for a quality product and customer service. They, and the many family-owned courses that still operate throughout the United States and Canada, are to be commended for following through.



Peter Blais
managing editor

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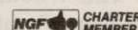
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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

GEESE POLICE OF ANOTHER KIND

To the editor:

I thoroughly enjoyed reading your article in the June 1999 issue of *Golf Course News* about border collies. I found the article to be very interesting. My golf course is Manhattan Woods Golf Club, located in West Nyack, N.Y., and we use a different breed of dog to control our geese problem. I would like to introduce to you the jindo breed. These dogs are from Korea, but the breed is originally from Mongolia.

They are used for herding, guarding flocks and as watch dogs.



One of Ken Lee's jindo dogs.

The dogs require no training, but act on natural instinct to chase geese, even in the water. We currently have three dogs on the property and they have completely removed the geese from the course.

Two of the dogs are females and will be used for breeding purposes soon.

If anyone is interested in this breed I invite them to come and see the dogs and Manhattan Woods.

Ken K. Lee, owner
Manhattan Woods Golf Club
West Nyack, N.Y.