

DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT 1999

The winds of progress blustered good news throughout the last 12 months of the millennium as yet another year of 400-plus golf course openings grew closer in the headlights. By Nov. 4 the National Golf Foundation reported that 438 courses had opened this year. It appeared the record 468 might be eclipsed by year's end.

Another 963 courses were under construction while 814 were in planning, keeping the pipeline chock full.

Buffing the shine on this news is the fact that these projects did not even include a number of First Tee facilities that are in the works around the United States, facilities that will draw tens of thousands of youths into the game of golf. Among those that will be included among the new openings:

- the Jack Nicklaus-designed Spring Creek Ranch outside Memphis, Tenn., which, as the first Audubon International Golf Course, shows the industry continues to develop with one eye on the environment and another on great golf;

- Arcadia Bluffs in Arcadia, Mich., designed by Rick Smith, built by GCN 1998 Small Builder of the Year Furness Golf Construction, and illustrating that Old World-style sod-wall bunkers can still be resurrected in the New World;

- the Willard Byrd-designed Thistle Golf Club, the 101st course to open on North Carolina's Grand Strand, which exemplifies the notion that sometimes more is better; and

- the Tom Doak-designed Apache Stronghold in Globe, Ariz., which illustrates that Indian tribes remain strong contributors to golf growth.

Suffice it to say that there appeared to be enough work to fill the plate of every person hanging a shingle reading: "Golf Course Architect."

Meanwhile, even more existing courses were enmeshed in either single-season or ongoing renovations or restorations. And the entire industry holds its collective breath waiting to see the impact of the new national wetlands regulations that will come into effect after the current Nationwide Permits (NWP) expire at midnight Dec. 30.

Although an Army Corps of Engineers spokesman said the new NWPs should speed up the permitting process, some experts are warning that a far greater number of golf course projects will be affected—and slowed down. With the pipeline of course development still loaded, perhaps only government entanglements like these can slow this lion.

Pebble Beach's Missing Link

By DOUG SAUNDERS

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. — Making changes to a golf course the age and stature of Pebble Beach can be construed as obtrusive tinkering. But to add an entirely new golf hole can seem like changing the smile on the Mona Lisa, or rewriting Beethoven's 5th Symphony.

But when Pebble Beach Co. broke ground on a new par-3 5th hole, its officials felt it would actually be the missing link bringing the course into the configuration that it was meant to have 80 years ago.

The new 187-yard hole will play along a bluff overlooking the ocean. Jack Nicklaus designed the hole to reflect the character of the rest of the course — a hole that should have been built in 1919.

It will replace the awkward par-3 5th that, in the original design, inexplicably played away from the ocean. Why this hole was laid out as it was illustrates how conflicts occur when golf courses and real-estate projects meet.

Pebble Beach Golf Links was created to stimulate land sales of the ocean properties of Del Monte Co. It was one of the first real-estate-driven golf developments in the West. As such, the balance between land sales, cash flow and construction costs were all factors in creating the golf course.

Over the years, the coveted property twice came up for resale — during the Great Depression and World War II. But Pebble



Pebble Beach's 5th hole

Beach Co. did not have the funds to buy it back. A Mrs. Jerkins bought the land and held onto it until her death in 1995. It was at this time that Pebble Beach finally secured the five-acre parcel, for \$9.5 million.

Construction of the new hole began last June and should be completed by January. Plans are to have it ready for the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro Am.

The hole tees off just behind the 4th green, boasting a stunning view of the 6th hole rising up the cliffs and the back of

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FEBRUARY

Niebur, Furness named GCN's best builders

By MARK LESLIE



Joe Niebur

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — Niebur Golf, which former cowhand Joe Niebur created in 1991, has been named Golf Course Builder of the Year for 1998 by *Golf Course News*.

Furness Golf Construction received the plaque for Best Golf Course Small Builder of the Year.

Niebur and Furness received their awards at the annual banquet of the Golf Course Builders Association of America in Orlando during the International Golf Course Conference and Show.

The Niebur announcement followed an extensive survey of architects, developers and superintendents involved in projects for 18 builders nominated for the award. Of a possible rating of 80, Niebur Golf scored 78.675. MacCurrach Golf Construction, Inc. of Jacksonville, Fla., finished second with a rating of 77.96, and Landscapes Unlimited of Lincoln, Neb., placed third at 76.14.

Furness Golf Construction, Inc. received near-perfect ranking from the developers, architects and superintendents on the three projects it completed in 1998. The principals were queried on such areas as meeting deadlines and budget, sufficient personnel and equipment, quality of work, and project supervisor. Of a possible

score of 80, Furness finished at 79.2.

Furness was followed in the survey by Turf Drain Inc. of Novi, Mich., with a score of 78.17, and Quality Grassing & Services, Inc. of Lithia, Fla., at 77.48.



Tim Furness



Steve Forrest, second from left, and Arthur Hills look over a topographical map flanked by Brian Yoder, left, and Drew Rogers.

OCTOBER

New wetlands regs may stifle development

By MARK LESLIE

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is implementing a new cadre of wetlands regulations in early 2000 that is expected to impact a far greater number of residential and commercial developments, including golf courses.

Public comment on the proposed Nation Wide Permits (NWP) expires Oct. 6, making the way for the new rules which affect jurisdictional waters of the United States — wetlands, streams, lakes, etc.

Although the new NWPs have not been officially confirmed, experts in the field anticipate few changes before the current NWP 26 expires at midnight Dec. 30.

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DECEMBER

Forrest named Hills' associate

TOLEDO, Ohio — Golf course architect Arthur Hills has named longtime associate Steve Forrest a principal in his company. The firm, now titled Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest and Associates, has been involved in the design of more than 150 new courses throughout the United States.

Meanwhile, Brian Yoder and Drew Rogers have been promoted senior design associates and have been made partners in the firm.

"I want to recognize Steve's efforts through the years and call attention to the key role he has played in our success," Hills said.

Hills and Forrest are both members of the American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA).

A landscape architect graduate from Virginia Tech, Forrest has worked with Hills for more than 20 years. His design philosophy reflects Hills' desire to create courses that are visually exciting, innovative, strategically challenging yet playable, and sensitive to the environment.

Yoder is an ASGCA member and has been with Hills since 1990. Rogers has been with the firm since 1992.

Wetlands regs

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"There may be minor tweaking, but nothing major," said Dr. Richard W. Whiteside of Wetland and Ecological Consultants in Woodstock, Ga. "But the Army Corps of Engineers [USACE] is encouraging all its districts to modify them [NWP] to meet their specific needs. Every district I know has published their

own add-ons to this headquarters program, and they are all even more restrictive."

But Carol Sanders of the USACE public affairs office said: "We are still accepting comments. After Oct. 7, we will decide what is appropriate. The schedule calls for us to issue the final NWPs in early November, with implementation 60 days later."

Whiteside, who deals with num-

ber of golf-related developments, predicted the new NWPs will affect more than half the new golf projects.

According to plans, NWP 26 will be replaced by five new NWPs, but a USACE statement reported: "Permittees will have up to 12 months to complete activities authorized under NWP 26, provided construction activities commence, or are under contract to commence, before

the existing NWP 26 expires."

"NWP 26 was perceived as too broad," said Sanders. "With the NWPs you are trying to look at activities that are similar and have similar effects, such as recreational activities."

"A lot of the golf courses we're working on are in low-lying areas," Whiteside said. "Stand-alone courses normally don't have many problems [with NWPs] because

they don't need to go so low. But courses associated with residential or ancillary development are usually forcing the architects down into flood-plain areas. That's when these NWPs come into effect."

NWP 26 was last revised in January 1997, reducing the number of acres a project could affect. Before then, a developer could impact one to 10 acres of isolated wetlands or stream headwaters. One acre could be affected without seeking permits. Under the 1997 revision, permits were required for any impact of more than 1/3 acre. The 10-acre maximum of wetlands that could be affected was reduced to three acres.

NWP 39, the major revision expected to take effect in January, will reduce that 1/3 acre to 1/4 acre. The three-acre maximum would remain in place but may often not be met because the limit on any project will be 1/4 acre plus 2 percent of the total project acreage. For example, a 100-acre project site may have a maximum impact acreage of 2-1/4 acres — 1/4 acre plus 100 acres times .02. The three-acre cap would be achieved when the size of the project site reaches 137-1/2 acres.

Under the anticipated new regulations, mitigation is going to be required for even the smallest of impacts — anything exceeding 1/4 acre," Whiteside said. "And you'd better be in-tuned to your local district restrictions."

The relatively recent cottage industry, land banks — wetlands people have bought and set aside for mitigation — should be in high demand.

According to USACE, NWP 39 will be joined by NWPs 41, 42, 43 and 44.

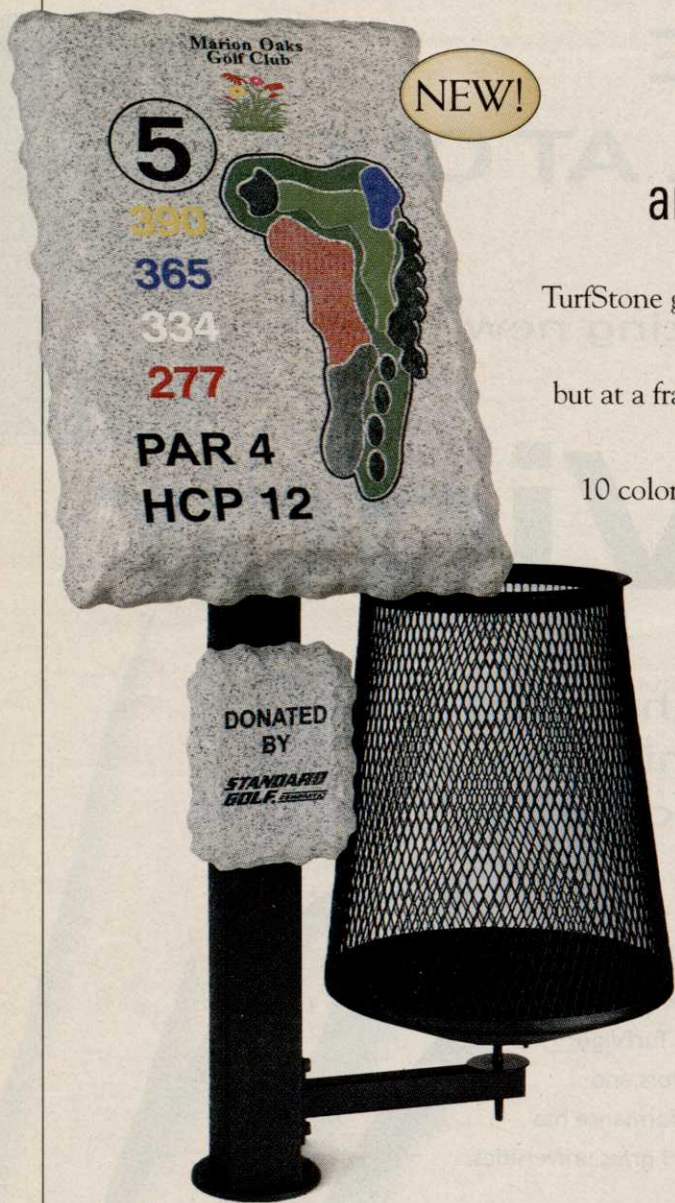
NWP 39 is intended for residential, commercial, and institutional development activities, including construction or expansion of building foundations or pads, as well as attendant features such as roads, utilities, sidewalks, and other similar infrastructure, as well as playgrounds, ballfields, golf courses, and nature trails.

If the proposal remains intact, a pre-construction notification submitted to the USACE "will be required for wetland impacts exceeding 1/4 acre, or for any impact to open waters such as intermittent and perennial stream and lakes."

The regulation, Whiteside said, may be more applicable to clubhouse and maintenance building construction than the golf course for many developers.

Another new rule, NWP 42, authorizes construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which could include golf courses and ski areas, "provided substantial grading and filling is not required." ▶

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