

Nothing's changed, everything's changed

This issue was truly a treat to put together. Along with the breaking industry news that you've grown accustomed to gleaming from these pages over the past 10 years, this issue contains a special 14-page section celebrating our 10th anniversary.



Michael Levans,
editor

When we sat down to brainstorm how to present such a section, we couldn't think of a better way than letting the industry speak for itself. In turn, we asked two or three illuminaries representing each of our departments (Maintenance, Design & Development, Management and Supplier Business) to weigh in and offer us their perspective on the 10 years just past.

But more importantly, we asked them consider where we're headed now that we have 10 more years tucked neatly under the collective belt. Not to my surprise, the columns and writing styles were as diverse as the participants, complete with witty repartee and solemn calls for increased industry awareness.

These writers include superintendents, course architects, course management professionals as well as the supplier's who have provided the tools for the job. It's a fun trip down memory lane and a good gaze into the crystal ball. The section kicks off on page 21 with an conversation between business partners Arnold Palmer and Ed Seay on the state of industry and travels along for 13 pages which include an extensive timeline summarizing the decade.

What do we learn from all of this?

GPS. Autonomous vehicles. Slow-release fertilizers. The HydroJect. Growth regulators. The World Wide Web. The tools of the golf course superintendent have changed — are changing — but the goal of the superintendent remains the same.

Over the past 10 years the game of golf has embedded itself into the North American psyche — I'd even go as far as saying that it's the default outdoor activity. The golf shirt has become "business casual." Golf has certainly arrived, but the game has remained the same.

In 10 years the golf course business became an industry then morphed into a booming industry with the hopes of sustaining its unprecedented growth. How does it do this?

The answer may never change. Twenty years ago my grandfather, a retired millworker turned house painter, was charged with keeping an eye on me during the summer months while Dad worked and Mom finished school. On the days there was

Continued on page 28

Drought, flood, fire ants and mussel invasions, yet GCN prevails

Have you ever thought about time being compressed? I'd like to talk to Mr. Einstein about this because it certainly seems like the past 10 years have swiftly passed. Wars and rumors of wars. Hurricanes and earthquakes. Droughts and floods. (Sometimes, as Texas discovered last year, droughts followed immediately by floods.) Fire ant invasions from the south and mussel invasions from the north. Attacks from raving madmen from the far left (read *Earth Firsters*) and the simply misled from the not-so-far left (read *Sierra Clubites*).

They have all come and gone, and yet we remain. I could get deeply philosophical here, but those who know me realize I usually poke fun at deep philosophers. Natural and manmade disasters aside, I'd rather remember the fun, and funny, things about this past decade. After all, golf is a fun game filled with fun people.

It is an industry that remains probably more insulated from changes in society than any other industry. Character may not matter in the White House, but it does in golf. Honesty and integrity may have vanished to a great degree around the country, but they are Standard Operating Procedure in golf. At least, that's my take.

What other industry could compare icons to our Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus and Tom Fazio? (Or name your top three.)

What other industry has the character, and characters, as our Pete and Alice Dye, Brent Wadsworth and Ted Horton?

What other holds its traditions, and tradition-makers, in such high esteem as does golf in the names of Old Tom Morris, Bobby Jones, Ben Hogan and Donald Ross and in such places as St. Andrews and Cypress Point?

Every day, racial hatred is evident in the news somewhere. But there was only one Shoal Creek incident that made golf news in 10 years. What other industry has so wholly — and wholeheartedly — supported anything approaching The First Tee program, reaching out, in great part, to inner-city youths?

Every day, vitriolic diatribes are in the news somewhere, about something or someone. People don't get attacked in golf, yet golf is always being attacked. Does that seem odd to you?

Ten years and myriad topics have passed. I've written of:

- Societal Deviation: This broke through golf's barriers when what I called "Potty Parity legislation" in some states demanded that new construction build as much as twice as much women's room space as men's room.

- Political Correctness: "Are you Politically Correct? Are you socially 'with it'? Are you caffeine-free, yogurt-loving and driving a recyclable utility vehicle? ... Remember, you must say 'tree butcher' but not 'lumberjack.' Or 'counterfactual proposition' but not 'lie.' (Hey, this was Clinton-speak before we ever heard of the man.)"



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

Continued on page 54

Tennis anyone? Is there a weak backhand on golf's horizon?

By PETER BLAIS • Associate Editor

I drive by the municipal tennis courts in our area and what do I see? Cracked asphalt, ratty netting, tilted posts, patched fences, broken light bulbs. Heck, even golf cars from a neighboring course using one of the courts as a temporary storage area.

What's even more depressing is what I don't see. Players. At least none under 35. Just an occasional pair of older knee- and elbow-braced hackers who speak warmly of Rod Laver and Roy Emerson, but don't know, or much less care, who are the world's top-10 ATP-ranked players in 1999.

And I — a once-fanatical tennis player — begin to wonder. Am I looking at golf's future?

Backed by a seemingly inexhaustible financial spigot of federal funding, municipalities from Maine to California poured out thousands of public tennis courts in the 1960s and 1970s. I spent countless hours on some of those courts. I'd occasionally check out the local upscale public courts and the private facilities at local golf and tennis clubs. But as a youth with limited funds, I never felt quite welcome there.

As I grew older and my wallet somewhat larger, my interest in tennis waned. The upscale public and private courts that had little interest in me as a teenager, now held little interest for me as a

young adult beginning to understand the concept and choices involved in discretionary income.

As the federal funding that built them dried up and the municipalities that maintained them tightened their financial belts, the municipal courts fell into disrepair. The upscale public courts closed their doors and became warehouses. The private tennis clubs lost members and tennis became a secondary amenity at golf and tennis clubs.

In 1987 there were 17 million tennis players, according to the National Sporting Goods Association. By 1997, the number had dropped to 11 million, a 4.1-percent annual decrease.

I've been driving by the local municipal golf course lately. I see young kids — a lot of them — with bags slung over their shoulders, making their way to a clubhouse, where they pay \$6 to play all day on a well-kept course. Then I drive a few miles past the private course. Few kids there. A few miles farther on is an upscale public course. Even fewer youngsters there.

I wonder how welcome the \$6 youngsters at the local muni would feel if they showed up at the local private and upscale public layouts? I wonder what those kids will be doing for recreation 10 years from now, when their wallets start to grow?

I've been with *Golf Course News* almost since its inception a decade

Continued on page 54

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Time line

Continued from page 27

subjected to more than 100,000 analyses in 13 projects since the 1988 Cape Cod Study and only five samples contained pesticides above health-based action levels, reports Dr. Stuart Cohen.

March: Joseph Baidy assumes the GCSAA presidency.

April: Increasing labor costs, declining membership and less money available for capital improvements are among the disturbing findings in an annual report on the health of private country clubs.

May: More than 60 percent of superintendents surveyed indicate they have altered maintenance practices compared to three years ago, citing pressure from government regulation, economic factors and environmental concerns.

June: Last mercury-based pesticide, Calo-Clor, taken off market, a result of EPA's cancellation of mercury-based pesticides.

July: Believing potential buyers could not live up to environmental deed restrictions imposed on the property, a bankruptcy judge nullifies the Resolution Trust Corp.'s sale of the Ocean Course at Kiawah Island to New York Audubon Society and financial partner Virginia Investment Trust.

August: EPA Administrator Carol Browner declares science peer-review procedures (until now non-existent) will be in effect Sept. 30, ending years of hostility with various branches of government and others in the scientific community.

September: Worldwide joint venture of Hoechst AG and Schering AG merger results in AgrEvo in North America.

October: Audubon Society of New York State presents first John James Audubon Environmental Steward Award to Tim Hiers of Collier's Reserve in Naples, Fla.

November: EPA establishes Biopesticides and Pollution Prevention Division to speed up registration of biological pesticides.

1995

January: The USGA begins a push for soil lab certification.

February: Paul Clute & Associates named GCN Golf Course Builder of the Year.

March: Cuba welcomes first golf course

Levans

Continued from page 10

there was some low scrapping to be done or rod-iron railings to be painted, I'd jump in his paint wagon at 6:00 a.m. and spend the day earning a few extra dollars.

But the next day, whether if I had completed the job or not, I'd jump into the wagon in a pair of clean shorts and a shirt and he'd drop me at Butler's Golf Course with the money I'd earned the previous day. It was our routine. One day on the job, the next day on the course. I'd spend the day at the course for \$9, including lunch.

The common denominator through out our special guest commentaries is the call to grow participation. You've heard it, read it, dozens of time this year. Yet the need is so great at this point in the game that you're going to continue to hear it. By they way, The First Tee is mentioned in just about every commentary.

The ultimate question should be, how do we make the trip to the course routine? Not just for the kids, but the trip should be routine for me, you as well as your entire family.

project in more than 30 years, in Vara Dero, 2-1/2 hours northeast of Havana.

April: Jeff Brauer assumes ASGCA presidency.

May: Audubon Society of New York State forms Audubon International for programs that go beyond state borders.

June: VIT secures the Ocean Course at Kiawah Island from the RTC.

July: In Loudonville, N.Y., Siena College, neighboring Schuyler Meadows Golf Course and the Audubon Society of New York agree to long-term environmental studies.

August: EPA settles on national emissions standards for small engines.

September: One year after the federal government eliminated the income-tax deductibility for club dues and reduced deductions for business entertainment, more than a quarter of the nation's private golf clubs experience a drop in membership sales. One-third report decline in gross food and beverage revenues.

October: The end comes to a "100-year summer," with record-crunching heat and humidity, scorching heat and drenching rains.

1996

January: Bruce Williams assumes GCSAA presidency.

February: Landscapes Unlimited is named GCN's Builder of the Year for 1995.

March: National Golf Properties purchases Golf Enterprises Inc.

April: Ciba of Des Plaines, Ill., and SandozAgro of Greensboro, N.C., agree to merge into a new firm, Novartis, which becomes a \$6 billion agrichemical giant.

May: Scientists plan first international conference ever on topics ranging from

Continued on next page

