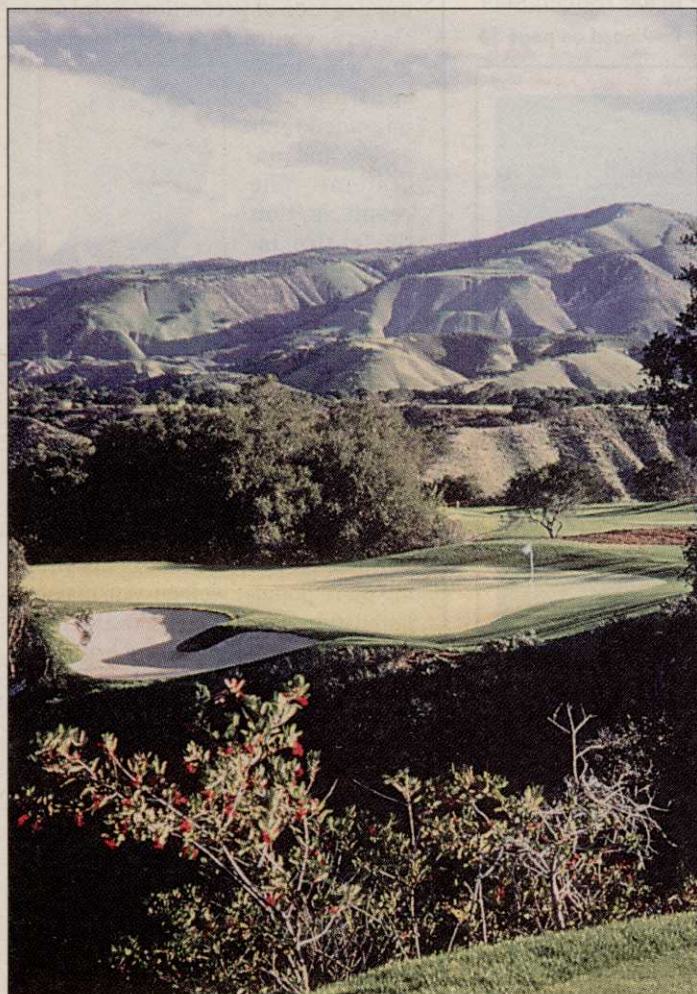




## 10 years later: Time to put the golf course industry into perspective

**Editor's Note:** The editors of *Golf Course News* have asked several industry illuminaries from each of the departments we cover on a monthly basis (Maintenance, Design & Development, Management, and Supplier Business) to give us a snapshot of our industry's progress over the past decade. We've also asked them to take a look into the future and consider where, based on what we've learned from the past 10 years, the industry may be headed. As expected, these columns are as varied as the personalities we invited to participate. The columns begin below.



### THE PRETTIEST PHOTOGRAPH WE NEVER RAN

We were ready to run this photo of Rancho San Marcos Golf Course in Santa Barbara, Calif., in March, 1998. But due to El Nino part of the course was washed out before the facility opened. Since then, the Robert Trent Jones Jr. design has rebounded and is open for play.

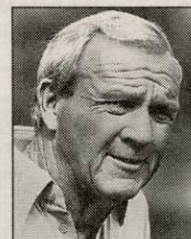
## Palmer/Seay consider industry's growth

When asked about the state of the game of golf, Arnold Palmer and Ed Seay of Palmer Course Design Co. (PCDC) had the following conversation:

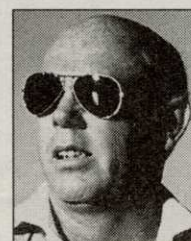
**Palmer:** I think the overall state of the game is in great shape. The regular Tour, the Senior Tour, the LPGA, and the Nike Tour are all in a very positive mode.

Palmer Course Design is going great. In fact, we have more active projects now than we have ever had. I know Ed [Seay], Harry [Harrison Minchew], Erik [Larsen] and all of our guys are not only excited about our current projects, but are equally

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Arnold Palmer



Ed Seay

## Science and business enhance the game of golf

By JAMES R. WATSON, Ph.D.

*Vice President, The Toro Company (Retired)*



James Watson

As I reflect on how things have changed in the 1990s, it's as much advances in science and technology as changes in the business of golf that has brought us to the current high point in golf's history.

For superintendent's, each day begins and ends with the same glancing question — How does the course look? During the

'90s new grasses emerged that possess superior stress tolerance: heat (bentgrass); cold (bermudagrass); drought (buffalograss) and salt (Seashore Paspalum). Toro developed the Universal Green Turf Scale that actually dials in the color

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## Top 10 changes for the decade

By BRENT WADSWORTH

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of *Golf Course News*, we prepared a list of the Top 10 trends of the last 10 years that are most likely to be perpetuated for the golf course design and development industry in the decade ahead.

- 10. Golf course development is booming in out-of-the-way places. (Who knew golf would be so popular in towns so far away from an easy-to-reach airport?)

- 9. Computers now enhance efficiency in every phase of development from design to irrigation. (Now if we can just program the computers to streamline the permitting process.)

- 8. The style of course most in demand is 6,800 to 7,200 yards long, has 18 holes, and is upscale and semiprivate, with daily fees. (Where have all the par-3s gone?)

- 7. Golf cart paths (and golf cars) are more popular than ever and in almost universal demand. (After all, we all need a place to park our clubs, laptop and cell phone, don't we?)

- 6. Water is scarce in some areas. (And getting scarcer.)

- 5. Litigation and potential insurance liability are omnipresent. (Enough said.)

- 4. Many sows ear sites (gravel pits, stone quarries, garbage dumps, flood-prone zones and even inner-city lots where buildings have been razed) are waiting to be turned into silk purses in the form of beautiful green golf courses. (Magician training would come in handy for some of these sites.)

- 3. Everybody and their brother and sister (and great aunt and cousin) are taking up golf and they need a place to play. (Who knew Aunt Bertha could hit so well with the help of a Big Bertha?)

- 2. Continuing upgrades in design, building techniques and technology have contributed to an overall elevation of the industry. (Quantity is up, too. In the last year approximately 450 courses have been built, from 211 just 10 years ago.)

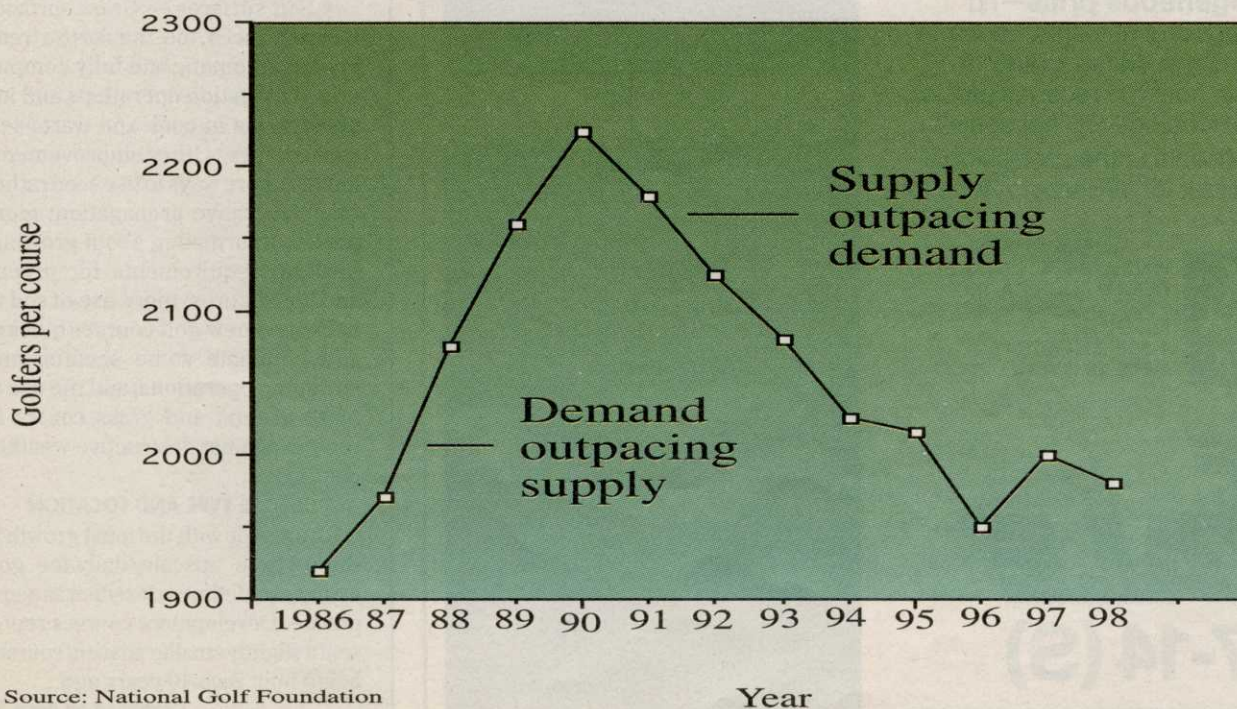
And the No. 1 trend from this decade that is most likely to be perpetuated in the next decade is ...

- 1. The pipeline of projects is full, with no real end in sight. (Thanks to all those people who think it is fun to keep hitting a little white ball with a stick and follow it around a course until it falls into a hole.)



### GOLF INDUSTRY STATISTIC

## Golfers Per Course • 1986-1998





## Palmer/Seay

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excited and encouraged about the potential for the next six to 10 years.

**Seay:** This isn't by happen-stance. Most of the design work in the 1990s by a lot of golf course architects has been a return to the more traditional-styled design. Which, in most cases, resulted in really fun courses to play, rather than difficult and severe. Arnold and I have always stayed pretty close to the traditional philosophies of design. That is, the playing of the game and, when possible, designing and building to and with the land. In most situations for the past 20 years or so, we did not get a naturally rolling, sandy, seaside, and beautifully timbered 400 acres without development to work with. I should add that the PCDC design team will continue to stay with the same traditional design philosophies.

**Palmer:** Along that same line, our course designs have always considered what effect the new equipment has had on the game. The U.S. Golf Association is constantly looking at this and now is concentrating on the area of primary importance: the stabilization of the ball.

Another major aspect of golf course design, construction and development that began slowly in the 1960s and has moved to the forefront in the '90s is the preservation, enhancement, and reclamation of our

existing environmentally sensitive lands. This will continue to be the strongest area of consideration. As it should be.

**Seay:** The industry as a whole is also promoting and exposing golf to more and more segments of the population, not only domestically, but internationally as well. The PGA Tour's First Tee program, The Executive Women's Golf League, golf academies, and family golf learning centers are gaining momentum and getting stronger and better every year.

PCDC is now promoting golf on a relatively new front in that, whenever we can,

we are recommending to all levels of development to provide golf in any structure. It may be six holes, three holes, 12 holes, 14 holes, practice facilities, etc. Not every golfing experience needs to be 18 or nine holes, or an Augusta National or a Pine Valley.

I really feel the next 10 years are going to be exciting for the whole industry, especially in the design, construction and development arena. We made great strides in the transition from the '80s into the '90s, and we all feel golf course development will continue to grow with particular emphasis in daily-fee and resort facilities.

**Palmer:** I agree with Ed and support and encourage everyone in golf to expose, provide and improve all of the elements of the game. And with more interest and more people coming into golf every day, all of us in the game need to promote, by example, the basic strengths of the game.

We must guard and protect these very elements that keep the game so great and be standard-bearers, if you will. This is one of the hallmark messages for the future from all of the Palmer companies. The game is in very good shape.

## Witteveen

Continued from page 24

just that. I haven't missed an issue since.

Funny thing about *Golf Course News*. Just like Ken Wright, I easily part with past issues. It's not the sort of magazine that one hangs onto. Not like *The Greenmaster* and *Golf Course Management* of which I have stacks and stacks collecting dust on a bottom shelf. *Golf Course News* I read, usually within minutes after its arrival, even in the summer season, then take it to the staff room from where it disappears to God knows where, but never to a shelf.

The best thing about *Golf Course News* is the new friends that I have made. Most people in the industry one meets annually at convention time. But Mark Leslie, Terry Buchen, Kevin Ross, Michael Hurdzan and many others come regularly to my mailbox.

They speak from the heart in a language that I understand, and when I now meet them at convention time, my greenkeeping life is complete. Thank you, *Golf Course News*, for presenting golf course life as I live it. Have a Happy Birthday, with many more to come.

## Walden

Continued from page 25

Golf Car, the DriveControl System with regenerative braking and the only twin-cylinder, overhead cam gasoline engine.

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GOLF COURSE NEWS



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