

Access for all: A 'golf court' could be coming to a green space near you

By TREVOR LEDGER

HERTFORDSHIRE, England — A revolutionary concept in golf course design, which has the potential to bring the game to a whole new section of society, has received a massive boost following the signing of a deal with the European Professional Golf Association (PGA).

A triumph of land use and organization has resulted in the invention of "golf courts," which allow for a full 18-hole, 6,500 yard, par 72 facility to be built on just 15 acres of land.

Bob Hunt, technical director of PGA Management, said he's delighted with the deal, in which he sees the formation of a new company, Golf Courts International of Barnet, Hertfordshire, to be headed by John Sale.

"We see golf courts as being an ideal opportunity for us to improve the accessibility of golf for beginners," said Hunt. "Golf courts can be built close to inner cities, they increase the opportunities for group teaching and provide an ideal transition from driving ranges to full blown golf courses. A golf court is like a giant academy. The PGA is being very active in promoting the concept and we are talking to contacts around

the world: from China to South America to Norway. I have seen people try to develop small golf courses but I've never seen anything in the world like this."

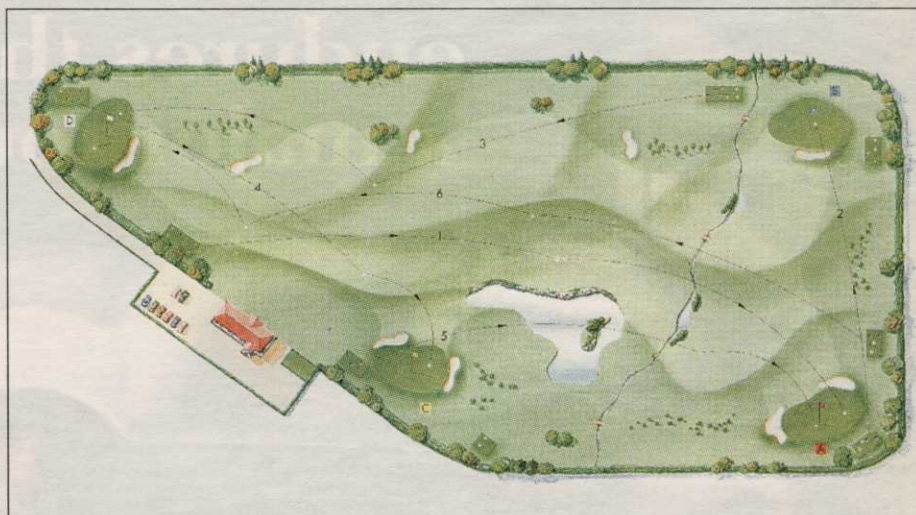
Another first for golf courts is the fact that they are eligible for 100 percent funding from the National Lottery Sports Fund. For example, if a school wished to set aside some land for a golf court, entire funding from the Sports Council could be applied for — this in a time when golf is languishing near the foot of the grants awarded league table in the UK.

Golf courts were the brainchild of Farel Bradbury, a Gloucestershire systems analyst who became temporarily disabled following a mild stroke in 1988. Having had golf recommended as physiotherapy, he became hooked and wanted his own course, the only problem being that he was restricted to the 6 acres adjoining his home.

Not to be deterred, he devised a system of four greens and eight tees with which to produce a 3,000 yard par 60 course.

John Sale was aware of the potential golf courts held and would not let the idea rest: "It has taken nearly four years to sort things out; from meeting Farel to getting where we are today."

As part of the arrangement, the PGA will be giving each golf court design a safety certificate and they will also be



Access for all: A masterplan for a the new 'golf court' concept. Could it be The First Tee's answer?

involved in the design of each project.

"The complete PGA endorsement is as unique as the concept itself," said Sale. "No other product has gained such a recommendation. This gives us major credibility and will stop people from saying that it is a Mickey Mouse concept."

The game played on a golf court is exactly the same as that played on traditional layouts. It requires the use of all fourteen clubs, but it is the dimensions of the playing area that are different.

As opposed to paying for a round of golf, on a golf court the players book the court by the hour — as with a tennis court.

Thus, the player has the option of playing 6 holes per hour (or any multiple thereof), giving flexibility of both cost and time — not an easy option on a traditional course.

Due to the compact nature of a golf court, the option to install floodlights is feasible and provides the owner and the

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Trevor Ledger is Golf Course News' International Bureau Chief. He is based in Shropshire, England.

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Griffin

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better decisions as to what they may be doing on their property in regards to impacting the habitat, water quality and air quality."

Use of renewable resources and an organic-based approach to caring for things like turfgrass is a major issue for Audubon International, which operates the Sanctuary Program.

To ensure continued compliance with the Principles of

Sustainability, Griffin like the many golf courses in the program, will need to be recertified yearly. The company will be able to use the AI logo as long as it remains certified.

Already, six of the company's properties are fully certified, having passed through the half dozen areas of environmental action.

Griffin employees "have embraced it, enjoyed it," said Geise. "And people in the communities have come out to join in on our programs."

Michael Schmidt, Griffin's environmental manager, has been working with AI staff ecologist Joellen Zeh on the broad-ranging project.

Geise said perhaps the most difficult task Dodson faces in winning companies and golf courses into the Sanctuary Program is a feeling that it is a policing or regulatory system. "But it's all voluntary," he said. "To us, it made a lot of sense to get involved — not just from a Nature Safe point of view."

Golf courts

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golfer with increased opportunities — seen as a real bonus in an era where time and space are at a premium.

The safety of the golfer on a golf court is equal to that on a full blown course thanks to the lower number of golfers per acre. A maximum of three matches and twelve players can use the court at any one time.



With Christy O'Connor Junior and Laura Davies lending their support in the company brochure, a certain level of kudos have already been attained and there are already 10 golf courts going through planning consent in the United Kingdom.

With leisure entrepreneur Chris Drummond promoting Golf Courts in South Africa and the new company offices in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the compact layouts look set to gather an international following.

John Sale again: "We see our biggest potential market in the United States and plan to break into it as soon as possible."

The major client base for golf courts appears to stem largely from the following social groups: hotel guests, children, women, beginners, business people, senior citizens and the disabled members of society. Environmentally, golf courts are naturally very acceptable — aside from taking up only one tenth of the size of a normal golf course, they also use less water, fewer chemicals and disturb the surroundings much less.

The compactness of a golf court allows inner cities to accommodate them on brown field derelict sites, creating an "inner city lung" right in the middle of a section of society who either have no chance to play the game or who have to travel many miles in order to do so.

This final point has long been cited as an important aspect for the development of golf as a growth sport.

As long ago as 1933 that doyen of revolutionary golf course architecture, Dr. Alister Mackenzie, stated that: "...golf courses for the masses are of value only when they are in close proximity to large towns."

Periodicals postage paid at Yarmouth, Maine, and additional mailing office. *Golf Course News* (ISSN 1054-0644) is published monthly by United Publications, Inc., 106 Lafayette St., P.O. Box 997, Yarmouth, ME 04096. Phone number is 207-846-0600.

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Golf Course News is distributed in the U.S. and Canada without charge to qualified personnel of golf course facilities and to golf course builders, developers and architects. Non-qualified paid subscriptions to the U.S. and Canada cost \$55. All foreign subscriptions cost \$125 annually to cover air delivery. All payments must be made in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank. For subscriber services, please call 215-788-7112. Send address changes to *Golf Course News*, P.O. Box 3047, Langhorne, Pa. 19047-3047.

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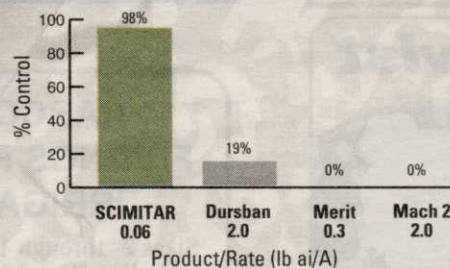
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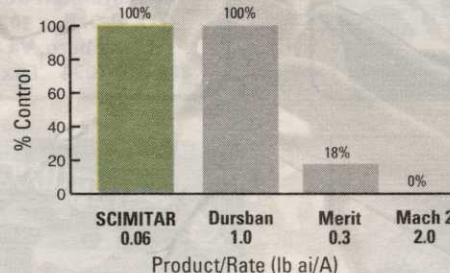
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Control of Annual Bluegrass Weevil



Source: S. R. Alm, et al, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI, 1997.

Control of Adult Black Turfgrass *Ataenius* Weevil



Source: H.D. Niemczyk, Ohio State University, 1996.

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