

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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JONES, BUSH TOUR SHADOW HAWK
HOUSTON — Rees Jones (left) visited Houston recently to survey the progress of the Shadow Hawk Golf Club and give President George Bush (right) a walking tour of the course Jones is designing for The Redstone Group.

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ASGCA panel targets dangers to the health of golf

By MARK LESLIE

CHARLESTON, S.C. — Trying to head off dangers to the health of golf, leaders of the game's major associations are targeting equipment and balls that add too much distance, the cost to play, the "intimidation factor" in learning, and attracting and keeping new golfers.

Speaking at the annual conference of the American Society of Golf Course Architects here, U.S. Golf Association (USGA) President F. Morgan "Buzz" Taylor warned that, if measures are not taken, golf's popularity could sink like tennis's. It was an ominous statement, illustrated by the fact that NBC Sports is dropping its contract for coverage of Wimbledon because "it can't sell the time," Taylor said.

Similar remarks, pointed toward fixing any holes in the dike of the expanding sport of golf, came from PGA of America Executive
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USGA turns over U.S. Open management reins

By PETER BLAIS

PINEHURST, N.C. — The United States Golf Association (USGA) has handed over responsibility for managing June's U.S. Open at Pinehurst No. 2 to an outside party — Pinehurst Championship Management (PCM).

PCM is the sports mar-

keting division of ClubCorp, the Dallas-based firm that owns and operates Pinehurst. PCM will be responsible for everything from handling transportation issues to developing corporate partners.

The USGA will retain control over what occurs "inside the ropes," according to the USGA's Tim Moraghan, who oversees course preparation for U.S. Open events for the USGA Rules and Competition Committee.

"Outside the ropes," said PCM head Jon Wagner, "everything with regard to marketing, corporate hos-
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NEW DOAK TRACK RISES ABOVE PHOENIX

GLOBE, Ariz. — Golf course architect Tom Doak ventured west of the Mississippi River for the first time to design Apache Stronghold for the San Carlos Apache Nation to augment its Apache Golf Casino. Doak had a couple thousand acres of land to choose from in designing what he called "a newfangled" type of course for the desert. This photo of the 4th hole shows its wide fairways and rough along the edges instead of the norm: instantly going from manicured to desert. See page 23.



AN "UNPLAYED" DYE CANVAS

The cornerstone of a new luxury community in suburban Savannah, Ga., called Ford Plantation, features a golf course Pete Dye designed in 1983 for a wealthy Saudi Arabian. The public has never played this course, which Dye describes as one of his best Southern layouts. Dye's flamboyance is obvious on this hole on the plantation's Ogeechee Golf Club, formerly called Sterling Bluff. See story, page 24.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGIES

Metallic Power gets \$350,000 boost for zinc/air power

By MICHAEL LEVANS

SAN DIEGO — Metallic Power Ltd. has been awarded a \$350,000 contract from the California Energy Commission's South Coast Air Quality Management District to demonstrate a prototype zinc/air fuel cell-powered riding electric greensmower by January 2000.

The company will collaborate with the Toro Co. on the project.

"With this contract we're now on a rapid trajectory to develop the zinc/air fuel cell technology," said Jeff Colborn, Metallic Power's chief executive officer. Founded in 1995, the company has won more than \$1.5 million in government research and development contracts.

The zinc/air fuel cell combines zinc pellets, approximately 1 mm in diameter, with oxygen.

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ASGCA issues

Continued from page 1

Executive Director/CEO Jim Awtrey, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) Chief Operating Officer Joe O'Brien, Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBA) President Bill Kubly, National Golf Foundation (NGF) Vice President of Membership Services Barry Frank, and National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) Executive Director Mike Hughes.

"I submit that this [what happened to tennis] might happen to our sport if we don't do what we're supposed to do in preserving the game," said Taylor, who was stressing the negative impact that could come from drivers with spring-like qualities that would add 25 yards in distance and golf balls that would travel 15 yards further than today's balls.

"Just think," he said, "a total of 40 yards from these two phenomenon if they are brought to the marketplace. That would be a tragedy for this game."

"We now have a golf course that is 7,777 yards long. We will soon be talking about 8,000-yard golf courses."

Identifying slow speed and the high cost of playing as two factors hurting the game, Taylor added that 8,000-yard courses would entail more money to buy the land and more to build and maintain the finished product as well as more time and higher greens fees to play.

Allow this, he said, "and we have further injured the game that means so much to us."

The USGA has "drawn a line in the sand" on clubs, Taylor said, "and one is soon to be drawn on balls."

"There is an understanding on the part of the USGA that we have a responsibility to act," he explained. "And in spite of all the tumult and the shouting from other constituents in the game about (a) we don't know what we are doing, and (b) we aren't the organization that ought to be doing it anyway, I submit to you that it is our responsibility. And I also make a commitment that is very apparent to all of us who are involved in the organization: that we will maintain the great traditions and the integrity of this game."

The PGA of America's Awtrey expressed concern that "golf is not affordable for the masses. When I see the number of infrequent players we have in the game, subjectively I believe that is because they can't afford to play more golf."

Many people, and especially families, who play five or six rounds of golf a year would play more if it were more affordable, he said.

He suggested creating partnerships with municipalities and

building walkable golf courses with greens fees less than \$20.

"That would require pushup greens and some other things — things that we know how to do, things that we used to do," Awtrey said.

Some architects, he added, have indicated a willingness to work on this type of project — if the land can be obtained and if people agree to maintain [sim-

ply]. This would show, Awtrey said, that people "can build golf courses, make them affordable and still turn enough profit."

"I hope that we are able to do that at some point, because I think, if we continue to focus on greens fees from \$75 to \$150, we will certainly continue to drive the image of the game as very expensive."

Meanwhile, the PGA of America is working at retaining golfers. It

will build a \$2-million learning center on 35 acres at its PGA Golf Club The Reserve in Port St. Lucie, Fla., not expecting any return on that investment.

"It's an intimidating game and we want to make it less intimidating," Awtrey said. "One of our goals for developing the new players who we bring into this center is an 80-percent retention rate after the first year. We want

them to continue the game because it's fun — not because they have to shoot a score but because they enjoy the game and can play it."

To that end, the learning center was built to help people learn and improve all the shots of their game. PGA of America members will man the center as instructors all the time. The facility,

Continued on next page

All in a Day's Work.

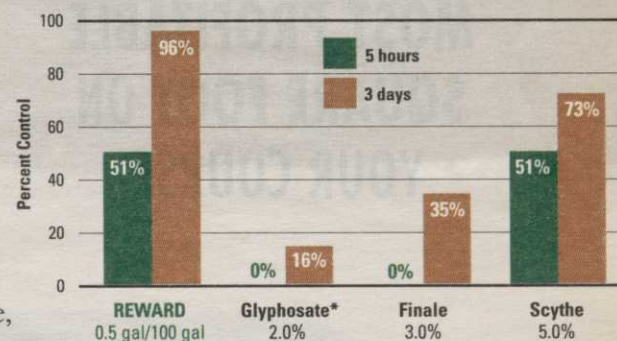


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CIRCLE #132

ZPP-REW-005

ASGCA issues

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part of which will be lit at night, includes a full bunker area, an acre of putting, a putting course, a pitching area, and three golf holes. The experience, Awtrey said, will "teach people how to manage and move around a golf course."

The cost? Less than \$20 for four hours.

"As long as we can continue to make the game fun for the consumer, the game will continue to grow," Awtrey said. "I worry sometimes that we spend so much effort on a couple hundred players. That

is because we build golf courses in case we have to host a tournament."

The idea of maintaining the enjoyment of the game was picked up by the NGF's Frank.

"It is important that we enhance the experience, enhance golfers' skills, and increase their appreciation for the sport and the history of the game," he said.

Good and bad news looms in the future in regard to the number of golfers and golf courses, according to Frank.

With nearly 1,100 courses under construction and another 700 in the planning process, the number of openings over the

next five years will add about 2.6 percent to the overall supply, he said. While that may not seem significant, "it is when you compare it to the number of bodies who are playing golf," he said.

"Last year we played about 530 rounds of golf. If you look at the natural aging of the population, over the next 11 years through the year 2010, we project it will grow to about 635 million rounds of golf played."

The largest contribution is expected to come from Baby Boomers. "The aging of the population is absolutely good for golf since people of older ages tend to play

golf more frequently, moving away from high-impact sports like baseball, softball, tennis and the like," Frank said.

Citing findings of a study the NGF did with McKinsey & Co., he said there are 26 million golfers in the United States. The study identified approximately 41 million additional people who wish to play golf or play more golf.

Of the 24 million adult players in 1998, Frank said, 1 million want to play more golf. There are 42 million former golfers, 12 million of whom wish to return to the game. Of the 130 million nonplayers, 7 million have expressed an interest in trying the game. Among the 51 million total juniors in the country, 8 million are golfers now or wish to try the sport.

"So the upside is really strong," Frank said.

But certain measures should be done to take advantage of opportunities for the industry, he added, such as supporting alliances and initiatives of various organizations like The First Tee and the NGCOA's Get Linked advertising program.

As Hughes explained, Get Linked ads are now available to golf course owners from the NGCOA to personalize in promoting their own facilities, or to join with colleagues in marketing a region or group of courses.

"Supply outgrowing demand has been on our radar screen for a couple of years," Hughes said. "We have to build rounds and players. Rounds and players is like taking your temperature. It's the basic fundamental measure of healthiness of this industry. We should never take our eyes off that goal. It is as important to me and my constituents, you, Wilson Golf, Ping, the USGA and everybody who's in this business. That's where we make our living."

The advertising campaign, he said, reaches owners at the grassroots level, "where the battle will be won or lost," giving them the tools to bring new golfers into the game and retain them.

"Retention is as important as attraction... Retention is what's killing us," Hughes said. "Our [ad] kit tells how to attract and retain golfers. We identified four constituent groups who are likely to play golf and who we have a chance of success with immediately. We identified youths whose parents play golf, Baby Boomers and early retirees, spouses of golfers, and executives, especially women executives."

The GCSAA, meanwhile, is launching its own \$3.2-million advertising campaign showing that superintendents maintain the places where people play golf and retain "the great traditions of the game."

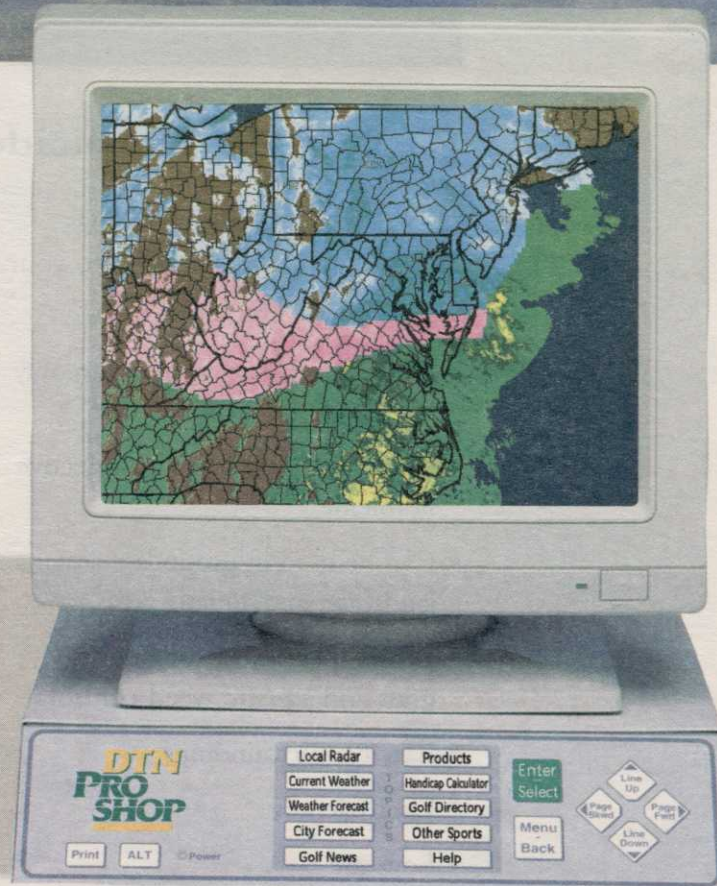
Also, O'Brien said the GCSAA is printing a book on developing a golf course in a community and will:

- continue to work with environmental groups;
- continue to upgrade and engineer its educational program;
- continue to move from a turfgrass to a golf organization — "as seen in our involvement at World Golf Village, in the First Tee and a couple of areas never on the map: charity programs and junior programs";
- expand its influence among small-budget golf courses; and
- continue as a spokesperson for the game.

GCSAA, he said, will "move from behind



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CIRCLE #109

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GOLF COURSE NEWS

Palmer

Continued from page 23

ber, and said: "The competition—in golf and course design—is what we're all about. It's what makes America what it is today ... Jack and I agree on a couple of things. One is the golf ball. We need to slow it down."

The way in which the golf industry controls the golf ball, he said, "will keep all of us going in the right direction in the years to come."

Returning to the \$2 million annual maintenance cost for his Bay Hill Golf Club in Orlando, Fla., Palmer said: "Somewhere along the way we have to ... 'back away' [on high maintenance] if we're going to keep the game going."

"We need to look at all the aspects of the game—from players and their equipment to superintendents to people coming into the game—in order to retain the traditions of the game."

Seay, a past president of the ASGCA, introduced his design partner, saying, "Everything he does is measured at different levels of seriousness."

Reading a comment by former ASGCA President Don Knott that the golf course should not be reduced to a "standard predictable venue," Seay added: "The golf course architect must resist design standards, or we get fur-

ther away from the origins and very essence of the game. Arnold's real contribution to golf course architecture is that he has allowed all of us at Palmer Course Design Co. the privilege to resist."

He said Palmer has taught the design firm's 24 employees (including 10 course architects) about design, business, discipline, style, commitment, re-

sponsibility and humility.

"Arnold has allowed, supported and encouraged variety and individuality in all of our designs," Seay said, adding that Palmer:

- "has supported our expanded concepts in business and design";
- is always eager and excited with a new twist; and
- loves to solve design and

construction obstacles.

Quoting Palmer in his new autobiography as saying, "Golf is my foundation," Seay said, "Golf is founded on integrity."

Seay went on to say about Palmer, "Actions are doctrine, and his actions are the foundation of honesty and integrity in his life."

While "accomplishments come from individuals who are

outstanding achievers of unusual capabilities," Seay said, Palmer relishes the mantle of proud parent, grandparent and gentleman.

And he quoted from Bob Hope: "Arnie's Army doesn't just consist of his golf supporters, but includes the countless individuals who recognize that his character, stability and just plain niceness will be emulated by generations to come."

ASGCA issues

Continued from previous page

the scenes to center stage," speaking of environmental stewardship, explaining the financial viability of maintaining the cost side of the game, and "explaining to people what the beauty of golf is all about: the landscaping, the tournament conditions."

While the GCSAA pursues these aims, golf course builders have determined to put money and labor behind its Sticks for Kids Program, the premise of which is to get golf clubs into the hands of people who wouldn't normally get them.

"The GCBAA has donated more than \$125,000 to date," said Kubly. "We have 10 programs across the United States, in cities where we have builder members."

Also, he said, his colleagues have agreed to build the first 100 courses in that program at cost or a deeply discounted price. This contribution is estimated to amount to \$10 million to \$15 million, Kubly said.

To give developers and would-be developers an idea of the cost of building golf courses, GCBAA has updated its regional construction cost databases and is making them available on CD-ROM and sending them to all USGA Green Section members and First Tee participants, Kubly added.



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