

Attack speed of play problems before they begin



Andrew Overbeck,
editor

As a kid I grew up playing a run-down municipal track, and I quickly absorbed the concept of playing "ready" golf. When we first started my friends and I stunk, but at least we played fast. Our choice was simple—you either kept pace or you ducked as tee shots from the group behind you sailed over your head. We learned etiquette by force.

With average rounds regularly exceeding five hours at many courses across the country, speed of play is cited as one of the top reasons people stop playing golf. In this issue, two articles discuss on-course solutions to the speed of play problem. (See page 20)

Attacking speed of play issues after the course is open is all well and good, however, the industry should be paying more attention to solving the problem from the very beginning. The muni track I played was easy to cruise through because the greens (in some cases dangerously so) were close to the next tee and the layout was smartly routed.

Admittedly, increased environmental regulations and more difficult sites dictate the increased distance between greens and tees at many new courses. While these conditions may be unavoidable, architect Dr. Michael Hurdzan has developed several simple design elements that developers and architects should consider when building a course that will allow for a faster round of golf.

• **LET 'EM HIT** — Try to work in at least five sets of tees that are roughly 30 to 40 yards apart. "If they are smart enough to choose the correct set of tees, then they can play the hole," said Hurdzan.

• **WIDE LANDING AREAS** — Fairways 50 to 60 yards wide would be ideal. "No one enjoys looking for a ball in the rough," he said. "At St. Andrews there is almost no rough, you can find a ball that is hit 100 yards off line." Hurdzan also suggested planting fairways and roughs with the same grass to allow courses to create their own fairway edge and make it easier to grow rough up for tournaments.

• **BE KIND TO THE SLICE** — "People tend to hit the ball right and short of the intended target," Hurdzan continued. "So we tend to avoid junking up the right side of a green or put too many hazards on the right side of holes."

• **BUMP-AND-RUN GREENS** — Hurdzan also advocates accessible greens that allow golfers to hop, skip and roll balls onto the surface. The green should have a mixture of hard and easy pin placements and the speed of the green should match the slope of the green. Otherwise, he said, "you will get a lot of

three and four putts."

• **DON'T SKIMP ON THE SAND** — The choice of bunker sand is crucial he said, because if a course uses sand that allows the ball to settle or stick in the face of a bunker, "play will slow down markedly."

• **MATCH THE PENALTY TO THE CRIME** — "Make bunkers fit the penalty," he said. "Sometimes we put bunkers in that are pretty fierce, but are meant more as intimidation. We try to balance the course so it looks hard and plays easy."

While Hurdzan admitted these criteria are not possible or appropriate on every hole on every course, he said these simple elements go a long way in improving the speed of play.

Superintendents also play a role in addressing speed of play problems, said Hurdzan.

"With multiple tees and hole locations, superintendents need to develop a program so that on certain days of the week holes should be in one part of the green that plays more quickly and the tees should be in a position that makes the hole play easier," he said. "I can't count how many times I have played a course and seen the tees

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GCN WANTS YOUR FEEDBACK

• WHAT IS YOUR NEW COURSE DOING TO ACCOUNT FOR SPEED OF PLAY ISSUES?

• WHAT STEPS IS YOUR COURSE TAKING TO IMPROVE SPEED OF PLAY?

• DO YOU HAVE ADDITIONAL DESIGN OR COURSE MAINTENANCE SUGGESTIONS THAT WOULD IMPROVE SPEED OF PLAY?

SEND YOUR COMMENTS, IDEAS, OR SUGGESTIONS TO:

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Overbeck to head GCN's editorial team

YARMOUTH, Maine — Andrew Overbeck has been promoted to editor of Golf Course News. Overbeck, who has been with GCN since 1997, has risen quickly through the editorial ranks at GCN.

"I have learned a lot from the previous editors here at GCN and I look forward to continuing to provide the timely business news and information that the golf course industry has come to expect from this publication," Overbeck said.

"Having spent the last three years reporting on the golf course business, especially on the supplier side, I've gained the hands-on experience and in-depth understanding of what developments and issues are impacting the business of golf," he continued. "With our coverage of the maintenance, development, management and supplier business sectors of the industry, GCN provides the most valuable and comprehensive business news that helps all of golf's decision makers become more successful."

After graduating from Earlham College in Richmond, Ind., in 1997, Overbeck embarked on a yearlong *Wanderjahr* throughout Southeast Asia studying the golf course industry with a grant from the Thomas J. Watson Foundation. After a year of freelancing for GCN and its sister publication *Golf Course News International*, he returned to the United States and joined the editorial team at United Publications, working for several of the company's business newspapers. He joined GCN full time in 1999 as the associate editor and became the managing editor in 2000.

Pajak joins GCN sales team

YARMOUTH, Maine — Michael Pajak has joined *Golf Course News* as the Eastern Territory Representative.

Pajak brings a strong commitment to customer service and a passion for the game of golf to his new position. His first goal is to get to know each of his customers personally.

"There will be lots of phone calls and lots of road trips. I'd like to visit everybody at least once in the first six months," said Pajak.

That also includes the golf

course management team. "I plan on visiting as many of our readers as I can," he said. "It is important that we hear how we can better serve them as well."

Prior to joining United Publications, Pajak was director of partnership development and call center operations for Diversified Business Communications, a producer of trade shows and trade magazines. Pajak, who is an avid golfer and certified golf club maker, lives with his wife and four children in Portland.



Michael Pajak

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For more information on this month's stories check out www.golfcoursenews.com. Extra features include complete dormant seeding tips from columnist and superintendent Kevin Ross, as well as the full text of Eastmoreland Golf Club's speed of play policy. The October issue, weekly e-news updates, GCN archives, the 2001 Buyers' Guide, and the 2001 Management Company List are also available online.

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