

Life imitates 'art'

In any business, it pays to be aware of popular culture. Some may argue, but as evidence, I point to an Oct. 26 incident in Aurora, Colo.

Four men cut security chains and hot-wired 23 golf cars at Kennedy Golf Course. In two hours, the vandals had done \$10,000 damage, leaving one car at the bottom of nearby Cherry Creek.

Golf car thefts are nothing new. In fact, Kennedy GC has had at least five car-theft cases this year. But in most cases, all the vandals want to do is joyride. This particular instance is most disturbing because of the seeming desire to simply cause damage.

So the question becomes, "Why the change in attitudes?"

The answer, more than likely, is "Jackass: The Movie," which was released, not coincidentally, on Oct. 25. The movie is the big-screen version of the recently cancelled MTV series, which features a group of guys doing things that no one in their right mind would ever think of, such as being covered in meat and barbecued. It should go without saying that these are not the kinds of things one should try at home.

One segment in the movie features the group driving golf cars wrecklessly around a course, crashing into each other and jumping over bunkers and water hazards. At one point, one of the cars flips over, destroying the canopy and knocking its occupants out cold.

The lesson is this: either be sure your golf car storage area is secure or become the victim of the next "Jackass"-inspired vandalism.

But hey, it could be worse. John Rocker's slasher film "The Greenskeeper" could have gotten more play nationwide.



Derek Rice

A Midsummer's Nightmare

Editor's note: Superintendent Tony Bertels penned these lines about the harsh weather that impacted conditions at Prairie Highlands Golf Course in Olathe, Kan., this summer. Things got so dry that Bertels' water source dried up, forcing him to purchase \$60,000 worth of city water. His poem originally ran in the Heart of America GCSA's August newsletter.

By TONY BERTELS

Out of troubled slumber
I awake in desperation;
Another day of soaring temps
With no hope of moderation.

"It's going to be a scorcher!"
Says the radio in my truck.
I grudgingly drive on to work
As I curse such foul luck.

No matter how I irrigate
Or spray or fertilize
I can't help but watch my golf course
Go south before my eyes.

My rough is slowly fading.
The greens are all on edge.
The whole damn place is turning
Into a mighty stand of sedge!

Oh! The ragweed all seems healthy
As do the goose and crab.
And the knotweed in the fairways
Could push me to rehab.

And that sunny disposition
Which my chem.-reps all possess
Is enough to turn me violent
As I try to check my stress.

I have a sinking feeling
That Mr. Skunk and Master Coon
Will soon be farming shallow roots
By the light of summer's moon.

Those rotten little varmints
Could cut me so much slack.
They can dine on all the grubs they want.
Just put the turfgrass back!

If these are truly "Dog Days"
It all seems quite clear cut.
The golf course is my master
And I am just its mutt!

It's all about my frame of mind
As I tread from week to week.
And there's something to remember
If things become too bleak.

You see, every dog must have his day.
And fall will finally dawn.
Then, I become the master
While the course becomes my pawn!

Hirsh: Golf market comeback imminent

Continued from page 4

to the volatile nature of the economy.

One area of particular concern is that of secondary market private clubs. Many of this type seem to be struggling more than other market segments. Many smaller communities are no longer able to support their clubs and in those with multiple clubs, the competition for members has become so intense that entry fees have dropped to levels which provide no encouragement for members to "stick it out" during lean times. These clubs, along with "second-tier" private clubs in even the primary major markets have experienced some problems. Membership levels are declining due to com-

petition that is either newer or cheaper. In many cases, these clubs have been forced to become either semi-private or daily-fee, or have been hosting more outside functions to make up for declining membership. This is particularly troublesome in those markets where residential developers build private clubs as amenities to their developments and create additional supply in markets with limited depth.

In closing, it is my opinion that while there is evidence of recovery, certain things need to occur first:

- We need to see the ultimate results of the Golf Trust of America and NGP situations. What will happen with the rest of

the GTA portfolio and what courses from the NGP portfolio will be spun off?

- Debt financing needs to become more available in the marketplace.

- Some courses will close and help balance out supply and demand. This does not imply that we will end up with fewer courses, only that those which were ill conceived in the first place or their locations are now too valuable for golf should be put to alternative uses.

- Sellers need to realize that golf is not just a real estate investment, it's a business and as such will require a higher rate of return, and a correspondingly lower value.

Let's all watch and see what happens next.

The Point-Counterpoint feature, which usually runs in this space, will return in the January issue.

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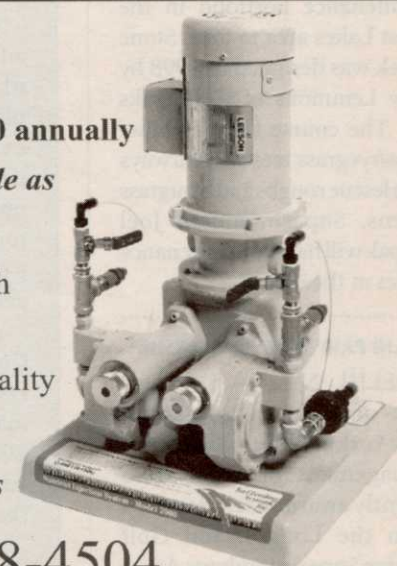
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