

Is anyone listening to the battle cry for affordable golf?

While the tone of Golf 20/20's first annual Golf Industry Report is upbeat, there are several disturbing trends that emerge from the data.

Two are not so surprising, new golf construction is down and rounds played numbers remain as flat as a two-by-four. No shocker there.

But there are more troubling statistics. Construction numbers are not only down, but, of the courses that opened, an increasingly smaller number of them are public access. The number of public courses opening still far outnumbers private courses, but the trend is unnerving just the same. When you combine those numbers with the fact that all of the 27 courses that closed permanently in 2001 were either daily-fee or municipal layouts, the alarm goes off.

I thought the industry was supposed to be focusing on providing more affordable, public-access golf – not less.

At the conclusion of last year's



Andrew Overbeck, editor

Golf 20/20 conference the message was clear: we need more affordable golf courses to grow the game of golf. The American Society of Golf Course Architects and others have certainly pushed the message and put a plan into action to promote

the need for more affordable golf, but clearly more needs to be done.

Watching ill-advised, high-end, country-club-for-a-day courses struggle in today's market has likely poisoned the desire of any developer to build a lower-end public golf facility. If you can't make money at \$75 a round, how the heck can you make money charging \$30 a round, right? Wrong.

Take a look at the front page of *Golf Course News* this month. Architect P.B. Dye just wrapped up work on a \$1.5 million, 18-hole golf course in Indiana that offers outstanding golf for \$38 a

round including range balls and a golf car.

Sure, a number of things worked in his favor. He's leasing the land, did the construction work himself and largely used his own equipment.

But the lesson here is the strategy he used. Dye built as high-quality a golf course as the market conditions could bear. Then he took a number of smart, cost-cutting measures to reduce the construction expenses even further.



The bridges at Buck's Point GC were constructed from the decks of old tractor-trailers.

Except for one machine, all the maintenance equipment is used. All the Rain Bird irrigation heads were purchased used for \$5 a head. The course was designed to fit in with the land and thus just 250,000 cubic yards of earth

were moved. The greens were constructed out of a topsoil mix and they used only four truckloads of sod to lay one strip around all greens and some of the bunkers.

The most brilliant cost-saving move involves the course's bridges. Instead of building steel I-beam structures, they purchased tractor-trailer decks from a Cincinnati scrapyards for \$500 apiece. With the steel and wood decking already in place, they saved a ton on materials and labor costs.

All of these steps do not detract from the beauty or playability of the golf course. The well-designed course was meant to be rustic, but it still provides great golf, and that's all the golfing public wants.

Is this possible at every new golf course? No, of course not. And there is still a market for high-end golf. But there are hints here that could help developers make affordable golf pay off.

The message is still clear: Keep the golf course simple, and as Dye said, let the golfers "go out there, beat the ball around and have fun." Now the industry just has to convince developers to listen.

POINT

Open pollination presents clear dangers

By BILL ROSE

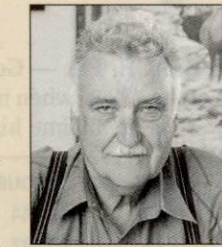
The recent approval by the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) of a control area to produce open pollinated creeping bentgrass in Jefferson County is a surprise considering the volumes of evidence presented on the dangers of this experiment.

Dr. Tom Hodges of Purdue University and senior author on seven patents specifically related to hybridization of grasses, submitted the following information to ODA director Phillip Ward for the recent hearing held in Jefferson County:

"I am writing regarding the transgenic bentgrass field trial by Scotts/Monsanto in Jefferson County, Ore. As you know, this trial involves open-pollinated bentgrass that contains the Roundup herbicide-resistance gene. Although I am a strong advocate of genetic engineering, this particular project is extremely dangerous because pollen escape to other grasses has a high probability of causing the development of herbicide-resistant grassy weeds as well as the fertilization of related *agrostis* species. This could have disastrous effects on the turfgrass seed industry because of the contamination of genetically engineered seed with non-engineered grasses as well as the lack of control of herbicide-resistant grassy weeds in all crops including the row crops such as corn, wheat and soybeans. If this trial is allowed to proceed, the damage it could cause is considerable, and this damage will give the anti-biotech forces major ammunition in their fight against all genetically engineered crops."

This letter states the fears I have on this project.

Genetic modification of crop plants for the production of not only food and fiber, but also energy, pharmaceuticals, and structural products is the future of agriculture. However, the Willamette Valley is prevented by statute from participating in genetically modified bentgrass, even if the transgenic bentgrass is male sterile. Male sterility is obviously not understood despite testimony pre-



Bill Rose

Continued on next page

COUNTERPOINT

Roundup Ready control area addresses concerns

By BOB HARRIMAN and DON SUTTNER

One of the biggest challenges in maintaining a desirable, uniform bentgrass fairway is the infestation of annual bluegrass or *Poa annua*. Removing *Poa annua* with herbicides is difficult because herbicides also can harm the bentgrass. The alternative is to keep the unsightly bluegrass alive and viable as golfing turf, otherwise the superintendent is dealing with brown spots, bare ground and dissatisfied customers or club members.

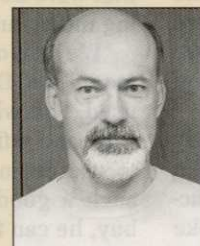
The Scotts Co. and Monsanto are developing Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass, improved through biotechnology to withstand treatments of Roundup Pro herbicide. The ability to use Roundup Pro without harming the bentgrass would allow superintendents to control *Poa annua* and any other weeds in their fairways with just one herbicide. It has the potential to significantly reduce or eliminate the use of several herbicides, fungicides and fumigants that managers now use to manage annual bluegrass.

The Roundup Ready technology in creeping bentgrass is the same technology that has been used successfully in agriculture for nearly a decade. More than 100 million acres of Roundup Ready soybeans, corn, cotton and canola will be harvested this year around the world.

Dozens of experiments with Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass in laboratories and greenhouses, which began in the mid-'90s, led to regulated and contained field trials conducted at test plots throughout the United States. Based on that research, which demonstrates the safety and efficacy of Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass, we have petitioned the USDA for deregulation of this product. We will also be submitting the necessary information to



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