

October 2006

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COURSE NEWS

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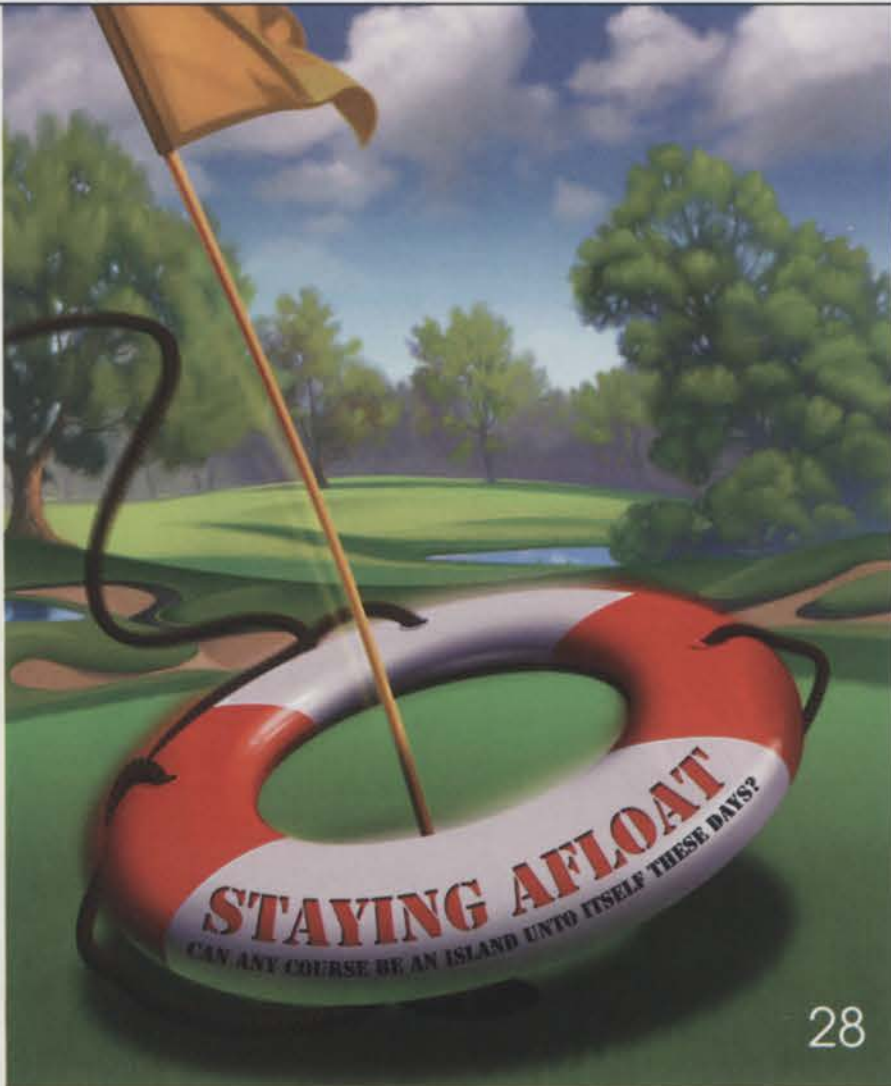
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Cover image: Ralph Voltz/Deborah Wolfe Ltd.



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Golf Course News reports on and analyzes the business of maintaining golf courses, as well as the broader business of golf course management. This includes three main areas: agronomy, business management and career development as it relates to golf course superintendents and those managers responsible for maintaining a golf course as an important asset. *Golf Course News* shows superintendents what's possible, helps them understand why it's important and tells them how to take the next step.

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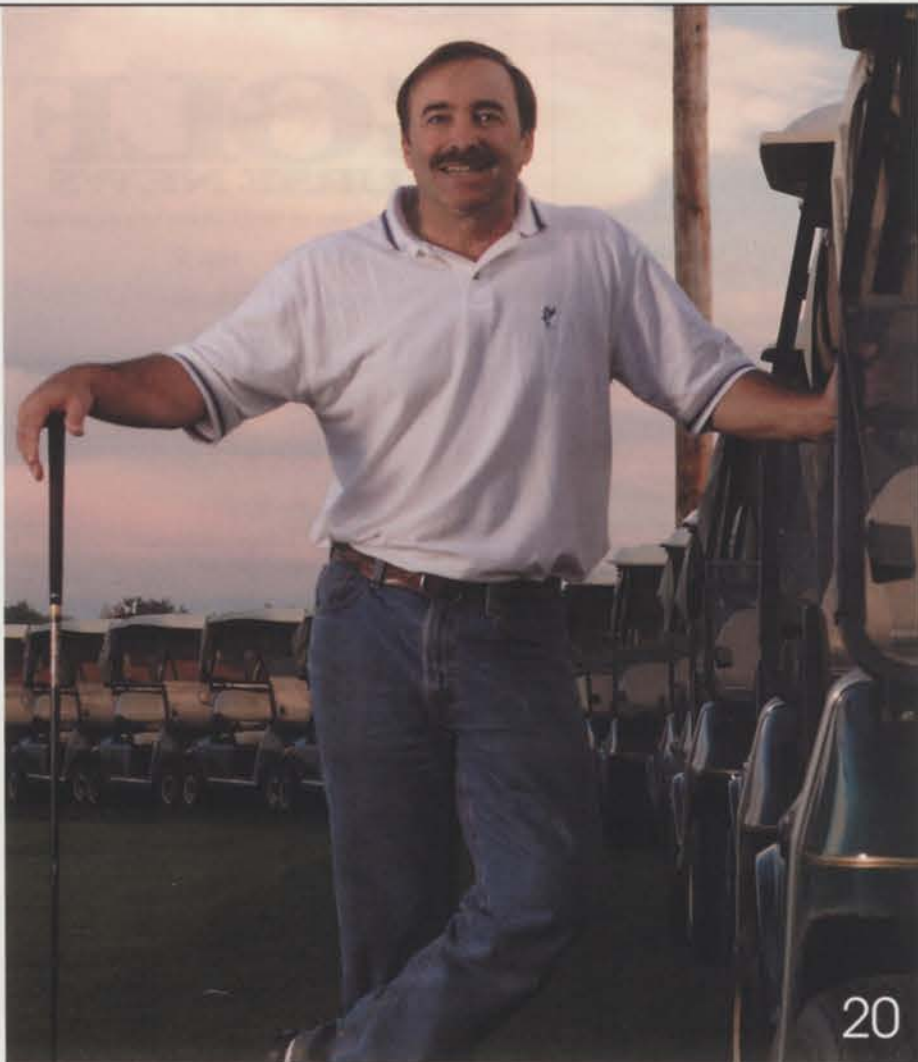
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John Walsh
Editor

Rising to the top

I don't need to remind readers of this magazine how difficult it can be working in this industry. Just like any other business, it has its pros and cons.

Among those difficulties, assistant golf course superintendents are focused on one biggie: breaking into the world of head golf course superintendents. By all accounts, "going to the next level" is infinitely more difficult than it was 20 years ago. With as many as 1,500 bright young students graduating from turf schools coupled with the decline of new golf course openings, there are more graduates than jobs. It's survival of the fittest, and it's clear the industry will weed out those who can't handle the stress and rigors of the job. Will you be one of those?

Last month, at the inaugural Green Start Academy hosted by Bayer Environmental Science and John Deere Golf & Turf, an assistant superintendent told the group that of the eight people who graduated with him from a turfgrass program in Iowa several years ago, he was the only one left in the business. The reason for this instant attrition might be opportunity, desire and commitment, or both, but it's a clear indicator things have changed.

Time management and education are key elements to an assistant's ascension. They can advance by using what they have and what's available to them, including: becoming actively involved in GCSA chapters; seeking mentors other than a boss; taking people- and financial-management classes to become more well rounded; learning about warm-season turfgrass if one's in the North and vice versa; and attending the Golf Industry Show.

The self-improvement list is endless, but the bottom line is that assistants need to think about the big picture and long term. They need to implement a strategy to get them where they want to be in 10 or 15 years.

Money and patience also are key elements assistants need to consider. Bruce Williams, CGCS, director of golf courses and grounds at the Los Angeles Country Club, tells assistants not to focus too much on money, but rather who they work for – namely higher-profile superintendents at well-known clubs. Money shouldn't be the driving factor – experience should. Money will follow the experience. Ken Mangum, CGCS, director of golf courses and grounds at the Atlanta Athletic Club,

says that when looking through assistants' resumes, he looks first and foremost at who they've worked for.

As with anyone who wants to advance in a profession, determining one's weaknesses and improving those is a must. In this industry, those tend to be effective communications, people management, staff motivation, financial management and even developing an agronomic support system (because nobody knows it all). Successful superintendents have mastered these aspects of the business.

Another element of professional advancement is adhering to proper business etiquette. It might seem trivial, but attention to detail goes a long way.

Assistants can take or leave this advice, but it's hard to ignore the wisdom of Williams, who has reached the pinnacle of the profession. He says the key to becoming a successful, well-respected head superintendent is to bridge the gap between the background and knowledge of turfgrass science to management and leadership. Being able to train people and supervise them is paramount to running a successful golf course maintenance staff.

Assistants need to hone their business skills and focus on aspects of the business such as management, budgets, payroll and strategic planning. The quicker they learn these aspects of the business, the better off they'll be, because when they get hired as a superintendent, they'll be expected to operate effectively in those areas.

Much of the onus to grow professionally is put on assistants; however, head superintendents need to create an environment in which professional development is expected and encouraged. As a superintendent, are you doing all you can to prepare your assistants for the next level? Would your assistant be able to take over the reigns if something happened to you?

Assistants should heed advice from the likes of Williams and Mangum because they're successful. Williams says there's room at the top for people who do exceptional work and go above and beyond what's expected of them. It's a bumpy road to the top of the industry, but it can be smoother. Williams and Mangum made it to the top, will you? GCN

John Walsh

We would like to hear from you. Please post any comments you have about this column on our message board, which is at www.golfcoursenews.com/messageboard.



GOLF COURSE NEWS

Serving the Business of Golf Course Management

Vol. 19 No. 9

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Don't forget us

I enjoyed reading John Walsh's article "College curriculum shift means interests vary" in the July issue (page 10). The article reinforced the need for change in college turf programs. But he only concentrated on the perceived big schools.

In 1998 SUNY-Delhi initiated its revamped bachelor's degree program that reflects the importance of the business management aspect of the golf course profession. We were the second college in the country – Kansas State was the first – to do so. This was a radical move, but, thanks to the recommendations of a panel of New York golf course superintendents, it became a reality.

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Dominic J. Morales
Professor and dean
Applied sciences and recreation
division
SUNY-Delhi
Delhi, N.Y.

Not so much

I read with interest John Walsh's editorial about seashore paspalum ("The next big thing," August, page 6) and thought he did a fine job.

One part that caught my interest was the mention of water use. He attributed someone saying water use on paspalum could be as much as 50 percent less than Bermudagrass. While seashore paspalum has an extensive root system, I haven't experienced or been able to verify anyone that has demonstrated a 50-percent reduction in water use. When the grass is managed properly, you can experience reductions as much as 20 percent, which is statistically significant.

Tim Hiers, CGCS
Director, golf course operations
The Old Collier Golf Club
Naples, Fla.

All in the family

I'm responding to Pat Jones' article about families in the golf course maintenance business ("It's a family affair," July, page 58). There are many of us that come from a long line of golf course people.

My grandfather, a farmer, owned a horse-drawn sickle bar and mowed all the bunker banks (and there were many) on the nine-hole Franklin County Country Club in Washington, Mo. I helped rake the same banks when I worked for my dad, Vertus Mitchell, who was superintendent at the same club. He served as superintendent there for more than 30 years before relocating to the 27-hole Forest Park Golf Course in St. Louis. Eventually, he retired from the Glen Echo Country Club in St. Louis. He spent more than 50 years as a superintendent.

I worked for my dad for five years in all capacities – the fifth year as his assistant before moving to Alton (Ill.) Municipal Golf Course. I've been a golf course superintendent for 50 years – plus five years as a worker and assistant – in Illinois, Missouri, Ohio and West Virginia.

My oldest son, Robert V. Mitchell, Jr., worked for me and his grandfather while he was finishing his degree and before taking the superintendent job at Southmoor Golf Course in Maxville, Mo. Following that stint, he moved to Lockhaven Country Club in Alton, Ill., then to French Lick Springs Country Club in Indiana, and then to a couple of courses in Texas before returning to tend to courses in Indiana.

There are four generations of golf course superintendents and golf course maintenance people in the Mitchell Clan.

Bob Mitchell
Former executive director of golf
and grounds
The Greenbrier Resort
White Sulphur Springs, W.Va.

Correction

Photo credit for the Tom Doak photos in the September issue were omitted. Credit goes to Bob Giglione.

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Industry advocates fear possible MSMA ban

by Heather Wood

Visit the Golf Course News Web site, www.golfcoursenews.com, for daily news updates about golf course developments and renovations, people, suppliers, associations and industry events.



Some in the industry are speaking out against the Environmental Protection Agency's intention to cancel the reregistration of an older herbicide, saying there would be no alternative for the removal of some weeds if that happens.

The EPA released a reregistration eligibility decision about organic arsenical herbicides, which includes the herbicide monosodium methanearsonate. There are about 90 end-use products that contain MSMA, according to the EPA. It's most commonly used on turf and cotton crops.

MSMA is used to combat dallisgrass and other members of the paspalum family, as well as to eradicate crabgrass. It's primarily used in the southern

United States.

The evaluation of the chemicals was mandated as part of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, which calls for all products with active ingredients registered before Nov. 1, 1984, to be studied. Thus MSMA, which originated in the 1960s, qualifies for the evaluation.

"This process, called reregistration, considers the human health and ecological effects of pesticides and results in actions to reduce risks that are of concern," says Ernesta Jones, an EPA spokeswoman.

The RED states MSMA can transform into an inorganic arsenical, which is more toxic to humans than organic arsenicals, and the amount of the inorganic arsenical found in Florida groundwater that was tested exceeds the level

the EPA finds acceptable. The EPA report also states more than 90 percent of Florida's groundwater is used for drinking water.

The EPA's process provides a 60-day public comment period before a final decision is made. The document was released Aug. 5, and all responses were being accepted until Oct. 10.

The industry responds

Some industry advocates say they find holes in the study and are hoping the EPA will reverse its decision. Tim Murphy, a turfgrass weed scientist at the University of Georgia, co-authored a letter to the EPA with seven other professors from the southeastern United States outlining the reasons they disagree with the EPA's assessment.

"Practically speaking, it's not clear to

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me there's the same level of detection occurring in Florida as is occurring in other places," Murphy says. "I'm assuming there's very sandy soil. I don't know if it's applicable to all soil types in the United States, but I'm not disputing they detected it. Florida has unique soils in many respects, but would that be applicable to Georgia, or Raleigh, N.C.? I don't know if it would be in those soils."

Jones responds: "Florida is described as an area of concern because of its very sandy soils and shallow water tables with golf courses particularly susceptible to leaching because they typically have well-drained soils and are heavily irrigated," she says, referencing the RED.

"Similar environments, within Florida and nationally, would be considered to be highly vulnerable," she adds. "These include areas with shallow water tables, low background (naturally existing) arsenic levels and well-drained soils to which arsenicals to not sorb strongly."

Michal Eldan, Ph.D., is chairperson of the MAA Research Task Force, a coalition of three MSMA producers. The task force is dedicated to the safe use of MSMA and disodium methanearsonate. Like Murphy and his colleagues, the MAA Research Task Force penned a letter disagreeing with the EPA's decision.

Eldan says the task force presented the EPA with results of modeling to demonstrate that MSMA's contribution of inorganic arsenicals was below what the EPA defined as the accepted level. The EPA then lowered the acceptable level, Eldan says.

"It's like a moving target," she says about the EPA's requirements.

The MAARTF had a consultant, Waterborne Environmental International, create a model in which a supposed MSMA was used at the highest frequency possible, on every square inch of a golf course with all the MSMA transforming to the more toxic inorganic arsenical. The model represented levels that are

never as high normally, Eldan says.

"If you get good results with the worst-case scenario, you don't have to worry, but if you have results that are unacceptable, you have to refine the model for more reasonable assumptions," she says.

With these worst-case scenario results, the model shows the levels of inorganic arsenicals contributed exceeded 10 parts per billion – the EPA's stated acceptable limit at the time, she says. The task force then presented to the EPA a new model that scaled down the hypothetical MSMA usage to an amount more likely to be used on a golf course.

Eldan says that when the task force presented this model to the EPA, the agency responded that the accepted contribution level was three parts per billion. This happened twice, she says, and each time task force consultants scaled the model down further to be more in line with the label's golf course usage instructions (for example, application as a spot treatment four times a year, and only on fairways). The



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RED cites the original model presented, which supposes MSMA is applied at the highest possible amount.

It got to the point where the EPA told the task force the accepted contribution level was 0.02 parts per billion, Eldan says, pointing out that's less than analytical methods are capable of distinguishing.

Finding a replacement

MSMA is the only herbicide that can successfully eradicate dallisgrass, Murphy says.

"Registration cancellation of the organic arsenical herbicides places an undue hardship on turfgrass managers attempting to control a weed that severely lowers the value of his/her commodity," reads the letter co-signed by Murphy.

Others in the industry are pointing to other effects they say the reversal of registration could cause.

"We know it's an economic issue for sod producers," says Stuart Cohen, president of Environmental & Turf Services, a consulting firm retained by the MAA Task Force.

"If they allow weeds to grow in the sod and they sell it, the buyer will find someone else to buy from in the future. Superintendents and green committees don't like to have broad areas of weeds on their tees and fairways."

The EPA report states many alternatives exist to control weeds in the absence of organic arsenicals. It names flauzifop and dithiopyr as chemicals that have postemergent control and dithiopyr or pendimethlin for preemergent control of crabgrass. It describes the primary method of weed control as maintenance of high quality turf.

"However, when chemical control of grass weeds is needed, typically, two or more alternative chemicals would be required to achieve weed control com-

parable to the organic arsenicals," the report states.

The RED concludes that because there are alternatives to using MSMA, the benefits of the compound don't outweigh the risks.

Although he doesn't agree with this outcome, Murphy is glad such oversight occurs.

"I'm glad we have agencies that are reviewing the pesticides that we use and the pharmaceutical drugs we take," he says. "They're charged with trying to make sure what's out there is only of low risk."

Murphy hopes end users of the herbicide will let the EPA hear their concerns no matter which side of the fence they're on.

The EPA's RED can be viewed at www.epa.gov/oppsrdd1/reregistration/methanearsonic_acid/. Comments can be mailed to the EPA in the address listed in the document, e-mailed or

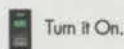


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delivered in person.

Jones says the EPA will review any comments submitted and decide how to proceed from there. An official response will be released. If the ruling stands, registration would be canceled on all organic arsenicals studied. There would then be a period for any who disagree to request a hearing. This is the expected course of action.

"The EPA considered submitted human health and environmental fate data as well as available open literature in its reregistration eligibility decision," Jones says. "Based on available data, the EPA is unlikely to change its conclusions. If previously unsubmitted data were to become available, the EPA would evaluate these data and potentially revise its decision as appropriate."

To read the EPA's report on MSMA and other organic arsenicals, visit www.epa.gov/oppsrrd1/reregistration/methanearsonic_acid. GCN

Tweaking the Tour

Agronomy department adds two positions

by John Walsh

The PGA Tour is tweaking the structure of its agronomy department to strengthen it.

Heading the department is Cal Roth, vice president of agronomy, who took over for Jon Scott, who left the PGA Tour to work with Nicklaus Design as chief agronomist.

"We're fine tuning the operations of the agronomy department, which Jon left in great shape," Roth says. "My transition has been smooth thanks to Jon and the quality and experience of the existing staff."

After an evaluation, it was decided the agronomy department needed to add two positions: a PGA Tour agronomist,

which has been filled by Bland Cooper, who came from ValleyCrest Golf Course Maintenance, and a director of agronomy, which the Tour is in the process of filling.

"What that does is structure the department so we have a director of agronomy for the TPC clubs and one for competitions," says Roth, who's been with the PGA Tour for 23 years.

There are two divisions within the agronomy department: one for competitions and another for the TPC clubs. Regional director Collier Miller will take over as director of agronomy and golf course maintenance operations for the TPC clubs, filling the vacant spot created when Roth left it to fill Scott's position,

(continued on page 49)





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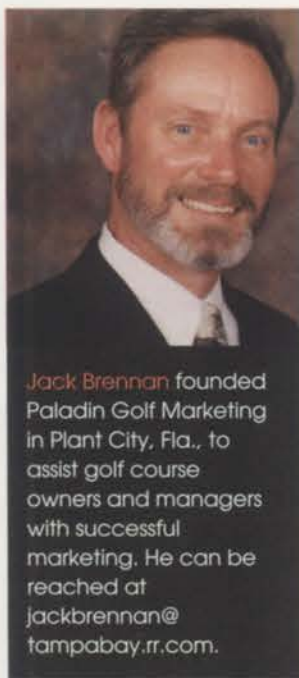
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Spurring more ideas



Jack Brennan founded Paladin Golf Marketing in Plant City, Fla., to assist golf course owners and managers with successful marketing. He can be reached at jackbrennan@tampabay.rr.com.

Last year, this month's column was devoted to identifying and solving problems through marketing solutions. Solving a facility's real problem(s) is effective marketing and effective operations. However, just conceiving marketing ideas that sound good or are dreamed up as a knee-jerk reaction to a real or perceived problem are, at best, mediocre, short-term promotions.

Problems aren't solved by creative, even ingenious, marketing promotions, but rather by marketing programs that address long-term solutions or goals based on a course's unique market position. You shouldn't confuse them.

Last month, I addressed the notion of possibly running out of marketing ideas for your facility in its unique market. The premise was that if you frequently believe you've run out of ideas to help your facility succeed, it's possible you're losing your passion for the business because you simply can't run out of marketing ideas. They're all around you – pervasive in life. They simply need to be modified appropriately to serve your facility in its market.

In preparation for last month's column, I e-mailed a network of golf industry people and asked them what they do if and when they find themselves uncreative and at a loss for marketing ideas. Their input might help inspire you:

Brian Gaines, regional vice president of business development for Meadowbrook Golf: "I keep files (paper and electronic) of every marketing idea I've ever come across and categorize them according to product type (private, semiprivate, daily fee, resort, etc.). Then, when I need an idea and am lacking inspiration, I'll go back and thumb through the files to see if one of them jumps out as being appropriate to a situation or sometimes spawns a different variation."

An advertising guy once said: "There are no new marketing ideas, only old ones that have been brought back or reworked." This isn't completely true, but there's value in the suggestion.

Mike Miraglia, Fore Golf Associates: "When I'm out of ideas, we go back to the old tried-and-true promotions, aka the basics or fundamentals, basically going back through history and finding the promotional items that worked the best and running one of those."

Douglas K. Spear, president of Spear Consultants: "When you run out of ideas, seek out someone who hasn't run out of marketing ideas, such as a professional."

Arthur Jeffords, president of Herberton Lighthouse Golf: "The best marketing idea, whether before or after you run out of other marketing ideas, is to remember that the best customer to market to is the one you already have. The better you treat and service your current customers, the more they'll return and remain loyal in spite of the marketing or discounting of the competition. They'll also recommend you to others and bring their friends. Good old-fashioned customer service still works, and customers appreciate and remember it. And, as always, if we all 'just say no' to discounting, then the industry will be better off."

John Reger, general manager of Haile Plantation Golf & Country Club: "Network. If you're in the golf

business, you have an incredible network of people willing to help you: PGA of America, U.S. Golf Association, National Golf Foundation, not to mention friends and associates. Ask around. You won't run out of marketing ideas if you care to succeed in today's golf market."

Dick Weiss, managing partner of Strategic Shaft Technologies (SST-PURE) and golf course owner: "Survey your members or players and ask what would encourage them to frequent the club more often. They might just tell ya."

Gerry Black, president of Relax Communications: "I once read about the idea of sitting down with a piece of paper and writing out a '100 ways to increase sales' list. You might not get close to 100, but it will force you to focus on things you aren't currently doing. A lot of times, people run out of ideas because they're too lazy to use their imagination. They try the traditional stuff, and then that's it."

Marc Brady, general manager of Tryon Country Club: "When all else seems to be faltering, educate your customers. Invite your members/guests to a forum about golf course 'agronomy 101.' Market yourself, your superintendent and staff to your members/guests by educating them about

what you studied, your course issues, your typical work day, basic agronomy, etc. Quell rumors. We often hear various suggestions/solutions from members that are so far from reality, but they don't know the business of golf. Help them learn about the business side. They'll appreciate it."

Danny Mays, president of Maverick Golf: "As an owner of a course, the only way I can truly understand the market surrounding any golf property – and they're all very different – is to take the time to ride the course (or sit on the first tee or putting green) and ask basic marketing questions about your type of facility (what's the daily fee, how did you hear about the course, how far did you drive, how did you get here) along with a

visit to your competition (That's always a fun one because the golf business is seemingly a turf war in some markets, usually the over-supplied one where there's discounting.)

WHEN MARKETING BECOMES PART OF YOUR EVERYDAY WORK ROUTINE, YOU'LL SOON REALIZE THAT YOU'RE SUCCESSFUL, TOO.

to discuss the global golf market and how to get more rounds to the area. Usually, I find the absentee owner or large management company staff is afraid to open up, thus, perhaps listening to their customers while visiting might give you the insight into their successful avenues of marketing.

"The answer could simply be reprioritizing the existing staff's focus away from less productive tasks and communicating the importance of seeking good, realistic market information versus playing golf with Bernice Goldbloom in the afternoon."

Al Martell, Castle & Cooke: "When I run out of marketing ideas, I call my consultant. If and when he runs out of ideas, we're all in trouble."

The above should give you practical understanding of what some influential people think about marketing and developing marketing ideas. It can be difficult for some, but for those who make marketing an everyday practice, it can come naturally. When marketing becomes part of your everyday work routine, you'll soon realize that you're successful, too.

Success comes to those who market wisely. GCN

Famous architect syndrome

Golf course renovations always have been a substantial part of most golf course architects' businesses and have become a larger part since 9/11 and the new-construction recession. While the renovation trend is accelerating, a related trend of restoring old courses rather than redesigning them is gaining momentum as well.

This trend dates to the 1979 U.S. Open at the Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio, when three new holes didn't match the original look of the Donald Ross design. The trend gained momentum with the sensitive restoration of The Country Club in Brookline, Mass., for the 1988 U.S. Open.

On the other hand, poor renovation jobs led to the creation of associations, like the Donald Ross Society, devoted to preserving the work of many Golden Age golf course architects and the emergence of independent, golf-design historians and golf course architects specializing in restorations.

While most courses are renovated for "here and now" reasons, many are considering restoring their courses to their original look as closely as possible or to their high point (i.e., the year they hosted a major tournament). Most golf course architects start the master planning process by asking whether members want to restore, rejuvenate, renovate or remodel

their course. The definitions vary from architect to architect, but we all seem to provide the same alliterative choices as a starting point.

So which one is in the best interests of your club? There are pro's and con's to each approach.

Change is good

The case for restoration builds if a course was designed by a famous deceased architect (Ross, A.W. Tillinghast, Seth Raynor, Perry Maxwell and Alister MacKenzie). However, these architects are responsible for less than 5 percent of the 16,000-plus courses that exist today. Several no longer exist, others have been dramatically

altered, and frankly, not all their courses were the masterpieces their supporters claim them to be. Assuming that only the top 50 percent of their courses might be worth restoring for historical value, that would amount to 300 courses.

The difficulties of a restoration start with the realization that most courses have evolved from their original designs by nature or necessity. A philosophical question: Has golf changed so much since the original design that we should consider a redesign as an adaptive reuse of a facility?

On golf courses, irrigation ponds were added, and drainage ponds and channels were expanded. These need to stay. But because of modern equipment, some features are no longer in play. Changes in maintenance demands and practices might make greens too steep, tees too small and bunkers impractical; and more lush fairways reduce the ground game.

Many famous deceased architects wrote about the need to allow for future length, so most people accept the idea of new back tees. But what about greens? Should their original size and contour be restored, knowing they're too steep for modern green speeds? Should bunkers that are 150 yards off the tee be replaced or moved further out to replicate the intended strategy? That depends on whether the bunker would fit the land similarly as the original, but it illustrates the value judgments needed.

So, the question arises: What constitutes a restoration? Whatever it is, it's an approximation at best.

Rejuvenate it

A key part of restoration is the historian or golf course architect trying to determine what the original architect's intent was. If we could reincarnate Ross to consult on a particular green, he might say it wasn't one of his best projects. It's difficult enough for green committees to arrive at a consensus without adding a historian or someone from a protectionist society who considers

himself stakeholder in your affairs to help make the decision.

If your course is truly a classic, there are marketing benefits of restoration. However, with the oversupply of facilities creating pressure to update courses, renovation might not be your best option. With so few golfers interested in architecture and the lure of catchy marketing campaigns that sell memberships or home lots, many owners need a completely new look for their courses to remain competitive. As someone said, "Since I'm paying dues in 2006, I prefer a 2006 golf course."

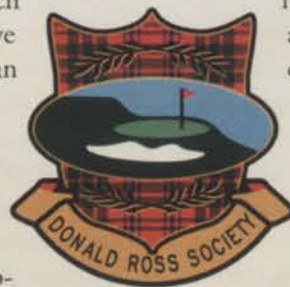
So, I often propose rejuvenation as a better solution, improving maintenance conditions and allowing some updates for the modern game while being sympathetic to the original style. Being sensitive to a good original design usually makes sense, and building over a good course from scratch usually is more expensive and doesn't provide much additional benefit. Generally, my guideline is to follow the existing routing to reduce infrastructure costs and propose feature designs I can justify that increase safety or improve maintenance.

After I'm gone

People ask how I would feel if someone remodeled my work after I'm dead. I don't know what happens in the afterlife, but I have a feeling I won't give a damn. I don't want to saddle the next generation with my wishes from the grave. I hope my course designs are well documented in photos, plans and in my own writing and will be placed in the care of thoughtful and reasonable people. But if my courses survive in any semblance of their original design, that'll be a good enough tribute to my designs.

Some of my courses have been altered already. Bunkers were removed to reduce maintenance costs, and while I might not like it, I understand it — conditions change, and courses must change with them.

I build playing fields for human enjoyment, and if that enjoyment wanes for reasons beyond my control, the important thing is to make sure golfers enjoy the game and the course. GCN



THE DIFFICULTIES OF A RESTORATION START WITH THE REALIZATION THAT MOST COURSES HAVE EVOLVED FROM THEIR ORIGINAL DESIGNS BY NATURE OR NECESSITY.



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The assistant trap

If the role of the golf professional might be looked at as the sexiest job in golf, the role of the golf course superintendent as the most essential job in golf, and the role of the club manager as the most beguiling job in golf, the roles of assistants within the three professions can be looked at as the final approaches to career success.

Unfortunately, assistant jobs don't always lead to successful careers in golf because too many of those entering the assistant job market *settle* for the softer jobs available and stay too long at these positions as opposed to *selecting* a more challenging career path that presents the inherent discomfort and risks associated with changing jobs early in a career. Only the naïve can believe that staying too long at a job will bear good fruit. The more mature understand the need for assistants to test their mettle by changing jobs to seek a more immediate challenge.

The stark reality of staying too long within the assistant job market is: (1.) While an assistant has spent from four to eight or more years searching for a career in golf, his/her school peer class has been on the job gaining invaluable experience elsewhere, to the point where the assistant can no longer compete with peers outside golf; and (2.) the assistant, consequently, has become too old to be welcomed into entry-level industry jobs outside golf.

With virtually no meaningful place to go, late escaping assistants have been literally career trapped at a point in their lives when they should be growing into their peak career years. To ward off this type of calamity, assistants should:

- Change jobs to move up the job ladder;
- Develop a career Web site;
- Assume if after about five years in the profession they can't begin to break through the pervasive top job interview barrier, get out of golf; and
- Always continue their education to enhance evolving careers in golf and to develop post assistantship job opportunities outside golf should the need arise.

Assistant pros

The role of the assistant golf professional is the most *intriguing* assistantship in golf because it offers tantalizing enticements

and, at the same time, presents arguably the biggest challenge to achieving career success in golf.

The enticement factor translates into the disarming appeal of the profession in which an assistant shooting a score lower than 80 when playing with always approving members, or giving a lesson a week for which he/she will never be held accountable, creates the false illusion of growing into a meaningful career. The collective impact of these types of misleading opportunities is they hold assistants in to what should otherwise be perceived as dead-end careers.

The challenge factor translates into the need that every aspiring golf professional must address, i.e., to become a completely effective and passionate teacher of the game. Until a golf professional can consistently inspire and elevate the playing levels of student golfers through his/her teaching ability, meaningful careers in golf will always remain out of reach because too many less-talented people are available to do everything else a golf professional does in the course of a day.

Therefore, the general five-year "in or out" guideline might not apply to assistant golf professionals, provided the assistant is maturing consistently into a more effective golf instructor – a process that takes time. However, once assistants realize they don't have the passion for teaching and, therefore, aren't effective instructors, they should leave golf quickly.

Assistant superintendents

The role of the assistant golf course superintendent is the most *unique* assistantship in golf because, unlike elsewhere in golf, an individual must commit to a considerable investment of time and money to earn a multiyear college degree to qualify for a meaningful assistant job. Acknowledging this commitment, the obvious question becomes whether the general five-year "in or out" guideline should apply to assistant golf course superintendents.

The presumed answer to this question must be "yes". However, by maximizing every career enhancing opportunity available, an assistant can extend this five-year probationary period. This means assistant superintendents – more so than other assistants in golf – must meticulously plan

and stretch out their formative career years, or run the risk of sliding aimlessly into career mediocrity. (My March 2005 GCN column profiles the differences that meticulous career planning can have on a superintendent's career.)

Assistant managers

The role of the assistant club manager is the most *troubling* assistantship in golf because assistants are working to gain access to a profession that (1.) prefers to identify more with the hospitality industry than the game of golf – evidence, in part, by the fact that the majority of managers working at golf clubs don't play the game regularly and, consequently, aren't perceived to be within golf's family circle like golf professionals and superintendents are; and (2.) fails to control who can assume the top of the profession title of general manager to the point where there are more less qualified abusing the title than there are qualified using the title. This ongoing situation significantly undermines respect for the profession.

It's not a coincidence the club managers are the only professional membership organization in golf that doesn't have the word "golf" in its title name like the Professional Golfers Association of America and Golf Course Superintendents Association of America do. But, when more than 80 percent of Club Managers Association of America member clubs are golf and country clubs, CMAA members should consider symbolically embracing the game of golf by changing the name of the association.

Therefore, the question whether the five-year "in or out" guideline applies to assistant managers becomes moot because the profession is too unsettled to allow for any meaningful evaluation in this regard. Accordingly, the best advice that can be given to assistant managers is to identify with and play the game at every appropriate opportunity; and to work under as many "true" general managers as possible – the only environment in golf where meaningful club management is practiced.

Golf professionals, superintendents and managers have a responsibility to grow their assistants. However, once assistants lose career focus, they should be firmly pushed out and on – the sooner the better (for them). GCN

We would like to hear from you. Please post any comments you have about this column on our message board, which is at www.golfcoursenews.com/messageboard.



Developing as a leader

Leadership. What does this often-used word mean to you? What does a leader do? What do you, as a golf course superintendent, do to excel as a leader?

To help realize your leadership potential, you must first understand that leadership needs to be distinguished from management, and what you do as a leader needs to be explored in detail.

My favorite definition of leadership, as expressed by author Marcus Buckingham, is: "Great leaders rally people to a better future." The focus of leadership should be on engaging and motivating a golf facility's work force.

To rally people to a better future, a leader must be able to discover what's universal among his followers. Why Rudy Giuliani become the person we associate with leadership after 9/11? Leadership experts suggest our acknowledgment of Giuliani as a leader began with his answer to a question during a press conference that awful day. Giuliani was asked what he thought the final body count would be. He didn't pass the question to others or talk about numbers; rather, his answer captured the emotion every American was feeling: "It will be more than we can bear." He had voiced what was in our hearts, and we were ready to follow him.

A leader must discover what's universal and capitalize on it. What's universal among your staff?

To understand leadership more clearly, let's look at three functions a leader must do successfully: set direction, plan strategically and develop human capital.

Set direction

When setting direction, your focus should be on articulating the golf course's mission; a compelling vision; a significant purpose and core values; and the engagement of leadership team members, workers and service providers to fulfill the mission or vision.

I recently asked two maintenance employees from different clubs what they do. The first employee, answering haltingly, said, "I mow grass." The second employee, responding quickly with a smile, said, "We provide a great golfing experience for our members."

Note the difference. The second employee understands the contribution the

course makes and views himself as part of a team. The first employee just mows grass. Which employee is more motivated? Which employee would you rather have on your staff? The difference likely lies with the skills of the golf course superintendent and club leadership. So, can you set direction better?

Plan strategically

Strategic planning includes brainstorming, analysis and selection of long-term strategies to improve a golf facility's success and financial health. Such strategies include expansions, organizational learning, identification of competitive opportunities and evaluation of benefits from new ventures.

Good strategic planning requires an understanding of the external factors impacting a facility. Positive factors that have benefited golf courses throughout the years include the increasing affluence of the American public, the emphasis on outdoor activities, the increasing number of healthy retirees, the emergence of golf on television and the excitement created by Tiger Woods.

Additional emerging factors that impact facilities are:

- The land occupied by many courses is valuable. For example, several courses in the Twin Cities have been sold for business, home or condominium development.
- The competition for recreational time and money is more intense. Every year, amusement parks become more prevalent and spectacular. The number of special events, festivals, recreational leagues, activities at local/regional/state/national parks continues to expand and become more attractive as they creatively attract participants.

- A recent study concluded young men and women in their early years in the work force have less available money to spend than those in previous decades. The leading causes were the cost of owning a home and the size of college loan payments.

- The lack of retirement money and plans might cause many baby boomers to return to the work force part time or full time in new jobs or careers.

You have a leadership responsibility to work with others to plan for the future of the facility and to keep those plans in mind as you lead your staff. For example, a su-

perintendent at an aging club in a growing suburban community was concerned about the future of the course and his position. When he visited with the pro, club manager and several board members, he discovered almost everyone had the same concern but nothing was happening. After further conversations, he, the pro and club manager asked to visit with the board of directors to discuss their concerns. The outcome: A small group was selected to work with a strategic planning firm to address the future of the course. The superintendent was pleased to be included in the small group.

Develop human capital

Human capital development involves identifying and improving leadership team members and their roles, responsibilities and performance expectations. A key emphasis is your professional development and that of the facility's leadership.

I've taught seminars for superintendents for more than 10 years, and I am impressed with the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's educational program and the interest superintendents have in professional development.

At the same time, I see two areas with great opportunities for improvement. The first is superintendents getting involved in leadership of a facility. In most cases, the superintendent has the most formal and informal training of the leaders. The GCSAA has recognized this need by emphasizing seminars and defining what participants will take back to their courses. Superintendents need to look for opportunities to provide leadership at their facilities.

The second opportunity is career development and planning. Not all of you want to or are able to continue as superintendents into your fifties and sixties. Unfortunately, the next logical career steps are limited. This is one area where you must provide leadership for yourselves. Think about what you plan to do throughout your career and retirement. Everyone should have a professional improvement plan, which should include preparation to excel in your current position and to prepare yourself for the next steps in your career.

Great leaders rally people to a better future. You need to apply this leadership in yourself, your golf course maintenance staff and your facility. GCN



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Hindrances to better business

Here is a list of the top eight challenges for members of the National Golf Course Owners Association:

1. A decline of rounds and revenue
2. Rising operating costs
3. Taxation and legislative issues
4. Marketing and customer service
5. Water/environmental issues
6. Insurance coverage and cost
7. Rampant green-fee discounting
8. Municipal competition

Source: NGCOA

QUOTABLE

"People should get course length out of their heads. Courses need to be tricked up. Everyone wants to have the longest course, yet some of the best courses in the world are short, and some of the longer courses are rubbish." – **Retief Goosen**, professional golfer, about the trend of golf courses becoming longer

"Five or six hours is fine to play a round of golf when you're older because it keeps you out of the bar, but it's not good for the younger people." – **Gary McCord**, professional golfer and golf analyst for CBS Sports

"The government says 36 states will have a water crisis in the next 10 years. Fights over water are no longer confined to the West." – **Robert Glennon**, professor, University of Arizona's Rogers College of Law

"We need to get away from the perfectly green golf course, but we need the owners to go along with it." – **John Fought**, golf course architect, John Fought Design

by the NUMBERS

1.3 The percentage increase of rounds at public courses year over year through August, according to NGF

180 The number of holes at the Mission Hills Golf Club in China

1.6 The percentage increase of rounds at private clubs year over year through August, according to NGF

3,076 The number of acres the Mission Hills Golf Club in Shenzhen, China, comprises

1.4

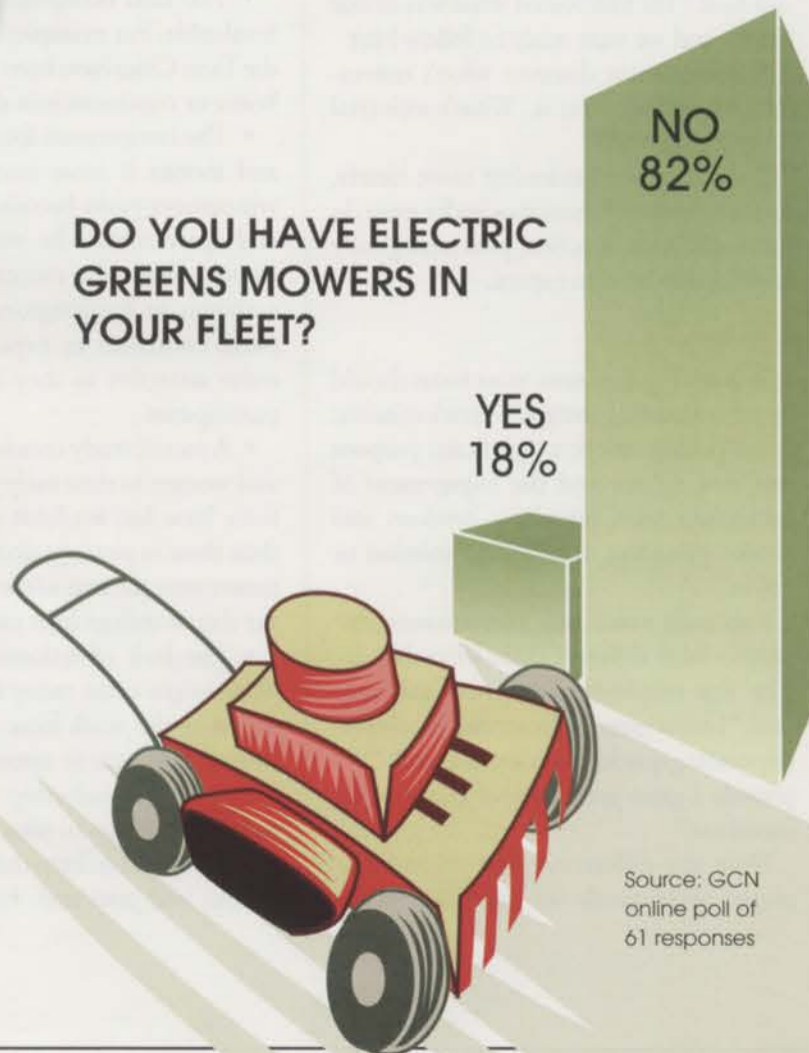
62,000 THE LENGTH, IN YARDS, OF MISSION HILLS' 10 GOLF COURSES

2,500 The number of caddies Mission Hills Golf Club employs

155 The number of bunkers on the Jose Maria Olazabal golf course at Mission Hills

The percentage increase of rounds at all U.S. facilities year over year through August, according to NGF

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Source: GCN online poll of 61 responses

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I did it my way

ONE GOLF COURSE OWNER ISN'T SO CRAZY AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

by
PAT
JONES

GCN INTERVIEWS
JOE SALEMI,
OWNER OF
BOULDER CREEK
GOLF CLUB IN
STREETSBORO,
OHIO

About eight years ago, I received a phone call from a guy who said he was building a great new course about 20 miles from my home in Cleveland and I should come see it as soon as possible. He said he was a novice, but he was designing and building the course pretty much himself and it was going to be special. Boulder Creek, he called it.

I receive many of these calls – usually from well-intentioned folks with more money than sense – so I told him, “Yeah, sure. I’ll get out there sometime.” Another crazy rich guy, I thought. Then blew it off.

During the next couple years, driving by the site near Interstate 80, I watched the course come to life. Hmmm ... nice piece of land, I thought. I should check it out. Still, I didn’t. Then the course opened and, to my surprise, it turned up on *Golf Digest’s* list of best new public courses. Wow, I’ve got to get out there, I told myself. Still, I didn’t.

Fast forward five years ... a buddy of mine called to say he needed a fourth for a tee time at ... Boulder Creek. Cool, I finally get to check out the crazy guy’s course. When I get there, before I even get to the first tee, I notice the crazy guy has done many smart things.

The small clubhouse is integrated – one wide counter doubles as an all-in-one pro shop sales desk, check-in point and snack bar. One person can do it all. Doors on either side of the building lead to a partially covered, lighted practice range. The covered part of the range features banks of garage doors so it can serve as secure storage for carts in the off-season. A clever system allows picked-up range balls to be fed into a cleaning hopper and automatically fed right into the machine that dispenses them again.

The price point is attractive for a ranked course at about \$55. Lots of nice landscaping, including hanging baskets of geraniums, lined the route to the first tee.

Another thing I noticed: The parking lot was full ... on a drizzly overcast Tuesday ... in October.

Wow, maybe the crazy guy’s onto something. So I decided right then and there

to find out more about what led Boulder Creek’s owner, designer, builder and chief cook and bottle washer, Joe Salemi, to create his own course and run it in a way that seems pretty different from the average “country club for a day.” Turns out he is crazy ... like a fox. Here’s what I found out.

Q What prompted you to do this?

My family’s in the excavating business. We do a lot of big jobs, like the office buildings in downtown Cleveland. I got into development and was looking for a parcel for a residential subdivision. I was checking it out when I noticed the parcel behind it was a spectacular spot for a golf course. It was being leased by a sand and gravel company at the time, so we had to get that changed and finally bought it in the mid ’90s.

I never played golf until three or four years out of college but fell in love with the game. I always had wanted to build a course. If you love this game, you have two dreams: play on the Tour or build your own course. Well, I can think just as good a game as Tiger, but my body just can’t do it, so I went for option number two.

Q You didn’t know much about course design and construction. What did you do to educate yourself?

I read every book on design that I could get my hands on. If I had to pick one book, it’s A.W. Tillinghast’s “The Course Beautiful.” He wrote some brilliant stuff. I read everything by Alistair MacKenzie, who’s the architect I admire most. We’re using quotes from him on the inside cover of the yardage book. I’m also erecting a MacKenzie monument near the clubhouse along with quotes from different architects on plaques around the course.

But the guy who blew me away was George Crump. If you read his books, he said way back then that Pine Valley would be one of the greatest ever. How did he know that?

The other one I love is Pete Dye. Nobody

today can even carry Pete Dye’s briefcase. His book “Bury My Heart in a Pot Bunker” should be required reading for everyone in the business.

Q How’d you get the project done?

We had aerial topography (mapping) done, and I did the routing plan myself. Then I had a retired superintendent on site for about eight or nine months clearing the property from the center line. We did three clears of about 30 feet from the center each time.

One advantage I had was that I had all the big toys – the dozers and excavators – that we needed to clear and shape. It took us two years to open, but we got it done. We were lucky to find a handful of people at various points to help with drainage, soil profiles, etc., just at the right times during the build.

Q Sounds like luck played a big part in this thing.

Do you believe in destiny? That’s us. I don’t know if I could ever do it again. This was such a massive project. I’ve done bigger stuff, but I built this golf course without any drawings. When I went to get permit approval from the city, I sat down with the mayor and city engineer and told them I had no plans. I had a copy of Pete Dye’s book with me. That’s it. They actually let me do it.

Also, at the time, the Army Corps of Engineers wanted to regulate isolated wetlands, which would have really killed us, but fortunately we fell into a legal black hole just before a Supreme Court ruling and avoided a huge amount of costs and hassles. It’s almost impossible to build a golf course economically. Between permits, stormwater regulations, inflation in the construction industry (steel, copper, oil, etc.), the complications and costs are just too much. We got incredibly lucky in so many ways. It was destiny that we pulled it off.

Then, one day, as I’m looking for a



D.S. Resch

shaper, this guy just shows up out of the blue – Matt Loos. He'd heard about our project and just stopped by. He'd been working all over the world, was looking to stay closer to home and wanted a shot at our project. He said, 'Show me something you want done.' Well, I'd cut out hundreds of pictures from different golf magazines and showed him a mounding feature I liked. He took off, and I came back later that afternoon, and you'd swear he'd shaped it just like the picture. Matt ended up doing the shaping, all the pipe work, etc. He talked his brother, Chris, into coming up here and working with us. He did all the greens and grow-in. We did everything in-house except the cart paths.

We also struggled to find labor during the project. Next thing I know, there's a van full of Mexican workers that pulled over right off the highway. They brought 20 to 35 guys. I would have never, ever got this golf course built without those guys. They worked seven days a week, weather permitting. A couple of them still work for us.

It's like Texas hold 'em poker: Every time I got down to my last card, I rolled a flush on the river. I'm so lucky that I got a chance to do this and didn't go broke.

Q What makes the course different?

It's a great golf course and a great value. We've never heard we have 'Mickey Mouse' holes or it's unfair. The general golfing public likes us. You can't buy that, you have to earn it.

Q You still do marketing to attract play though?

We advertised on radio, in print and on TV to attract golfers that first time. We collect e-mail addresses and make offers on the Web site. But, golfers' experiences are what keeps them coming back. We listen to people. You have to cater to your customers. People who blow smoke up your butt do you no good. We fixed many things on the course based on that input.

Initially, we had many complaints about yardage markers. So, we put in the Kirby markers and eliminated the complaints. Green speeds were also a little too low. Unfortunately, the average golfer judges golf courses by the speed of the greens ... even if they can't putt on them. Our greens are G-2 bentgrass. They're Ferrari greens, but we manage them cautiously because we also want keep up speed of play.

If I had to sum up why average golfers like us, it's because we give them a fair round of golf. There are no blind shots. People don't leave unhappy about surprises. If you don't

give the people what they want, you're going to go broke. They want lush conditions, they want fast greens, and they want to be able to find their ball. They don't like unplayable golf courses where you're constantly looking for lost balls. Right now, we're spending the money to clean out areas that slow down play and frustrate golfers.

Q Was the course meant to be an anchor for real estate?

That wasn't part of the plan at all. I just wanted to build the best course I could. But I recently sold part of the adjacent property to Ryan Homes and it is putting in 265 units.

Q How did you set your price point?

We never did a marketing analysis or anything like that. I had no numbers at all. I had purchased the land free and clear and put a couple of million dollars of my own into it. Then I borrowed another \$2.5 million to finish.

The one thing I knew was the general public can't afford \$150 per round – that's Economics 101. Also, I wasn't in this to make a lot of money. Then, a few days before we were set to open, I read an article in *Golf* magazine that suggested \$68 per round was about the maximum an average golfer would pay. So we stuck with that. Now, we're doing 20,000 to 25,000 rounds per year at about \$60 per round average.

Q What kind of play do you get?

We get many customer golf. We get many guys that decide if they're going to play somewhere outside their club, they want to come here. We also get many guys who've dropped out of private clubs.

We don't do many big outings. We stay busy enough with our tee sheet. We have that luxury.

Q You did some things structurally that are different than most facilities. How did you come to design the set-up that way?

When I laid out the range, I eliminated steps to reduce labor. The way we're set up in the pro shop, it takes a total of two or three people to run the entire clubhouse. We could write the book on lean golf management. We have no budget. We just spend as little as we can.

For grow-in, I bought used equipment – it's going to be destroyed in the process anyway. When you're done, you don't feel like you've wasted it. One of the biggest mis-

takes made by new golf courses is buying \$500,000 worth of new equipment that's going to get trashed.

We bought our equipment and carts versus leasing. My background is accounting. We can write those off effectively. We get five years of use out of the carts. After five years, they're still worth \$1,500 each. I'm only down a little at that point. And I've paid the equivalent of the lease costs and still have the down payment on new carts. We pay cash for everything and buy used equipment whenever we can.

It goes back to my Italian family roots. We say, 'There's the right way, the wrong way and the Italian way.' We do things a little differently.

Q What do you like most about your business?

I'm lucky we don't have a budget, and there are no committees or any of that junk. Also, the opening of the course was just the beginning. Now, we're dressing things up and constantly adding new features. That's fun.

This course is a legacy to my family. Plus, I always wanted to do it. We've been a great nation and every generation has given more than it's taken. When I leave I want this to be a public golf course that every one can enjoy and afford. It's my contribution back to the game and society.

Q What trends in the industry do you lose sleep about?

Most operators aren't looking at simple economics. We've built too many courses and put too much financial pressure on operators, such as the changes in the tax laws, permitting costs, etc. Plus, Cleveland has changed. There are fewer big corporation headquarters and a lot fewer people with club memberships.

The whole lifestyle in America has changed and made the private country club a dinosaur. The stay-at-home mom isn't sitting around the club playing bridge all day long. The dad isn't playing golf and hanging around playing cards all night. No one hangs out at clubs like they used to. Also, there's been an explosion of restaurant options, and the elite dining concept that used to support clubs isn't in demand any more. It's an absolute waste.

Q You mentioned leaving a legacy behind when you're gone. How would you like your golf obituary to read?

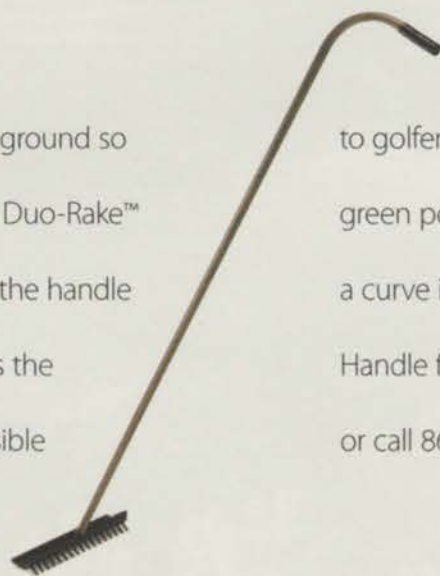
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AT A GLANCE

The Blackstone Course at Blackstone Country Club in Peoria, Ariz.

Owner: Sun Belt Holdings and Shea Homes

Architect: Jim Engh

Builder: American Civil Contractors

Golf course superintendent: Roger Brashear

Cost to build: \$9 million

Length: 7,089 yards

Par: 72

Number of holes: 18

Project started: Fourth quarter of 2003

Course opened: Fourth quarter of 2005

Turfgrass on greens: Tifeagle Bermudagrass

Turfgrass on tees and fairways:

419 Bermudagrass

The Blackstone Course at Blackstone Country Club was inspired by links courses in Ireland.

by JOHN WALSH

There were a couple of firsts involved with the development of the Blackstone Course at Blackstone Country Club in Peoria, Ariz. Golf course architect Jim Engh had never designed a golf course in the desert. Golf course superintendent Roger Brashear had never been the lead golf course superintendent during a grow-in. However, the experience of Denver-based American Civil Contractors and the fact that the company builds many of the courses Engh designs helped the project progress smoothly. Those involved say it turned out beautifully.

Out of the gate

Sunbelt Holdings, which partnered with Shea Homes to develop Blackstone, studied the marketplace diligently, says Mark Hammons, vice president of Sunbelt.

"With the entitlement we have, we're able to build five golf courses," he says. "We already built a public golf course and wanted to build a private one. We think we've created something that's not found in this valley with production homes, custom homes and a golf course."

Hammons says there aren't many golf clubs in the area at the Blackstone's price point, which is \$60,000 for a club membership. He says Arrowhead Country Club is probably the closest club in price to Blackstone, but it's an older facility. Quintero Country Club, about 20 miles northwest of Blackstone, is at the high end of the market.

"Those are the two extremes, and there was nothing in the middle," he says. "Blackstone is a home club. We are building custom homes for empty nesters and young people."

Moving forward with the golf course project, Sunbelt interviewed Engh and liked his philosophy of working within what the land presents.

Before working at Blackstone, Brashear was superintendent of the Cochise Course at Desert Mountain for about four years. He heard about Blackstone through Intrust Golf Management, which had contacted him about working at one of golf courses it manages, including one in Vistancia near the Blackstone site. Those courses didn't interest him, however, Brashear was interested in the Blackstone project because he had never been the lead superintendent during a grow-in and was excited to stay in Arizona.

Rick Maher, operations manager for ACC Golf, an arm of ACC, says the company was interested in the project for three reasons: (1.) Engh, with whom it had a good relationship, designed the course; (2.) working in Arizona in the winter is preferable; and (3.) Shea Homes and Sunbelt are big clients.

Design style

Sunbelt's management team, which includes several accomplished golfers, looked at the land and thought it would be developed into a normal desert golf course with carries, elevation changes, boulders and landscape creations.

"But when the management team started talking to Jim, and he said he had never done a golf course in the desert, management then said, 'We want something different,'" Hammons says. "There's criticism that a lot of golf courses out here are similar, but with Jim, the links style, greens design and bunkers (there are only 30 of them compared to 60 or 70 on a typical desert course) are different. He makes playing the course challenging but rewards you for thinking through the round. If you hit an errant shot, but get the distance right, you have the opportunity to make par."

Engh incorporated many natural features in his design. For example, there's a natural land berm blended into the eighth hole, and a green tucked in a cove surrounded by natural earth on the ninth. The site features many arroyos and drainage areas that Engh could capitalize on, allowing him to bring his style to the desert.

"I have a love for Ireland and using the land as it is, although I'm not afraid of creating things where nothing exists," he says. "I don't want repetition on the golf course."

Engh worked well within the land, which is part of his style, Hammons says.

"We moved between 200,000 and 250,000 cubic yards of dirt," he says. "It was kind of a clean slate in terms of the land and design, except for the 404 (permit) areas that run through the site."

On the site, 404 areas are dry streambeds deemed wetlands by the Army Corps of Engineers that can't be disturbed.

Other than the 404 areas, which were a constraint when designing the course, Engh says he was able to route the course where he wanted to. The 404 areas determined where some holes went. Some holes touched nothing and fit perfectly. Other holes were different. For example, Engh chose a flat



There are many areas of the golf course that didn't require grading.

area to put an irrigation pond and one hole wrapped around it with an Irish flair.

"We went through a selection process, so the owners knew the look they would get with us, and that allowed us to move forward without much interference," Engh says.

Being a desert course, a maximum number of acres of maintained turf—90—is part of the construction equation.

"We have really big landing areas, but there's no grassing around the tees and up to the fairways," Engh says. "The course is 7,089 yards from the tips, but additional length wouldn't change the number of maintained acres of turf. I design for a scratch player. The challenge is designing for the Tour players. For me, I cover 99 percent of golfers by designing for the scratch golfer.

"I became more bold and confident by understanding that one out of every five golfers won't like the layout, and that one person will be the most vocal," he adds.

Engh and Hammons prefer when a golf course superintendent is on site from day one, and Engh likes the superintendent to lay out the irrigation system. Brashear was there for that.

"He reviewed Jim's plans and offered suggestions from a maintenance standpoint,"

Photos by Joann Dost

Hammons says. "It was a great advantage to have Roger on that early."

Builder relations

Building in the desert can be tricky. Anything that's disturbed won't grow back, Maher says.

"We take the time and effort not to tear up any more than we have to," he says. "We're focused on minimal disturbance."

Other than running into hard ground and working in 110-degree temperatures, everything went smoothly, Maher says.

Engh was on site periodically, but during the shaping process and grassing, he was there more often. During construction, there weren't many change orders, Engh says.

"When we hit rock, there were change orders that needed to be made," he says. "We also added a few irrigation heads here and there."

Potential issues were addressed before they became problems, Maher says.

"Roger is the more-than-helpful type," he says. "He was there to solve problems, not create them."

Working with ACC was a positive experience for Hammons.

"They wanted to come to this market, so they were aggressive with their price," he says. "We were adamant about keeping the disturbance to the landscape outside the golf course to a minimum. They met the timeline. They held to their numbers. ACC knew Jim and his philosophy so there weren't many change orders, but there were many small changes that were absorbed in their daily operations."

Brashear also was pleased to work with ACC.

"We learned a lot from each other," he says. "Being my first golf course build, I was scared so bad because you have to do it right. It was up to ACC and me to make it happen."

Because the course is part of a master-planned community, it will be surrounded

by homes eventually. But, as of mid-September, none of the homes had been built yet, but lots have been sold.

Water supply

Water is always a concern when building a golf course, especially in the desert. Engh says the water set-up and delivery was already resolved before he arrived, which allowed him to focus strictly on the golf course. Sunbelt worked with the city of Peoria and the Central Arizona Project, a water provider. The property on which Blackstone sits is bisected by the CAP canal, which channels water from the Colorado River. Additionally, Blackstone has a wastewater plant that provides Class A effluent water.

"We have two lakes with effluent water, and we will wean ourselves off of the CAP as soon as possible, as we build more homes," Hammons says. "Out of every 100 gallons that goes into the treatment plant, 80 percent can be regained to go back into

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Selection and care

When building some courses, depending on location, the choice of what grasses to use can be daunting. But not for the Blackstone project. 419 Bermudagrass was used on the tees and fairways, and Tifeagle Bermudagrass was used on the greens. The varieties are typical grasses in the desert because they're durable and stand up to the weather. Because the greens' design and the weather, it would be difficult to grow bentgrass, Brashear says. There wasn't a lot of choice with the grass because of the greens' design and the desert location.

"We toyed with the idea of bentgrass greens but because of the heat, we decided it wasn't prudent," Engh says.

Brashear says Tifeagle makes for a perfect putting surface if it's verticut and topdressed regularly. He grooms the greens four times a week, verticuts once a week and brushes twice a week.

"Tifeagle is known for thatch, but if you don't deal with it every day you'll have problems."

The Blackstone project started late in 2003, and sprigging finished in September of 2004. Hammons says Sunbelt missed its marketing window but ended up with a year-and-a-half grow-in. The course, which is overseeded with ryegrass in the winter, is going through its first year of transition.

"Until we sell every house around here, we'll overseed," Brashear says. "There are a lot of benefits to not overseeding, but I understand why they want to do it."

Brashear says it takes a lot to maintain the course. For example, there's a lot of hand work needed around the bunkers because they're severe.

"As Jim once said, this course won't be low maintenance, but I'm 34 and am not looking for an easy course to maintain," he says. "When I'm 70 and still doing this, I'll be looking for the flattest course in Kansas. The course is hard to maintain, but it's fun. I haven't found anything to complain about. There are a few areas of the course that take more to maintain, but it's beautiful."

That's entertainment

Of the 20-plus projects Engh has worked on since starting his own firm in 1991, he says the desert setting makes this course stand out. A lot of roll into the greens, flat areas around those rolls, and several ways to look at shots onto the greens are a few of the aspects that differentiate Blackstone from other courses in the area.

"We brought our vision into a desert set-

ting," he says. "It's a golf course that looks like nothing else in the Phoenix Valley. There's a wide variety of randomness. You can play it 30 times, and still not figure it out. We're bold with our individual hole

characteristics.

"We're in the entertainment business," he adds. "If you look at it any other way, you're missing a large part of the business."

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Staying afloat

CAN ANY COURSE BE AN ISLAND UNTO ITSELF THESE DAYS?

by
JOHN
WALSH

It's the purest of golf development concepts: A course that's just a course. No houses, no business parks, no fancy hotel – just golf for golf's sake.

But the majority of the golf courses built nowadays are tied to real estate, whether it's residential housing or a resort. Home building accounts for about 70 percent of new courses coming on line, according to Henry DeLozier, v.p. of golf for Pulte Homes and president of the National Golf Course Owners Association board of directors. This is mainly because the number of rounds generated by stand-alone facilities – ones that aren't part of a residential or commercial development, owned by a municipality or part of a resort – simply can't cover the cost of building and operating them.

"The cost of construction is more than the number of rounds we're getting," says Joe Niebur, president of Colorado Springs-based Niebur Golf. "Golf courses need subsidies. The land cost is too much in highly populated areas. You need something else to carry the golf course."

As a result, fewer stand-alone golf courses are being developed. Those that are being built are the brainchildren of incredibly wealthy individuals or are located on unique pieces property.

"The economics aren't there anymore," says Mike Bylen, owner of three public stand-alone courses in suburban Detroit – Cherry Hills, Pine Trace and Shepherd's Hollow.

Bylen attributes the demise of stand-alones to oversaturated markets and the general economy. He says there were 42 upscale golf courses – most of them stand-alones – built in suburban Detroit between 1989 and 2001. Two have closed and three more are about to, he says.

"It's not like opening a coffee shop, where you can move to another corner if business is bad," he says. "You can't move a golf course. If you could, I would have done so already."

Nowadays, stand-alones are the exception, according to Steve Forrest, golf course archi-

tect with Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest and Associates. He says the decline of stand-alone courses started in 2000.

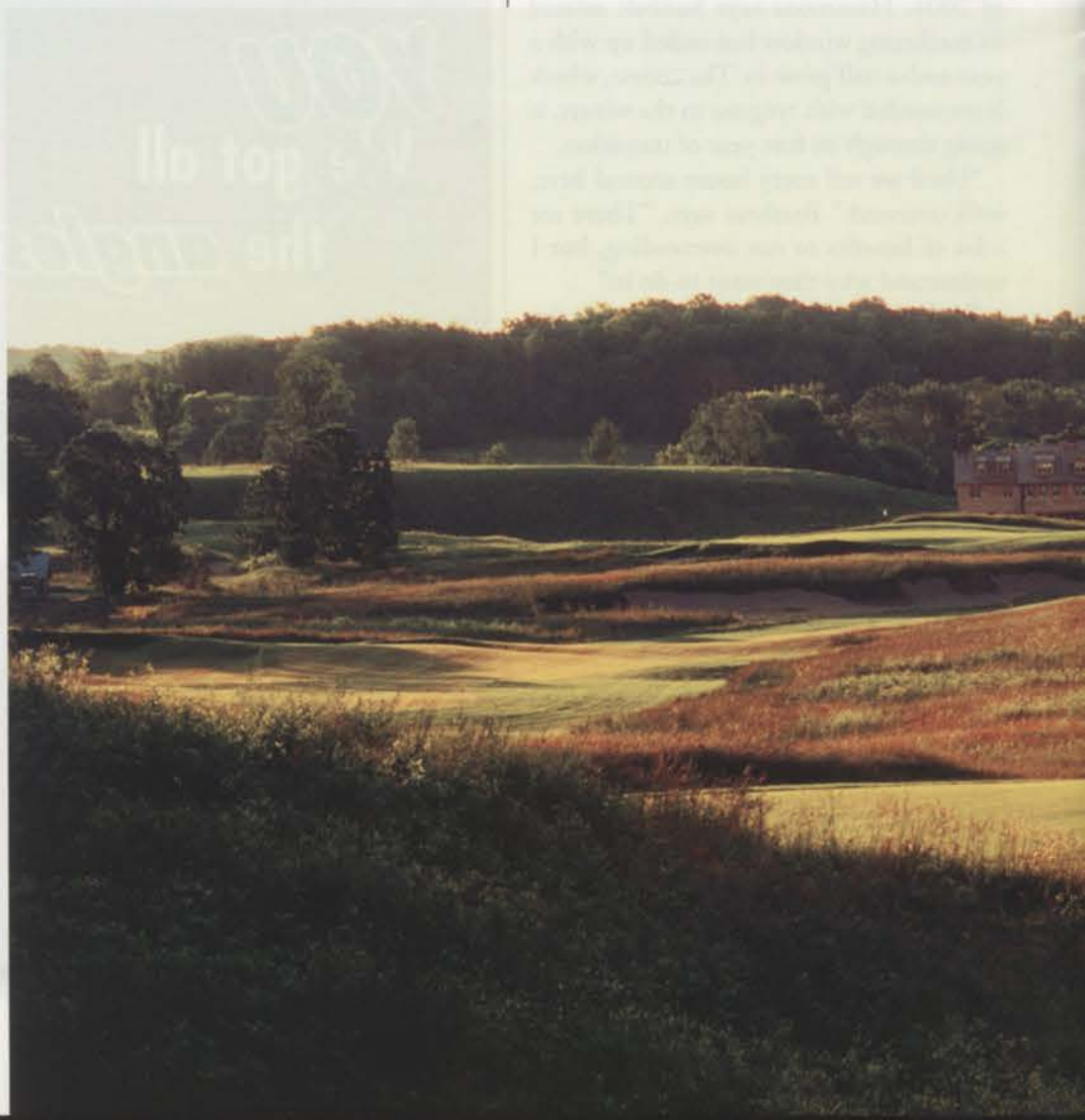
"It's hard to make money at a golf course," he says. "It's hard to get financing. It will take at least three years to get out of the red and into the black – that's the standard. Unless you're independently wealthy or use government funding to build a course, you won't see a stand-alone course be a big success. I would be surprised if stand-alone courses would be more than 10 percent of the market."

Everything in Scottsdale, Ariz.-based SEMA Golf's pipeline, including Mexico, is part of a residential development or a resort, according to president Bob Steele. Steele

says he has heard of a few stand-alones being built. The last course SEMA built that didn't have housing around it was part of the Desert Mountain Resort in Scottsdale, Ariz. There were five courses already and demand indicated a need for a sixth course.

"Unless it's a high-end private club that's funded through membership, golf courses will need residential development to be built," Steele says. "Still, there are some private exclusive clubs out there, but it's not feasible anymore to do those kind of private deals."

Niebur Golf currently has eight jobs under way, and none of them are stand-alones – all are tied to residential real estate or a resort. The last time Niebur built a



stand-alone golf course was Three Crowns in Casper, Wyo., which British Petroleum developed on a reclamation site. It opened in 2004.

From an architect's point of view, Forrest says stand-alones are the most desired type of course partly because the people building them usually want the best for the course.

"We're thrilled when we find them," he says.

Currently, of all the designs the Hills/Forrest firm is working on, two are stand-alone courses. One is being built in between Annapolis, Md., and Washington, D.C., by Albert Lord, vice chairman and c.e.o. of Sallie Mae. The course, called Anne Arundel Manor, will be built for Lord and 50 of his closest friends. Construction is scheduled to start in November. No market research was done for the project, Forrest says.

Another stand-alone course Hills/Forrest is working on is part of the state of Kentucky's golf trail in Yatesville State Park. It's called Eagle Ridge.

All of the golf courses Tripp Davis and Associates is designing are tied to real estate.

"Right now, I have five new projects, and they're all tied to residential real estate or a resort," says golf course architect Tripp Davis. "Golf courses that aren't tied to real

estate tend to be smaller, private high-end clubs. You don't see them often."

However, in the past six years, the firm has designed a couple stand-alones financed by private equity, most notably The Tribute in The Colony, Texas, and Clary Fields in Tulsa, Okla., which are both public.

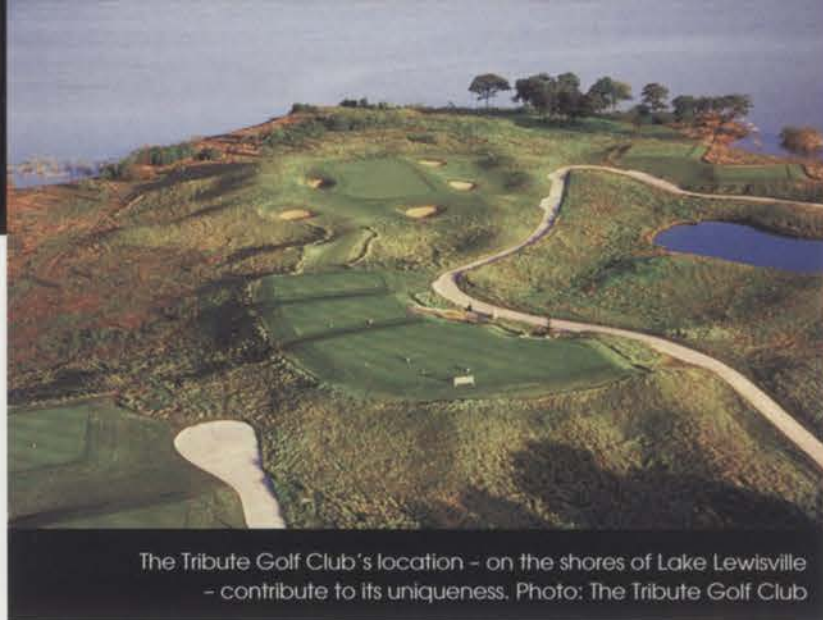
"When we designed them, we realized they needed to be profitable and unique," Davis says.

Making it work

For a stand-alone to be successful, it needs to be in a metro area and have the right demographics, Forrest says. As an example, the big three motor companies – Ford, General Motors and DaimlerChrysler – are located within 30 minutes of Bylen's three courses.

"The majority of our customers have a direct or indirect relationship with the Big Three," he says. "We book a lot of business because of them."

Davis says there are two keys to building sustainable stand-alones. First, there needs to be a new site that adds to the golf experience to make it a unique concept. For example, you don't want a flat site with a lot of rock and no ambiance. And second, you need to take a minimalistic approach



The Tribute Golf Club's location – on the shores of Lake Lewisville – contribute to its uniqueness. Photo: The Tribute Golf Club

to designing the course because you need to build it as cost efficiently as possible.

The Tribute Golf Club and Clary Fields Golf Club fit those requirements, according to Davis. The Tribute is on a unique site – the shores of Lake Lewisville. The design is considered a "dream 18" because the holes are based on concepts found in Scotland and have the ambiance of links land. Other aspects that make it different include:

- The director of golf is from Scotland;
- Bag pipes play through speakers;
- The flags are five feet instead of the standard seven and a half feet; and
- It's maintained to play hard and fast.

Clary Fields came about because a guy in Tulsa who loves to golf was having difficulty reserving tee times at the local public course, so he built his own.

Since Erin Hills opened Aug. 1, business has been good for owner Bob Lang, who isn't trying to generate as many rounds of golf as possible in order to give golfers an uncrowded experience. Photo: Paul Hundley





Among his projects, Steve Forrest is designing two stand-alone golf courses. Photo: Forrest/Hills & Associates

“What made this project work was that there was a water source close by and the soil was sandy,” Davis says. “We built the course for less than \$2.5 million.”

The course breaks even at 22,000 rounds per year when most similar public courses would need 30,000 rounds to break even, Davis says.

Another example of a stand-alone that has unique aspects is Erin Hills in Hartford, Wis. It will host the 2008 USGA Women’s Amateur Public Links, which it was awarded while under construction. It was designed in the fashion of Old Tom Morris because very little dirt was moved during construction.

“There was only one hole where we lifted the green,” says owner Bob Lang. “Everything else was cored into the ground.”

Lang, a builder, has a different philosophy about golf carts. He claims the only modern aspect of the golf experience at the public Erin Hills is the electric golf carts. There are no continuous cart paths, and fewer golfers means fewer carts, which is better for the fescue grass, which can’t withstand a lot of cart traffic.

Performance

So if other forms of real estate help golf courses financially, how are the stand-alones performing without that component? Nationally, rounds at the real estate/resort courses have increase 3.5 percent this year compared to last, according to the National Golf Foundation. Rounds at stand-alones have increased 2.7 percent this year compared to last.

Right now, it seems Erin Hills is doing well after its Aug. 1 opening.

“I’m getting so many calls,” Lang says. “The USGA is coming back to evaluate the course, but the decision hasn’t been made about whether the U.S. Open will be played here in the future. David Fay is looking at it. When we opened, we received unexpected national attention, and as a result, it gives you the expectation this course is really good.”

Lang’s goal is for Erin Hills to become a destination golf course. So far, he’s booked tee times from golfers from more than 20 states. He’s also receiving more tee times from Illinois golfers than he expected. During August and September, the course was averaging 80 to 90 golfers a day.

“We do no advertising,” he says. “There’s so much awareness now, we’re getting repeat business.”

Lang says he has bookings all throughout October, but the course will probably close in early November.

“We’re not taking tee times for next year,” he says. “We’re trying to figure a budget for next year.”

For Lang, the fewer tee times the better, which isn’t normal for most public golf courses. He says tee times are going off every 10 minutes, but he’s only allowing five per hour, holding one.

“We’re trying to create a unique golf ex-

perience,” he says. “It’s about getting away in a natural setting. We want to provide an uncrowded golf experience.”

Fewer tee times means less revenue, which makes it challenging for Lang, who wants to keep the bank happy, the course fluent and the golfers happy.

Lang’s goal this year is to generate 5,000 rounds at \$150 a round. By the first full week of September, Erin Hills had generated about 3,000 rounds.

Being a highly-rated new course helps business, but how long will the buzz last?

“I’ve asked people, and they say look to the third season as the top-out year,” Lang says.

But Lang, who’s the sole owner of the course with a very supportive bank, doesn’t want to generate 22,000 rounds a year. He says 10,000 to 12,000 is ideal, but 14,000 to 18,000 is more realistic financially.

(continued on page 49)




Being a highly rated new course, as well as receiving attention from the U.S. Golf Association, is helping business at Erin Hills. Photo: Paul Hundley



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Changing course

SUPERINTENDENTS ALTER FERTILITY PROGRAMS TO ACHIEVE BALANCE

by
DAVID
WOLFF

Photos also by
David Wolff

Just a few years ago, the “lean-and-mean” mantra dictated the greens fertility programs of many golf course superintendents. The amount of nitrogen used to fertilize greens was reduced, and at the same time, heights of cut were lowered. While the quest for ever-increasing green speed has driven Stimpmeter readings to 11 feet and faster, the consequences – often including increased turf stress and disease – have been less than desirable.

However, the pendulum is starting to

swing the other way, says Bruce Clarke, Ph.D., director of the center for turfgrass science at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

“Five to six years ago, we began to see a significant increase in anthracnose on greens,” he says. “This was most likely the result of lower cutting heights and reduced amounts of nitrogen application. Where annual bluegrass is a major component of the putting surface, low mowing can deplete the carbohydrate reserves of this species, often already weakened by environmental

stress. This told us that reduced fertility and ultralow cutting heights might not have been such a great idea.”

Todd Lowe, the U.S. Golf Association agronomist for the Florida region, sees a variety of fertility programs regularly. Some courses are lush, while others are lean, but most fall somewhere in between.

“As a whole, the industry is moving to more of a spoon-feeding program of applying nutrients on a lighter, more frequent basis,” he says. “This allows superintendents



John Cunningham, golf course superintendent at The Mandarin Golf & Country Club, modified his turfgrass management program to suit the membership and be more consistent daily.

to provide the amount of nutrients they feel the turf needs. Also, the newer bentgrasses and Bermudagrasses are more prone to develop thatch.”

The most important cultural practice impacting thatch accumulation is nitrogen fertility, Lowe says, and applying a slug of nitrogen creates lush top-growth that must be worked harder to provide optimum playing conditions. It also can create friendly environments for pathogens.

Conversely, keeping the putting greens leaner provides better playing conditions on a more consistent basis, but it's easy to go overboard and keep the greens anemic, Lowe says. It forces superintendents to manage greens on the edge as food reserves in the root system are used up. Often in these conditions, fungicides are applied more to protect the weakened plant.

It's not the only way

Clarke, his Rutgers colleagues James Murphy, Ph.D., and graduate assistant John Inguagiato, have conducted research that shows mowing heights can be raised about 0.015 to 0.030 inch, and, with double mowing or single mowing in conjunction with rolling, will produce a green speed similar to that of a lower mowing height. The study demonstrates that lowering mowing heights isn't the only way to obtain desired green speeds.

On the other hand, too much of a good thing can cause problems. Other research indicates that while rolling greens will increase green speed when done more than once a week, turfgrass wear might be a concern when rolling frequency is increased to more than three times a week.

Inguagiato is conducting research about the best management practices for controlling anthracnose and maintaining ball-roll distance. His preliminary results show that increasing mowing height from one-tenth inch or less to 0.125 inch or higher greatly reduced anthracnose. Furthermore, an acceptable ball-roll distance at a height of cut of 0.140 inch was obtained with a mowing frequency of 14 times a week and/or rolling every other day. The combination of double cutting and/or rolling at 0.125 or 0.140 inch also reduced the severity of anthracnose considerably.

Balance it out

At Cutten Club Golf & Tennis in Guelph, Ontario, Canada, the fertility program



The golf course maintenance staff at The Mandarin is careful not to overwater and relies on hand-watering because the middle of the greens don't need as much water as the edges.

is designed to achieve a balance between playability and healthy turf. The push-up greens at the 75-year-old club are a mixture of *Poa annua* and bentgrass. Golf course superintendent David Kuypers tests the soil monthly, looking at nutrient levels, pH, organic matter and exchange capacities. Then he conducts a clipping analysis.

“Nitrogen is the nutrient everyone looks at,” he says. “I pay particular attention to the dry weight percentages of the clippings. For nitrogen, 4 to 6 percent is the textbook range. But to me, 6 percent is excessive; that would be very lush conditions.”

Kuypers says he keeps the greens in the healthy range, but at the low end.

“We apply an adequate amount of nitrogen, but it's not excessive,” he says. “On the other hand, we don't starve the turf. Nitrogen is the only way plants will produce carbohydrates. All the stories that came out

of the Northeast last year after their devastating summer pointed to carbohydrate starvation as the cause of the collapse of the plants. It's just like a human being. If you starve yourself for a long time with poor nutrition and then there's a stressful period in your life, you can collapse.”

Playability is another reason Kuypers stays in the lower end of nitrogen fertility.

“If there's a target range, we'd rather be on the leaner end for control purposes,” he says. “We can always add more nitrogen if an issue comes up, such as a low growth rate. However, we can't stop the grass if it's going. Excess growth can be just as much a negative. We use short-residual, low-rate nitrogen in the spray tank. We monitor nitrogen levels weekly to make sure they're adequate. We do a lot of tissue testing and alter our inputs based on the results.”

The goal at Cutten Club is to create



The fertility program at Cutten Club Golf & Tennis is designed to achieve a balance between playability and healthy turf.

the smoothest, truest surface possible. So Kuypers and his staff roll greens three times a week and use growth regulators. Kuypers also gives credit to Jacobsen's E-Walk walking greens mower. The electric mower gives operators the ability to set clip frequency independent of walk speed.

"Every time you make a pass on a green, you'll miss some blades," Kuypers says. "That's one reason some courses double cut. The longer the turf is on that first pass, the more you'll miss, and the more impact that miss will have on ball roll. The more leaf tissue you try to cut off on any given day, the less clean the cut will be. If I want to affect green speed, changing the height of cut is the last thing I want to do. If we can get a good, clean cut on a healthy, dense stand of

wasted," he adds. "We can always increase fertility. Water and fertility programs are the two most important aspects of turf management. We pay a lot of attention to doing those things well. When you start to get lazy, the tendency is to overwater and overfertilize."

Change with the times

Golf course superintendent John Cunningham has been involved in golf course maintenance for more than 30 years, and he realizes it's easy to fall into a rut of doing things the same way. However, during the past six years, he's changed his cultural programs based on changes in the industry.

"Today we maintain fairways like we used to maintain greens," says Cunningham, who also serves as property manager for The Mandarin Golf & Country Club in Markham, Ontario, Canada. "Golfer expectations have changed, and we have to adjust our methods and cultural practices. Our goal is to determine the ideal green speed for our property and membership and then be consistent. It doesn't matter what's going on at courses down the road or up the street. We modified our program to better suit the Mandarin membership and make us more consistent on a day-to-day basis. When we approach the member/guest day, for example, we don't have to dramatically ramp up conditions. We're going to stay consistent."

Cunningham tests soil annually and developed a foliar feeding program. He prefers foliar fertilizer because it's applied on the leaves of the plant, which absorbs it.

"Foliar is a much more consistent application," he says. "With granular, the operator has to walk at the same speed and take the same overlap. With foliar, we get a perfect application every two weeks, keeping the nitrogen level down so we don't get a flush of growth. I can back off on the potassium, phosphorus or micronutrients and spoon feed whatever is necessary. We stick to the program for the season based on soil test results, then reevaluate in fall."

The Mandarin, which opened in 1991, has bentgrass greens, tees and fairways. The greens were built to USGA specifications and are aerified once a year, in early September. At three-week intervals, they're verticut and topdressed.

Water management is another critical element of Cunningham's program. The staff is careful not to overwater and relies on hand-watering because the middle of the greens don't need as much water as the edges.

"Members tell us the greens are smooth, consistent and true regardless of their speed,

which can be slowed by topdressing," Cunningham says. "That seems to matter most to members."

A different focus

Despite the popular "lean-and-mean" mantra, Chris Hartwiger, USGA agronomist for the Southeast region, disagrees with its premise. He says that in his area, the southern end of the transition zone, green speed isn't the focus.

"All the mid-level to high-end courses in this region have really good greens," he says. "They have converted to more heat-tolerant bentgrasses, including A-1, A-4 and Crenshaw. There is a premium on keeping turf alive during summer. The rule isn't to push green speed. No one is stealing market share over six inches of green speed. The difference is the 'wow' factor, which means exceeding customer expectations."

The best example of the 'wow' factor in Hartwiger's region is at the Atlanta Athletic Club. A few years ago, Rees Jones was brought in to renovate the Riverside Course, which received much less play than the Highlands Course, which hosted the 1976 U.S. Open and the 1981 and 2001 PGA Championships. The project included a new grassing scheme: Fairways are Zeon zoysiagrass, which has a fine leaf texture and light green color; and roughs are Tifton 10, a coarse Bermudagrass with a blue/green color.

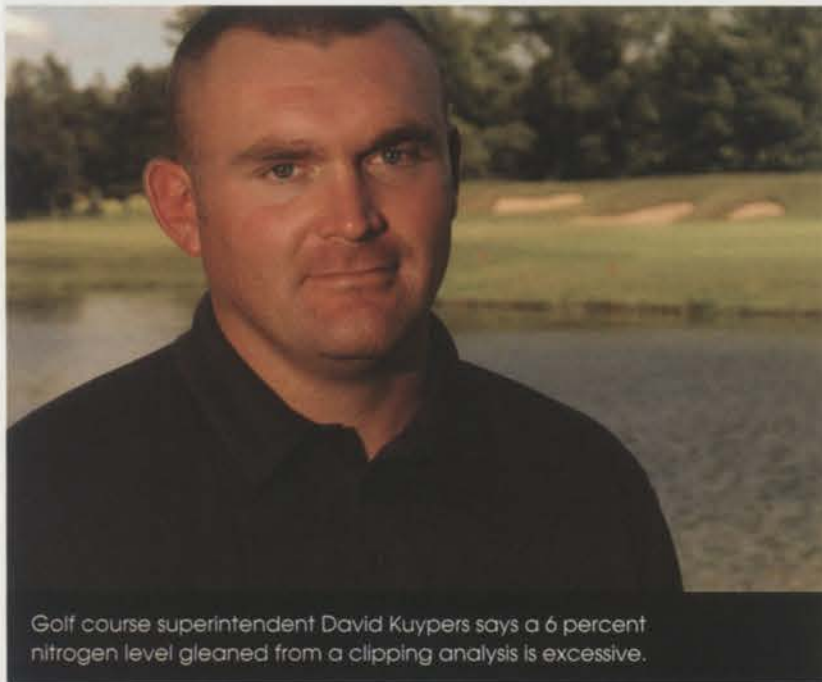
"This represents a color and texture contrast," Hartwiger says. "Golfers voted with their feet, and now more rounds are being played on the Riverside Course. Not to be outdone, the Highlands Course is being regrassed with Diamond zoysiagrass in the fairways, which has a very fine leaf blade, and Tifton 10 in the roughs. In this region, these factors take precedence over tweaking fertility programs."

A degree of sanity

Yet fertility programs remain the heart and soul of playability and healthy turf. Clarke says the best programs are well balanced.

"It's clear the best method for maintaining green speed and turf health is a program that includes raising the height of cut, using greens rollers and implementing a program of growth regulators," he says. "This trend has brought back a degree of sanity to greens maintenance. It has heightened the awareness that mowing low isn't the only way to achieve faster green speeds." GCN

David Wolff is a freelance writer based in Watertown, Wis. He can be reached at dgwolff@charter.net.



Golf course superintendent David Kuypers says a 6 percent nitrogen level gleaned from a clipping analysis is excessive.

grass, speed takes care of itself. The E-Walks stand up the grass and provide a great quality of cut in one pass. We're actually getting the same results as double cutting."

This July in Guelph, the weather was hot with heavy rains, which created problems with summer patch. Extremes in nitrogen, high or low, make the plant more susceptible to this disease.

"If we are anywhere, it's low, especially after a heavy rain," Kuypers says. "Ammonium and magnesium sulfates are antagonistic to summer patch, so we came out with one-tenth of a pound of ammonium and knocked it down a bit. We raised the height of cut and took our medicine. The greens were a little slower, but they didn't die. We didn't have any turf loss from summer patch, which was key.

"Again, we want to find that balance of adequate growth and sufficient health, but not anything greater than that because it's



Winged Foot Golf Club, Mamaroneck, NY

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Leavin' on a jet plane

DESIGNERS AND BUILDERS FIND OPPORTUNITIES ALL OVER THE WORLD

by
JOHN
TORSIELLO

With the U.S. golf course development pipeline constricted tighter than a Speedo on a fat guy, some in the industry are focusing more on foreign markets that are booming or poised to explode, according to golf course designers and developers. Whether it's in Asian golf hotbeds such as South Korea and China or sleepers such as Lebanon and Croatia, the world is discovering the economic significance the game wields.

"What we see in Europe is predominantly tourist and resort driven or the second home market," says Kevin Ramsey, a senior architect with Santa Rosa, Calif.-based Golfplan. "Places like Spain, Portugal, Egypt, Tunisia and Dubai are sunshine destinations for northern Europeans, much like the Southwest and Southeast are for the United States. In Asia, it's mainly resort and private club driven. There's still some real estate connected to some projects, but I don't know who is buying the stuff. Probably speculators."

About 90 percent of Golfplan's business is done overseas, Ramsey says.

"We have had some feelers from U.S. developers in Tennessee and Idaho, but there's

no real hot spot we see in the United States, per se," he says. "The economy in California is stalled and even sliding a little. There has been some money spent on rebuilding existing courses around the country, whether they're private or public, and that's keeping some people busy."

Ramsey says his coworker, Ronald Fream, is known as the "Johnny Appleseed" of golf course architects because he's usually the first one into a country.

"In fact, Ron was in Lebanon working on a course we were planning outside of Beirut when the war started," he says. "He was stuck there for several weeks, but we're still going ahead with the project. It's a beautiful piece of land near the Syrian border that luckily wasn't touched by bombs."

Eastern Europe

Most golf course projects overseas involve much less exposure to personal danger.

"There are a lot of places overseas that had political turmoil that seems to have gone away, and their leaders are looking for ways to promote economic development," says O'Brien McGarey, president of Denver-based Dye Designs Group. "The Adriatic coast of what was formerly Yugoslavia is simply magnificent and primed for resort development. Cities and municipalities have property, and they're looking for ways to develop the land to bring tourism money into the area. One of the ways is with golf."

Robert Trent Jones II LLC has been in negotiations with individuals and officials in the former Yugoslavia, says John Strawn, the company's c.e.o.

"The two places in eastern Europe that have the strongest possibilities are Croatia and Montenegro," Strawn says. "Tourism is on the rise now that the fighting has stopped, and there's very little golf. I know Jack Nicklaus is doing the first modern golf course in Croatia, and we are in discussions with several groups to build a course there. It's a beautiful region with great history, wonderful cuisine and a long coastline. There's a need for four- and five-star resorts with golf, and I believe it will happen in the near future."

The proximity of Croatia and Montenegro to the main population centers of central and northern Europe (Croatia is within a five- or six-hour drive for more than 200 million people) makes it ideal for new resorts, Strawn says.

Eastern European countries such as Poland, Hungary and Russia are beginning to view golf as a tool to draw tourists. Currently, there's a paucity of good courses; however, there's a growing middle and upper class that's interested in the game.

South Korea

In Asia, South Korea has been bustling with new golf course construction for more than a decade. The boom has been fueled by an increasingly financially secure middle and upper class (South Korea has the 11th-largest economy in the world) that has more free time on its hands because of labor laws that have reduced the average work week considerably. The success South Korean professionals have had on international Tours also has spurred interest in the game. Three years ago, there were 220 golf courses in the country. Presently, there are about 255.

Unlike tourism-driven development in southern and eastern Europe, the boom in golf course construction in South Korea has been a predominantly public-private partnership with cities and provinces setting aside land and sometimes funding developments, which include golf and other amenities.

On the island of Jeju off South Korea's southern coast, a favorite vacation destination for Koreans and Japanese, there are 16 golf courses, and there's a government approval to build as many as 30.

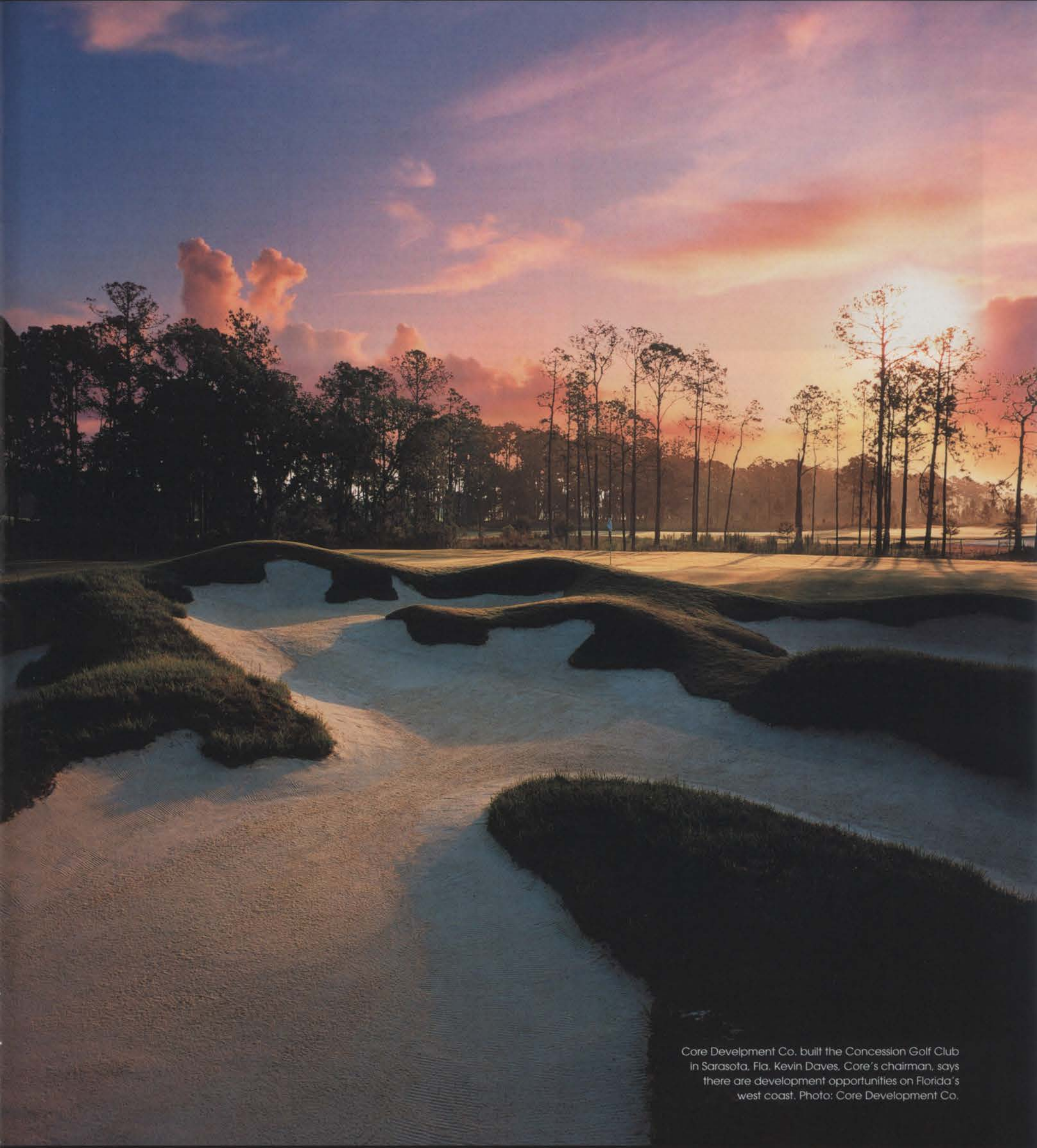
"The South Korean government really has been behind the move to make golf affordable for more of its people," says Rick Elyea, vice president of Post Falls, Idaho-based Jacklin Golf. "There are stipulations that state that even private clubs must set at least nine holes aside for public play."

The South Korean market remains hot, McGarey says.

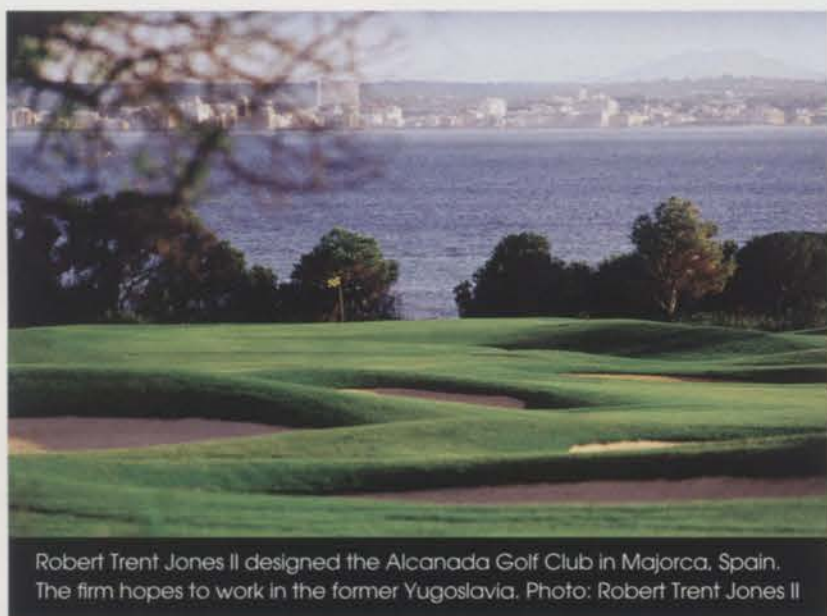
"My wife Cynthia (Dye-McGarey) just



South Korea has experienced steady golf course development, which includes the Asiad Country Club in Busan. Photo: Dye Designs Group



Core Development Co. built the Concession Golf Club in Sarasota, Fla. Kevin Daves, Core's chairman, says there are development opportunities on Florida's west coast. Photo: Core Development Co.



Robert Trent Jones II designed the Alcanada Golf Club in Majorca, Spain. The firm hopes to work in the former Yugoslavia. Photo: Robert Trent Jones II

did a walk through on our latest project on Jeju called Cypress Country Club. It's 36 holes on a former cattle ranch. There's another developer who has plans for six courses and 108 holes on 2,000 acres. If there are 260 courses open now, you can bet there are another 20 to 25 under construction in the country and probably another 50 to 75 in the planning stages."

Morgan Stanley Real Estate and Gale International, a real estate developer and investor, recently reached an agreement in which Morgan Stanley will fund \$359 million of foreign direct investment for Gale's new Songdo City development project in Incheon, South Korea. The project will include a Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course.

Even the closed society of North Korea got into the act when it signed an agreement (since turned sour) last year with South Korean industrial giant Hyundai to develop three golf clubs in the inter-Korean industrial complex near Kaesong.

Japan and Vietnam

Interestingly, the situation in Japan is similar to that in the United States. New course development is stagnant, mostly because of an enormous increase of inventory.

"Japan was building golf courses hand over fist in the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, when it was the strongest financial power in the world," McGarey says. "From 1989 to 1994, Perry Dye completed 24 courses in Japan. The Japanese started venturing out into other areas of Asia to invest in, but that stopped in the mid-1990s when their economy took a downturn. Now it's the Koreans that are going out all over Asia, investing in golf course and resort developments in places like Thailand and Vietnam. Vietnam, in particular, is on fire, but it needs almost complete foreign investment because

its economy is so weak, and it's difficult to bring deals to fruition."

Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) has four golf clubs, and Hanoi has two. The government is promoting these destinations to international travelers.

China

China presents a potential mammoth market for new golf course development given the country's enormous population and growing economy.

"I read recently that the government of China is anticipating the building of 1,000 new courses over the next 10 years," Elyea says. "You put that against maybe 400 being built during the same time in the United States, and you see why people are looking at China."

McGarey says China is somewhat of a mystery because there had been a lot of development going on.

"A lot of the private stuff is built out," he says. "Hainan Island, which is designated as an economic tourist zone, has bounced back nicely from the economic downturn in the 1990s, and there's a pretty large degree of foreign investment on the island."

New course development in China also is being affected by the government stepping in – there are fears of corruption – and preventing about 4,000 projects, not all of them golf related.

"It's not that everyone involved corruption," McGarey says. "It's just that the government wanted to make sure everything was being done properly. The China market is a great opportunity, and it will be done smartly."

Here at home

All the talk of potential for development overseas doesn't mean there aren't opportunities remaining for new course development in the States. The Northwest has a number of new projects up and running or in the construction phase, and the high-end market in the Southeast and Southwest remains strong, albeit predictable, Strawn says.

"Much of the new development we're seeing tends to be in those areas where there's already an existing supply," says Jim Kass, a researcher director for the National Golf Foundation.

Kevin Daves, chairman of Wichita, Kan.-based Core Development Co., developer of the ultra-high end The Concession Golf Club and Residences in Sarasota, Fla., remains bullish on Florida's west coast market.

"The last I heard there were 1,000 people a day moving to Florida, and areas of the west coast here are amazingly void of great golf

courses," he says. "In the east, they're everywhere but not in the west. You have a lot of people from the Midwest coming down the I-75 corridor landing on the west coast. Because of that, plus the fact that there aren't as many courses in the west, there's still a lot of gas left in the tank in that area."

Daves' firm also is in the initial stages of developing a large project in the Charleston, S.C., area, another area of the country he believes will see growth.

"I also see things starting to trend toward The Bahamas," he says. "Land is still decently priced, and there are a lot of small islands that are attractive locations for resorts."

Hawaii, which can almost be viewed as part of the international market because of its distance from the mainland, remains busy, says Mark Richards, president and c.e.o. of Honolulu-based The Maryl Group, a designer, developer and builder of high-end and ultra-high-end residential properties.

"The key to building overseas is having a great parcel of land to work with, and then designing and building something very different and special, but also something that's traditional in keeping with local customs and culture," says Richards, whose developments are all tied in with active lifestyle amenities.

About 95 percent of The Maryl Group's clients are from the mainland United States, and for most of them, Hawaii is a second, third and even fourth home, Richards says.

"The one challenge we have as a company is that the Hawaiian economy has been on overdrive for the last four or five years, and that has placed a serious constraint on the subcontractor market. As a result, we have had price pressures because we need to convince subcontractors they should take our work over that of another company."

Trusting partners

Regardless of location, foreign clients are looking for the same things from a designer or developer that clients in the States want, Ramsey says.

"They're looking for value and a lot of service," he says. "Your reputation means so much in the foreign market."

It's wise to have someone on the ground when conducting business in a foreign country – someone who knows the customs and lay of the land, McGarey says.

"You want to have someone who you can trust to partner with," he says. GCN

John Torsiello is a freelance writer based in Torrington, Conn. He can be reached at jtorsiello@megahits.com.

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Timber!

ASSESSMENTS AND A MANAGEMENT PROGRAM NEED TO BE IN PLACE BEFORE CUTTING DOWN AND TRIMMING TREES

by
T.R. MASSEY

When golf started, it was played on land near seas surrounding Scotland, or so the story goes. When Scotsmen crossed the Atlantic to design courses for their American cousins, they did so in big, open fields – land resembling places they were used to playing. To them, trees were bunkers in the skies.

Nowadays, especially in parkland settings, trees play a major role on golf courses, but that role isn't always positive. Trees affect turf health and sometimes pose a threat to the well-being of workers and players. To protect turf, as well as reduce the cost of cleaning up debris and limit the liability of falling limbs, many facilities have established well-defined tree maintenance programs.

Michael Hurdzan, Ph.D., golf course architect with Columbus, Ohio-based Hurdzan/Fry Golf Course Design, believes trees should be a lightly used spice, not a red-hot chili pepper. The reason? Trees require special maintenance.

"Trees in the wrong place are nothing more

than weeds," Hurdzan says. "They complicate turfgrass maintenance and add to the cost of the game. They steal one of the things that make the game fun – wind."

Trees aren't necessarily sylvan beauties that frame golf holes. Courses can be designed without trees surrounding each green. Trees that surround greens deny turf most of its needed requirements – morning sun and air movement.

"If a tree shades your turf in the morning, you'll have problems with that turf," Hurdzan says. "Trees are competing with grass for moisture and nutrients. Less light is available, so the plant doesn't live in a healthy state. This can cause pest problems and powdery mildew. Several diseases prefer the shade, and they'll attack and weaken the turf."

The Emerald Ash borer problem plaguing the Midwest, for example, is a tree blight that might make tree programs more necessary.

"Many courses have 60 percent ash trees, and it will be like the American Elm blight from the '50s or late '40s," Hurdzan says. "Even now, up North, they still have American Elms that have to be taken down. Trees are susceptible to blight. We're not ruthless woodcutters. We're trying to manage a diversified stand of trees intelligently."

Brian Zimmerman, director of golf for the Milwaukee County Parks system that includes 15 golf courses, believes those courses are in the path of the Emerald Ash borer. He and his staff are working with the University of Wisconsin to identify trees, set up testing and collect data to see if the borer is in the area.

"Some of our properties are predominantly ash, which makes us very nervous," Zimmer-

man says. "We've tracked some of our feature trees, but that's on the radar for all of it."

Get with the program

Tree management programs start with consulting an arborist or forester. Hurdzan suggests conducting a tree inventory and classifying the trees by type, size, age and health. A full survey of trees and shrubs should be conducted so they can be rated by condition.

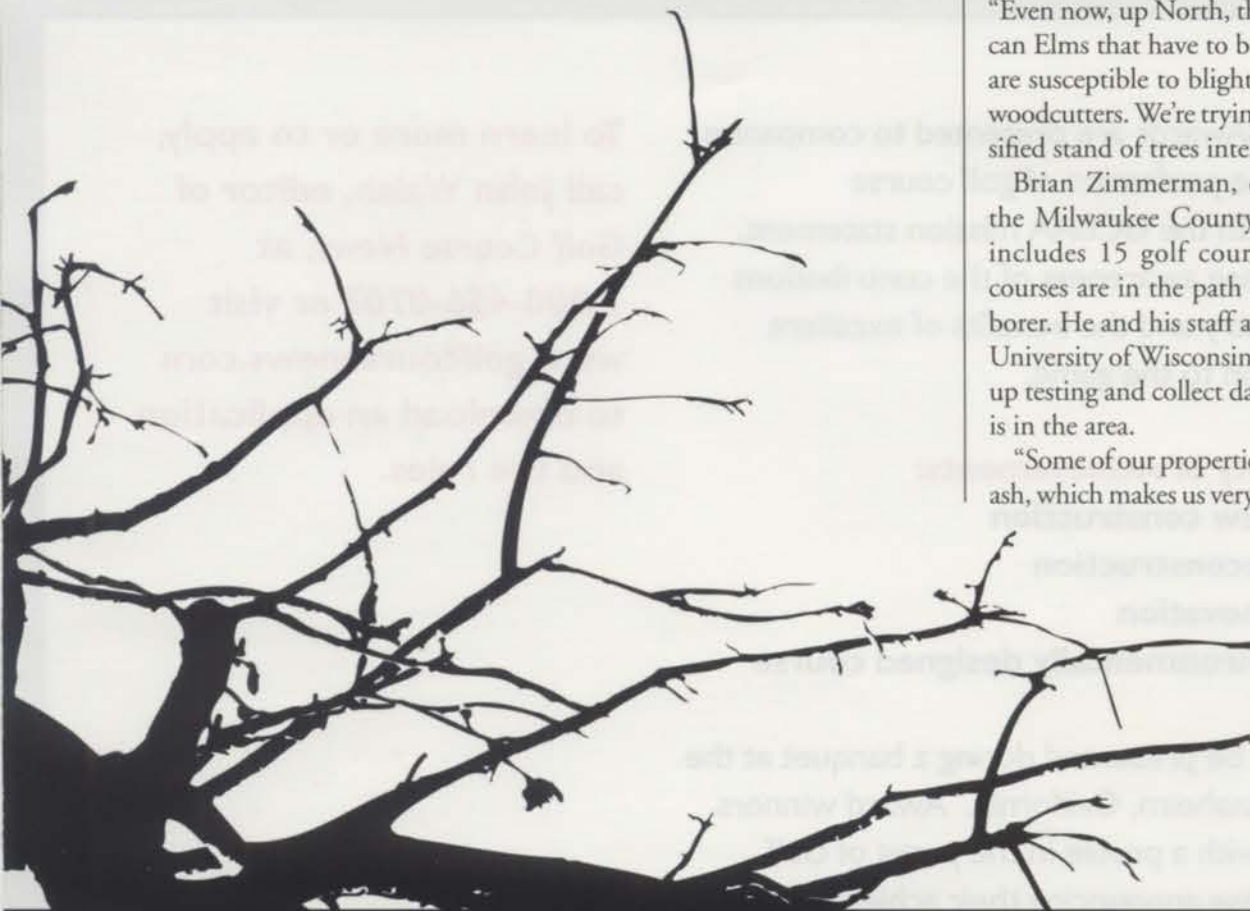
Hurdzan also suggests using a GPS system to track the inventory. The user types in a code for each tree at each location and then downloads the information. The next step is to rate the trees from a playability aspect and develop an action plan to protect the trees of high value. Next, according to Hurdzan, superintendents should have a plan for lightning protection, sanitary pruning, fertilizer and clearing trees that inhibit growth.

"To say that all trees have equal value is very naive," he says. "That's like saying all geese are good. You have to tell members you have a management plan that's been put together by pros and you're looking at the long-range health of the trees and are trying to protect them."

Tree maintenance should be part of every golf course's budget, says Mike McBride, a turf consultant and renovation specialist who previously served as the superintendent at Muirfield Village Golf Club in Columbus, Ohio, for 18 years.

"Some might not have any trees, but parkland courses with mature trees have to have a line item for this," McBride says.

The first issue of a tree maintenance program is safety, regardless of the turf issues, and health is next, he says. When putting together a tree maintenance program, McBride recommends hiring an arborist to identify diseases and nutrient deficiencies because not all superintendents have that knowledge. If trees are having a degrading effect on turf, superintendents should consider removing them.



"Trees in the wrong place are nothing more than weeds. They complicate turfgrass maintenance and add to the cost of the game." – MICHAEL HURDZAN, Ph.D.

"The expectation of putting surfaces today is way, way different than it was 20 years ago," McBride says. "The firmness, speed and amount of activity are much greater. They get worn out. If you can improve the situation by removing a few trees, that might be a possibility. It helps the turf withstand more stress."

That might be understandable to superintendents, however, golfers might not realize trees have a beginning, middle and end to their lifespan. Many times golfers don't know if trees were removed if it was done professionally.

Nonetheless, there's a lot of emotion involved with tree removal.

"Let's say there's a tree out there that's been there forever, and the members love it," McBride says. "It could be a strategic part of the hole or it could have been dedicated to someone, but the entire situation must be evaluated before you react. Maybe you can thin out or limb up instead of a mass exodus with a bunch of chain saws."

Sometimes superintendents need backing from agronomists. Commercial companies can arrive on site with computer models that identify shade and what trees will do as they grow and what will get worse. They can map out all the trees and make a presentation to boards or green committees with the help of technology.

Who does the deed?

Superintendents also need to decide who will actually do the tree work. Hurdzan advises subcontracting it.

"You don't have to think real long about whether you want to put a low-paid worker up in a tree with a chain saw," he says. "Every golf course superintendent should contract that out, unless you have special training. Otherwise you're courting danger."

An example: Insurance reasons force Chad Mathieu, golf course superintendent at the private Ramsey Golf & Country Club in Bergen County, N.J., to contract tree work,

which increases his tree maintenance line item, which he says is substantial.

Hurdzan recommends superintendents talk to their peers to decide how much to spend on tree work.

"They should be looking at \$50,000 annually for trees, maybe \$100,000 if you have an extensive amount," he says.

To take down a tree, clean up and remove a stump costs about \$2,500 to \$3,000 per tree, Hurdzan says. Lightning protection can cost \$1,500 per tree.

Loblolly pines, white oaks, sweetgums, willow oaks, sycamores and cypress trees abound at the private Country Club of

South Carolina in Florence, where golf course superintendent Rob Strobel is protecting his Tifeagle greens by clearing surrounding trees. Even though Strobel handles his tree program in-house, he still spends about \$40,000 a year.

"We have numerous pieces of equipment – dozers, trackhoes and center-point scoop buckets," he says. "We take down a 100-foot tree with no problem, and I have one person who's trained to run that sort of equipment."

Which ones can go

At Ramsey, Mathieu has to go through a



As part of a recent renovation at Scioto Country Club, trees were taken from green sites and out of areas where bunkers needed to be moved. Photo: T.R. Massey



Brian Zimmerman, director of golf for the Milwaukee County Parks system, is concerned about the negative effects of the Emerald Ash borer. Photo: Milwaukee County Parks

strict borough shade tree commission to take down trees.

"Five years ago, we had a lot of neglected trees," Mathieu says. "That winter, I came in and took down a bunch of trees, and the shade tree commission handcuffed me to six trees a year. The next year, I told them I had 15 trees that needed to go. They said six, so I brought an attorney in and told them if one of those nine trees hurts someone, I hold the town responsible."

Not every situation has to be so tense. Mathieu and his green committee take a tree tour each fall. They inspect trees for dead wood, look for ones that shade putting surfaces, and discuss pruning and topping

issues. Letting the members be a part of the program helps them understanding what needs to be done more.

"You've got to really keep on top of it," he says. "If you don't, you'll end up taking down thousands of trees. I know many superintendents who are handcuffed by members."

Twice Mathieu has invited the USGA Green Sections' Turf Advisory Service, which is available to almost any course in the country, for help explaining why some trees are in jeopardy.

"I'm for turf, not trees," he says. "In the end, with help from the USGA, the committee and I have been able to get together."

In Columbus, Ohio, Hurdzan recently was

involved with renovating Scioto Country Club's bunkering system and advised the club about which trees needed to be removed. Many were taken from green sites and out of areas where bunkers needed to be moved. Hundreds of trees were removed. Hundreds of trees also have been removed at Oakmont (Pa.) Country Club, Muirfield Village and the Scarlett Course at Ohio State.

"It's hardly noticeable," he says. "These aren't 'Eisenhower' trees at Augusta National. These are planted in the wrong place or the wrong variety."

At Brown Deer Park Golf Course in Milwaukee, tree roots were growing under a green because there was a silver maple tree five feet from the corner of it. Since 2002, when Zimmerman started, he has assessed each property's tree supply.

"At Brown Deer, we thinned out a lot of trees in the rough," he says. "Our forestry crew, which we're blessed with in Milwaukee County, came through and cut things back for us. We've got high lift trucks, multiple chipping trucks, stumping equipment and trained staff that can climb trees and cut certain limbs. Each property in our system is different, and we manage them as such. We don't have a greens committee. We make sound agronomic decisions based on what's best for the golf course." GCN

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Successful planting

Cutting down and trimming trees is just part of a tree management program. Planting trees is important as well. But planting trees without proper vision can lead to catastrophic results.

Michael Hurdzan, Ph.D., golf course architect with Columbus, Ohio-based Hurdzan/Fry Golf Course Design, says the 1930s Dust Bowl can be blamed, in part, on improper management of trees.

"Before World War II, we cut down lots of trees for various reasons," he says. "We planted trees willy-nilly after the war. Americans aren't patient, so we planted fast growing trees – silver maples, red maples, Chinese elms – and now they're at the end of their lives. All those trees planted carelessly are causing us to establish tree programs. Planting the right ones is what good forestry is all about."

Rob Strobel, golf course superintendent at the Country Club of South Carolina in Florence, is establishing a tree theme, similar to Augusta National, in

which each hole is populated with the same kind of tree.

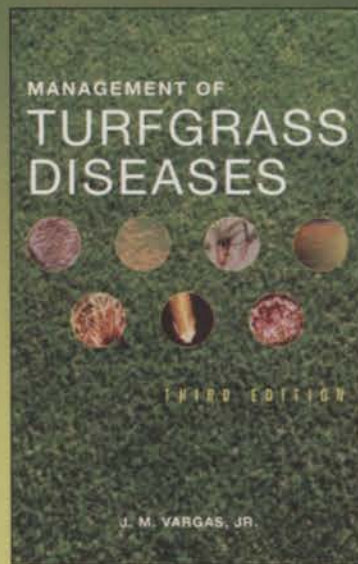
"We plant trees off to the side so they don't get in the line of play," Strobel says. "We go out into our woods and dig up a tree and plant it in the rough. When a limb encroaches on the playing surface, we take care of it, or it gets way out of hand. We transplant a lot of trees and put them in spots where they won't have to be cut down."

Lay people have difficulty understanding how big a tree's canopy will get, Hurdzan says. Because people want instant gratification, they plant trees too close to the play line and the canopy ends up over the fairway.

Brian Zimmerman, director of golf for the Milwaukee County Parks system, has an architect on the county staff who helps him decide where to plant new trees. There's always debate about where to put trees, he says.

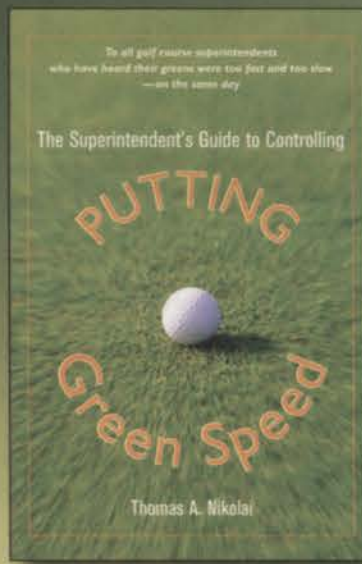
"Proper positioning of trees can save thousands of dollars in the future," Zimmerman says. "The goal is to plant the right amount of trees in the right area. You have pick the right trees for the right soil and look. It's extremely key to your success rates." GCN

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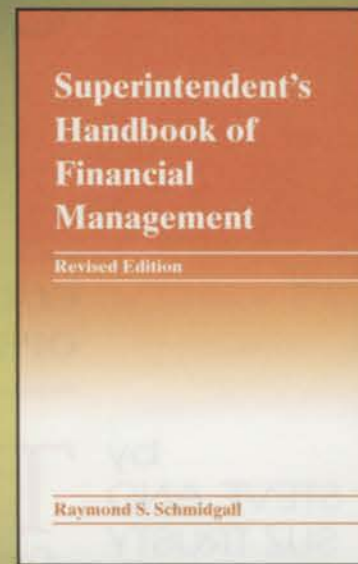
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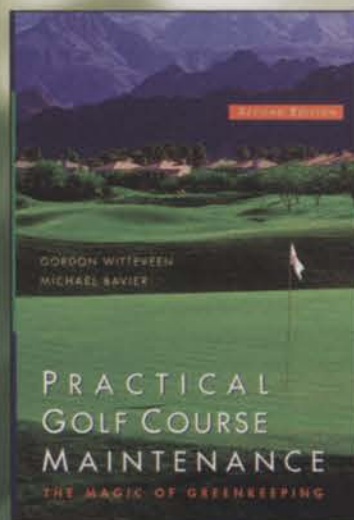
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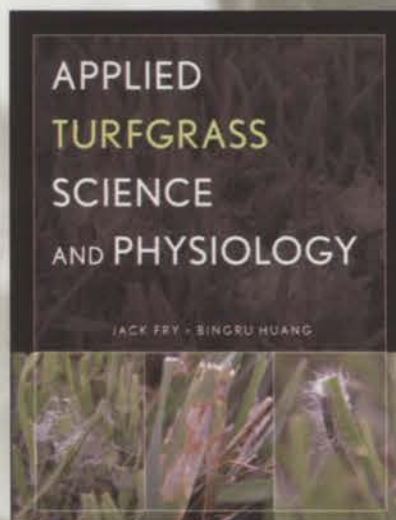
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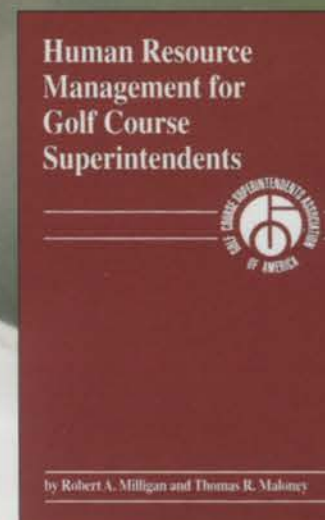
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The marketplace is tight, and golf course superintendents are feeling the pinch.

Corporate belt-tightening and recreational travel reductions have reduced the number of rounds played at many courses and, in turn, have put a greater focus on strategies to maintain profitability. Saturation of courses in key markets has stiffened the competition and put more strain on budgets. The gas-price hikes of 2005 and 2006 forced further examination of expenditures and exploration of methods to improve efficiency while holding the line on spending.

In view of all this, management of some

courses is finding ways to increase its equipment arsenal without boosting budgets.

Let's do it together

Finch Services is a John Deere distributor that has locations in Westminster, Md., Hanover, Pa., North Wales, Pa., and Huntington, Pa. President Ray Finch says he's seen a bit of joint purchasing throughout the years, most likely involving courses that have the same ownership. It's basically for specialty equipment that's used for short periods and can be moved between courses in a relatively close geographic area. A unit could be leased or purchased, whichever best

fits the overall equipment program.

A prime market for equipment sharing is courses owned by government agencies facing tightening budgets.

"I'm aware of a recent purchase of a deep-tine aerator by a Baltimore-area county that plans to share the unit between six golf courses," Finch says.

The state of Kentucky recently purchased a tractor and aerator to serve 22 courses, says Chris Bernauer, controller for John Deere distributor Xenia Power Equipment in Ohio. A government entity owns the equipment, which is used on government-owned courses and is in constant use, Bernauer says.

Bernauer doesn't know of a specific superintendent who jointly purchases equipment with a course owned by a different entity, but he's seeing more management companies bringing in specialty equipment to be shared among the courses they operate, especially in metro markets.

One superintendent working within such an arrangement is Rick Darby, golf course superintendent at Arizona National Golf Club in Tucson. The course is one of four in the Tucson area under the umbrella of the I.R.I. Golf Group. Two of the courses are about five miles apart at the north end of Tucson and two are about one mile apart in the Green Valley area. The equipment is leased through the I.R.I. Golf Group, and allocation is made to each specific course. The lease agreement for the two courses to the north – Arizona National and Forty-Niner Country Club – is one package that's rolling over into its third year. The equipment for the Green Valley courses – Canoa Hills Golf Club and San Ignacio Golf Club – also is part of one lease package, which is in its first year.

"By leasing, we always have the most current equipment," Darby says.



The state of Kentucky shares a tractor and aerator that serves 22 golf courses, according to a John Deere distributor. Photo: John Deere Golf & Turf

With this program, each course has all the day-to-day equipment on site. They also share other equipment.

"Typically, I have most of the shared equipment at my course, including the trenchers, wire locating equipment and a greens roller," Darby says. "If another course needs these items for an irrigation project, our crew will make sure they're ready to use. The other course will come here to get the equipment and bring it back in the same shape as it left here when they've finished with it."

With projects such as aerating, the maintenance staffs on each course might work as a team so they don't have to purchase, lease or rent additional equipment.

"We tend to schedule these projects a couple weeks apart so we can complete work on one of the properties and then transport the equipment to the next course," Darby says. "Occasionally, we'll also share the labor so we can double up to get the work done faster."

"We're saving money by sharing," he adds. "Sometimes it can be a hindrance if you want a specific unit and need to make arrangements to get it. That can set you back a day or two, but overall, it works out very well."

Sharing is caring

Despite I.R.I. Golf Group's purchasing habits, Josh Shull doesn't see courses working out joint buying or leasing arrangements through a sales representative or a distributor because each course has a pretty good assortment of equipment in its own maintenance shop. Shull is a sales representative with TurfWerks, a Jacobsen distributor with locations in Omaha, Neb., Sioux Falls, S.D., and Johnston, Iowa.

"But I am aware of quite a bit of borrowing or sharing of equipment if there's a breakdown with a specific unit or for special projects," he says. "It's more of a personal relationship than a formal agreement."

Speaking of sharing, John Temme and Chris Coen, who have known each other for 12 years and work 10 miles apart, are a good example. Temme, golf course superintendent of Wakonda Club in Des Moines, Iowa, and Coen, golf course superintendent of Glen Oaks Country Club in West Des Moines, say sharing equipment is a great way to extend their resources while keeping their budgets in check.

"We usually talk to each other daily and probably share something about once a



A Big John tree transplanter was shared among Chicago-area municipal courses in exchange for trees. Photo: Big John Tree Transplanter Mfg.

week," says Temme, who worked for Coen before accepting the position at Wakonda Club. "It's all based on a handshake agreement. We pick up equipment in good shape and return it in good shape. If it breaks on our property, we fix it. I even bought a trailer to facilitate the exchange."

The cooperation between the two has expanded into the aerification process.

"In the fall, my equipment and crew go over to help Chris aerify his greens, and his equipment and crew come here to help aerify ours," Temme says. "The host course provides lunch."

Typically, they'll exchange two greens aerifiers, blowers, drag mats, the sand topdresser and about 10 crew members, Coen says.

"We each pay our own crews no matter which course they're working on," he says. "Since our courses are similar, it all works out during the year."

Coen and Temme also share equipment with other Des Moines-area courses.

"We all look to each other's courses for the equipment we only use once or twice a year," Coen says. "It's just smart business."

When the annual capital budgets are being developed, the two check with each other and the other area courses because they don't want to buy duplicate equipment.

"If it's in our shop 90 percent of the time, we can share it," Temme says.

"We try to buy equipment no one else has so that, jointly, we have all the tools we need to maintain our courses," Coen says.

Timing also is important.

"I bought a big leaf sweeper that I use primarily in the fall because we have lots of large trees," Temme says. "Chris uses it during the

summer when dethatching fairways."

Although the two courses are competitors, the boards and membership of both back the cooperative relationship.

"They think it's great because we can finish big tasks such as aerification in half the time, and they get the course back sooner," Temme says. "They've seen the cost savings, too, and are very supportive of the arrangement."

Three facilities jointly own one item. The Hyperion Field Club in Johnston, Iowa, joined in for a three-way purchase of a concrete saw. Each pitched in \$500. It stays on the shelf in the shop of whichever course used it last until someone else needs it. Just like the rest of this cooperative arrangement, it's practical, logical and effective.

Consider this

For all the positives of jointly purchasing or sharing equipment, pitfalls need to be recognized and avoided. For courses in close enough proximity to share, regional agronomic needs generally happen at the same time, especially with aeration and seeding, says Scott Kinkead, executive vice president of Turfco.

"The challenge is to fit key equipment use within a pretty intense time schedule," Kinkead says. "They need clearly defined parameters and good synergy. Joint ownership would work better with equipment that wasn't as weather dependent and was used less frequently, such as a tree spade or backhoe."

If a joint-purchased or loaned unit was damaged, even if the one using it was going to pay for the repairs, it could be out of



A seeder is an example of a piece of equipment that's shared among maintenance staffs. Photo: Turfco

service for quite a while, Bernauer says.

"Not having it available for an extended period would be pretty tough to explain to a board," he says. "Basically, golf course boards change annually. So, even if a joint purchase or lease had been approved prior to the arrangement, another board might have an entirely different opinion about it. Also, joint ownership would likely need to be within noncompeting courses. As rounds are harder to gain, I don't see too many courses that aren't in competition with each other."

But superintendents consider all those factors before making a purchasing or sharing decision. Fred Behnke, certified golf course superintendent of Mount Prospect (Ill.) Golf Course is one.

"I discussed joint-purchase options with a group of superintendents during a mid-September meeting," Behnke says. "As we talked about it, the idea became less popular. We discussed the need for use at the same time, who would have the first use option, where the equipment would be stored, and how damage would be handled. The main questions were the feasibility of such an arrangement and how much capital money would be required from each participating course."

Behnke says course management ended up renting or contracting certain services because the course didn't have the specialized equipment.

"We figured if we had access to the equipment, we could do the job with a skilled staff operator for a third of the cost," he says. "It would be great to have a shared interest in a stump grinder or lift-bucket truck. Yet, while all the issues could be resolved, we would have to set up a system to make it work and get the right entities at all the different courses to agree on it."

"In the end, we decided borrowing and sharing equipment on a course-to-course basis as we had been doing was the best approach," he adds. "We do have an unofficial honor system. If equipment is damaged while in use by another course, the user covers the repairs. And we always return the machine in top shape, replacing the tines on a borrowed aerator for example, and filling it with fuel."

Behnke cites a past Chicago-area situation in which a park district course shared a Big John tree transplanter they purchased to move multiple large trees on its property. Other park district and municipal courses could use the machine in exchange for a tree. For every three trees the borrower moved, they'd dig one tree of equal size and take it to the owner's course to plant.

"It worked well for everyone until they ran out of room for more trees," Behnke says. "The window of opportunity closed due to lack of space."

Yet, because the benefits are appealing, superintendents continue to explore innovative options for sharing equipment. GCN

Steve and Suz Trusty are freelance writers based in Council Bluffs, Iowa. They can be reached at suz@trusty.bz.



Some of the equipment used at Glen Oaks Country Club (pictured) is shared with the Wakonda Club because the clubs' golf course superintendents are cooperative and the courses are 10 miles apart. Photo: Glen Oaks Country Club

travels with TERRY

Ride, not walk

Instead of transporting their walk-behind green and tee mowers using turf vehicles with tow-behind trailers, Mike Hulteen, CGCS, and then equipment mechanic Leland Davis of the Salina (Kan.) Country Club, designed and built sulkies as a low-cost alternative to transporting them around the course.

The sulkies were built using surplus materials left over from other projects and locally available supplies, which cost about \$50 for each sulky. It took as long as four hours to build each one.

The frames, supports, seat post and foot rests were built using 1.5-inch square metal tubing that was welded together. The seats and seat mounts (bolted to the seat and welded to the seat post square tubing) were recycled from old mowers. The tires and wheels, which were bought at a local hardware store, are replacements for wheelbarrows.

The sulkies are attached to the mowers with a U-shaped receiver hitch, which is made of one-quarter-inch-thick flat steel welded together and bolted to the walk-behind mower, and a single piece of one-quarter-inch-thick flat steel, which is welded to the bottom of the end of the sulky's tongue. A three-eighths-inch-diameter hole is drilled for a one-quarter-inch bolt used as a quick-and-easy way to join the hitch and receiver together. They were painted a similar color to match John Deere green.

Each walk-behind green and tee mower has held up well and hasn't had any mechanical problems when pulling the extra weight of the sulky and staff member.



Ride, part II

Another alternative to walking or using a trailer to transport a Toro Hydroject from green to green is using a sulky.

The same 1.5-inch square metal tubing (describe above) is used for the frame and supports. Three-eighths-inch-thick flat steel is used for the seat post, which is bolted and welded to the frame. The flat steel seat post is heated and bent in a near vertical position. A bracket is bolted to an old recycled mower seat and welded to the other end of the flat steel seat post, which has been heated and bent to the proper angle. The tires and wheels are replacements for wheelbarrows that were bought at a local hardware store.

A triangular-shaped piece of one-quarter-inch-thick flat steel bolted just above the drive wheel has a three-eighths-inch-diameter hole drilled into it for the sulky to be hooked up to it. The sulky has a U-shaped receiver welded to the tongue framework, which has two three-eighths-inch-diameter holes drilled into them that allow a one-quarter-inch bolt to hitch them together.

The cost for the materials, which were already in stock from other projects, was less than \$100. Materials included a tool box, hose reel, pressure regulator, replaceable water filter and housing, and manufacturer's metal bracket. The labor cost was as much as five hours of the equipment mechanic's time.

The Hydroject has held-up well and hasn't had any mechanical problems as a result of pulling the extra weight of the sulky and operator. GCN



Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He's a 35-year member of the GCSAA and can be reached at terrybuchen@earthlink.net.

Globetrotting consulting agronomist Terry Buchen visits many golf courses annually with his digital camera in-hand. He will share helpful ideas relating to maintenance equipment from the golf course superintendents he visits – as well as a few ideas of his own – with timely photos and captions that explore the changing world of golf course management.

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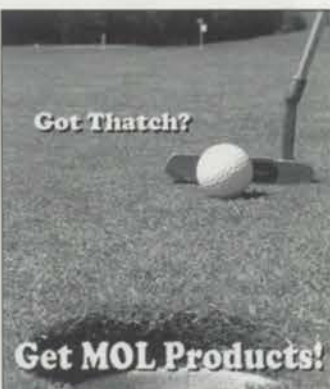
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Country Club Services is currently seeking experienced Project Managers, Superintendents, Shapers, Foreman, and Operators. Management applicants must have strong communication, organizational, and computer skills. Competitive salary, and compensation package. Please send resumes to countryclubsvcs@aol.com or Fax to 561-862-0447

Employment

Golf Course Company currently seeking experienced qualified Shapers for International and Domestic projects. Resumes can be e-mailed to frank@intergolfinc.com, faxed to 914-693-9506 or call 914-693-2024.



Duinick Bros. Inc Golf is accepting resumes for experienced individuals, or those wanting to start a career in the construction industry. We desire those who possess a positive attitude and the ability to work as a vital member of our team. Positions include, Crew leaders, Irrigation installers, Shapers & Equipment Operators. Passing a physical and a drug test are conditions of employment. Resumes can be emailed to lisah@dbigolf.com or faxed to (320) 978-9900. www.dbigolf.com

GolfWorks, Inc. is currently seeking Experienced Project Managers, Superintendents, Irrigation Superintendents, Foreman, Operators and Laborers. Please send resumes to jsalvatore@golfworksinc.com or fax to 512/327-8169. Please include salary requirements.

Requests for Proposals

OPERATION OF GOLF COURSE AT VAN CORTLANDT PARK



The City of New York Department of Parks & Recreation requests proposals for the renovation, operation and maintenance of an 18-hole golf course, clubhouse and food service facility, with an option for a full-scale restaurant/banquet facility, at Van Cortlandt Park, Bronx.

All proposals must be submitted no later than Wednesday, November 15, 2006 at 3:00 p.m. A site tour will be held on Tuesday, October 17, 2006 at 11:00 a.m.

For more information, contact: Gabrielle Ohayon, Project Manager, Parks & Recreation, Division of Revenue and Concessions, 830 Fifth Avenue, the Arsenal-Central Park, Room 407, New York, NY 10021 or call (212) 360-1397 or download the Request for Proposals document at www.nyc.gov/parks. You can also e-mail her at gabrielle.ohayon@parks.nyc.gov.

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Staying afloat

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"This time next year we'll know how good a destination golf course we'll be and if we're as good as the hype," he says.

Business is a little different for those courses that have been around for a number of years. In Texas, The Tribute, which opened in 2000, started to recover from the effects of Sept. 11 in 2003. It has experienced a steady increase in the number of rounds and green fees since 2003, according to general manager Jeff Kindred.

Kindred says he can't reveal the exact numbers, citing the policy of American Golf, which manages the facility. This year, the facility is on track to generate 40,000 rounds. In 2005, it generated less than that.

The Tribute is in the high end of the market, which includes six other courses in a 40-mile radius.

Kindred says being a stand-alone course isn't a hindrance for business.

"In a lot of ways, being a stand-alone course is a positive because the golfers that come here don't want houses lining the course," he says. "This gives us a unique feel. Golfers like the fact that they feel like they're out of town. Because we sit out on a peninsula, you have that destination feel, like you're getting away from the daily grind."

Residential homes are five miles away from the course, but because the ground is part of Army Corps of Engineers' land, homes won't be built on the course.

The Tribute draws golfers from Texas and out of the state. Most guests are local businessmen and about 30 percent of rounds are charity and corporate events. A lot of people

call wanting to try the facility, referencing the course's Golf Digest Top 100 ranking.

Business is also aided by the fact the clubhouse hosts weddings – more than 100 a year. And corporate meetings tie into its customer base.

The facility offers amenities a hotel can't, such as allowing those attending meetings to putt on the practice green or use the driving range during breaks. There also are eight guest suites that are part of the stay-and-play package offered by the facility. The suites are appointed with antique Scottish furniture.

Alone no more

For those stand-alone courses that have been struggling, owners have been looking at ways to make them more profitable, mainly adding real estate components as sources of revenue. Steele says owners are getting creative and selling parcels of land around stand-alone golf courses, building homes throughout the course.

"People are doing this to add revenue," he says. "I've even heard of re-routing some holes to include some houses."

In Catossa, Okla., the Cherokee Hills Golf Club, once called Indian Hills and Spunky Creek, was struggling because it had no real estate or municipality to underwrite it, Davis says. The Perry Maxwell design that was redesigned by Davis used to be a stand-alone course, but a Native American tribe bought it and built a casino and hotel on the property.

"We'll see stand-alones that will be redesigned or redeveloped so the golf course serves as an amenity to the primary revenue source," Davis says. GCN



A hotel and casino were added to Cherokee Hills Golf Club because it was struggling as a stand-alone course. Photo: Tripp Davis and Associates

news analysis

(continued from page 13)

and Collier's position will be filled by a TPC agronomist by the end of the year, according to Roth.

Within the structure, there are six agronomists reporting to the director position that has yet to be filled – and most likely will be filled by someone outside the PGA Tour – and two regional agronomists reporting to Collier. All 10 agronomists overlap and work together.

"What this will do is allow for the appropriate agronomic support for each tournament as well as the operational and agronomic support for PGA Tour golf course properties. This also frees up time for me to be at headquarters as needed," Roth says.

As the vice president of agronomy, Roth will work closely with the staff of each of the three tours the organization operates and the staff for golf course properties.

The new structure also frees up Roth to look at future sites for TPC facilities and their development. Currently, the PGA

Tour is developing a new golf course in Naples, Fla. – the TPC at Treviso Bay, which is scheduled to open late next year. There's another TPC course on the drawing board – a 36-hole resort property in San Antonio, although ground hasn't broken yet. There are also other sites for possible development of TPC clubs. In addition to continuing to directly support certain PGA Tour events, Roth also will be available to inspect future possible tournament sites.

Cooper, the newest PGA agronomist, says he wasn't looking to leave ValleyCrest, but an opportunity came about that he couldn't pass up because he always wanted to work with the PGA Tour. He started Sept. 5.

"I'm at an age when if I'm going to make a move, now is the time to do it," he says. "The only job I would have left ValleyCrest for is the PGA Tour. The guys at ValleyCrest are a class act. I made great friendships while at ValleyCrest. I feel bad for leaving. I wish the timing could have been a little better, but there's no one to blame but me. They'll find someone sharper and forget about

Bland Cooper. It was a tougher decision than you might think."

Cooper sees himself spending the rest of his career with the Tour.

"It's the insanity of tournament golf that's attractive to me," he says. "Tournament golf is almost like a drug. I always liked preparing a course for a tournament. It's the finality of a tournament – we have a deadline. It has to be right before the tournament. There's a satisfaction I get out of that."

Tournament preparation is one thing Cooper didn't experience at ValleyCrest. He says that's not necessarily bad, but it was a void he needed to fill.

As a director of agronomy with ValleyCrest, Cooper traveled 180 days a year. He will travel about the same amount with the Tour.

Cooper says he doesn't know exactly how many golf courses he'll visit throughout the year because the Tour is always adding and moving events, but each agronomist is involved with 12 to 16 events, so he'll visit at least that many courses. GCN



Roth



Cooper



Pat Jones is president of Flagstick LLC, a consulting firm that provides sales and marketing intelligence to green-industry businesses. He can be reached at psjhawk@cox.net or 440-478-4763.

Best job in the business

A big part of my weird job is to keep tabs on what's going on in the wide world of golf, and, not surprisingly, the World Wide Web is an enormous resource for me. Every morning, I get up at O-Dark-Thirty, fix a pot of coffee, fire up a Marlboro and begin surfing to find a bunch of golf-related Web sites to catch up on news and opinions of the day.

One of the Web sites I visit regularly is *GolfClubAtlas.com*. It's an interesting discussion group that's largely populated by serious golf junkies who compare notes on great courses throughout the world. Although I respect the views of many GCA members when it comes to design and playability, I'm often bemused by the crap these folks post regarding turf species, mowing heights, green speed and other conditioning topics.

For example, most posters are big on "fast-and-firm" conditions without really understanding how they're achieved. I occasionally jump into the electronic debate to try to insert a note of agronomic or business reality, but they often don't want to hear it. They have their opinions and won't be swayed. It reminds me of the old-time reporter's axiom: Don't let the facts get in the way of a good story. Except in this case it's, "Don't let facts about turf health get in the way of my golf game."

But, despite its faults (or perhaps because of them), visiting the GCA discussion group is a great way for superintendents and owners to understand what the average low-handicapper, semicrazed golfhead is thinking. It's like a focus group populated with the guys who tend to be the loudest, most insistent, insufferable members or players on your golf or green committees.

Recently, there was a discussion thread about the best superintendent's job in the nation. Predictably, from their somewhat warped perspectives, the focus was on famous old courses designed by one of the dead Scottish guys. Classics like Yale University Golf Course in New Haven, Conn., Augusta (Ga.) National and Cypress Point Club in Pebble Beach, Calif., were cited.

No doubt those are great jobs. But, it occurred to me that hundreds, if not thousands of superintendents believe they

have the best job in the business based on their own individual criteria.

So, what are the reasons a particular superintendent wants to stand on the 18th green and shout, "I love my job!" Here are a few possibilities, and some observations, about each:

Prestige. Want to be at a Top 100 club? Host a big televised event? The good news is you're the man. The bad news is ... you're the man. Prestige usually equals pressure to perform and sometimes ridiculous expectations. It also means dealing with the Tour, the USGA, a bunch of consultants and the boneheads from network TV. Ready for that?

Money. I'm making a wild guess, but I'll bet only around 2 percent of all head superintendent jobs garner more than \$150,000 a year. That's about 350 or so jobs out of 16,000-plus facilities. Let's be honest. About one-third of those jobs belong to guys who worked for Paul Latshaw earlier in their careers. Another third are guys who caught the eye of Bruce Williams, the industry's preeminent placement guy. The final third are people who worked their butts off, made good contacts and found themselves in the right place at the right time. Which route will you take? And, if you lose that job, how long will it take you to find another one in the same pay grade?

Outside opportunity. You might be thrilled to find yourself at a low-impact course that allows you to do other things. Maybe you want to consult, buy or manage a couple of other courses, or even run a little landscaping business on the side. With the right ownership, a good assistant and a creative approach, you could be in heaven. Then again, if you neglect your primary job or your world-class assistant moves on, you could be on the unemployment line.

Inside opportunity. As a kid, you loved to play in the dirt with your Tonka trucks. Now, your sandbox is a 150-acre golf course that's doing big construction jobs. Score! The facility has a couple of million dollars to spend on bunkers, greens reconstruction or irrigation, and you get to ride shotgun during the entire process. Pretty cool, but it can be perilous if things aren't done just right. You have to be confident enough to know what you can handle, but savvy enough to know when to turn things

over to the right architect, builder or irrigation consultant. Also, beware of catching "construction fever" and wandering the world for the next 20 years riding a D-6 Cat bulldozer and being a site gypsy.

Owner relationship. We probably all know one or maybe two superintendents who managed to hook up with a special owner (or one of those rare club presidents for life) with whom they miraculously agree on everything and who stay at the same facility for 30, 40 or 50 years. Think that happens often? During my 20 years in the industry, I can count the number of individuals who've lucked their way into one of these deals on 10 fingers and maybe a couple of toes. These happy accidents occur once in a blue moon. Always be on the lookout for one, but don't bet the farm on it. Also, remember that if your golden goose dies, the golden eggs stop too.

Stress level. So you've found a job that comes complete with an "assistant for life" who knows everything there is to know but doesn't want your title. Or, you've stumbled into one of those rare positions in which everyone that matters at the facility respects what you do and likes you. Your stress meter is pegged at zero most days. You could end up being one of those lucky fingers-and-toes guys I mentioned earlier for decades to come if you play your cards right. Just remember low stress doesn't mean low expectations and things can change in a heartbeat because of bad weather, bad luck, a change in ownership/management or a bad hire. One warning: As secure as things might be, beware the new general manager.

Other stuff. How about a chance at a sweat equity ownership share in the course? That could be a dream for someone who doesn't just want to collect a paycheck for life. Or, you find a job that allows you to stay close to family or friends. Maybe that's the deciding factor. Last, but not least, you're simply having a ball because of a combination of factors. When you wake up every morning knowing that your job is actually fun, your biggest problem is all the speeding tickets you get racing to work.

So, who really does have the best job in the business? I bet hundreds, if not thousands, of you reading this right now are saying, "I do!" But, seriously, the best job in the business ... sorry, I already have it. GCN

Don't forget to check out Pat's Digital Coffee Shop column that appears twice a month in GCN's weekly e-newsletter. To subscribe to the newsletter, visit the GCN home page and click on the "news" drop-down menu.



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