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THE VALUE OF EXPERTISE

Mom-and-pop facilities have made course renovations without using golf course architects for budget and access reasons for a long time. That's more understandable than successful clubs spending a lot of money on projects, often on everything but a qualified golf course architect.

Some clubs seemingly look for anyone and everyone to take the place of a golf course architect, and I don't know why. Perhaps green committee members – people who would never entrust the renovation of a commercial building they own to an amateur – think because their golf courses are natural instead of sticks and bricks, they don't require professional help. Others relish their chance to play golf course architect, either by themselves or using a golf course architect only to draw their ideas or keep them from making mistakes. In such cases, a golf course architect usually is credited for all the unpopular new features, and a green chairman receives credit for all the favorite ones.

I've seen clubs choose to use retired golf pros; current golf directors; contractors or bulldozer operators; turf, irrigation or other suppliers with a vested interest; project facilitators (even though architects and contractors are usually self-facilitating); golf writers; and restoration experts or historians as pseudo or substitute architects. Each says he brings a unique perspective and the project can't get built or renovated with only a golf course architect involved.

There can be merit to those unique perspectives, but in my view, it's often the other way around. Most "consultants" could use the company name "Miracle Golf" and the advertising slogan "If it's a good course, it's a miracle."

During a construction project, a golf course architect's broad perspective and impartial, unbiased, fee-based advice and expertise in design and construction usually proves most valuable. The knowledge gap between golf course architects and the oth-

ers mentioned above is often a vast chasm. Many of those consultants don't even know what they don't know. Ignorance isn't bliss. If you don't think so, ask yourself or other experts how many of the questions on this page you or they know the answers to.

Of course, the answers will vary from place to place, but the underlying knowledge to supply the correct answer won't. Others might know some answers, but I doubt they (or to be fair, the golf course

architect) will know all. You could spend months or years finding these answers, but an experienced golf course architect has done that for you already and has the talent to put those ideas into practice.

The "savings" from not hiring an architect usually turn out to be false, as demonstrated by most architects getting their remodeling business the second time around. And, even if your situation calls for other consultants, a golf course architect still is your best resource to lead a team to its goal of proper design and construction for your long-lasting enjoyment. **GCI**

Architect knowledge

How many of these questions can you answer? These are questions that shed light on how much knowledge a golf course architect brings to the table during a construction project.

- What are the effects of soils, sun and wind on our design?
- How many parts per million of salt can our turf take in irrigation water?
- What's the best length for the golf course and its typical players?
- What's a safe distance between parallel fairways and boundaries?
- What's the typical spray pattern for golf shots that allows safe play?
- How close together can greens and tees be?
- How wide of a path allows easy two-way circulation and easy movement around the clubhouse?
- Are our tees and greens the right size for our play levels?
- Do our tees need mix and drainage?
- What method and materials should we use to rebuild our greens?
- At our green speeds, what's the maximum slope in cupping areas?
- With our turf, climate and mowing, what's the maximum green slope overall?
- Does our course need to meet ADA requirements?
- What other permits do we need to proceed?
- How do we meet new environmental regulations?
- Can we control drainage on the course and avoid floods better?
- Are our bunkers properly positioned to create strategy?
- How far from the green should our bunkers be?
- Do we have the right sand?
- What bunkers can we eliminate and still have a nice course?
- How wide should tree corridors be for comfortable play?
- What species are worth saving, and which should we avoid?
- Can we save our irrigation system when building improvements?
- Are our cart paths located properly? Are they safe?
- What grasses are best for our tees, greens and fairways?
- Who are the best contractors to bid this project?
- Should we accept the lowest bid automatically?
- What's a reasonable schedule?