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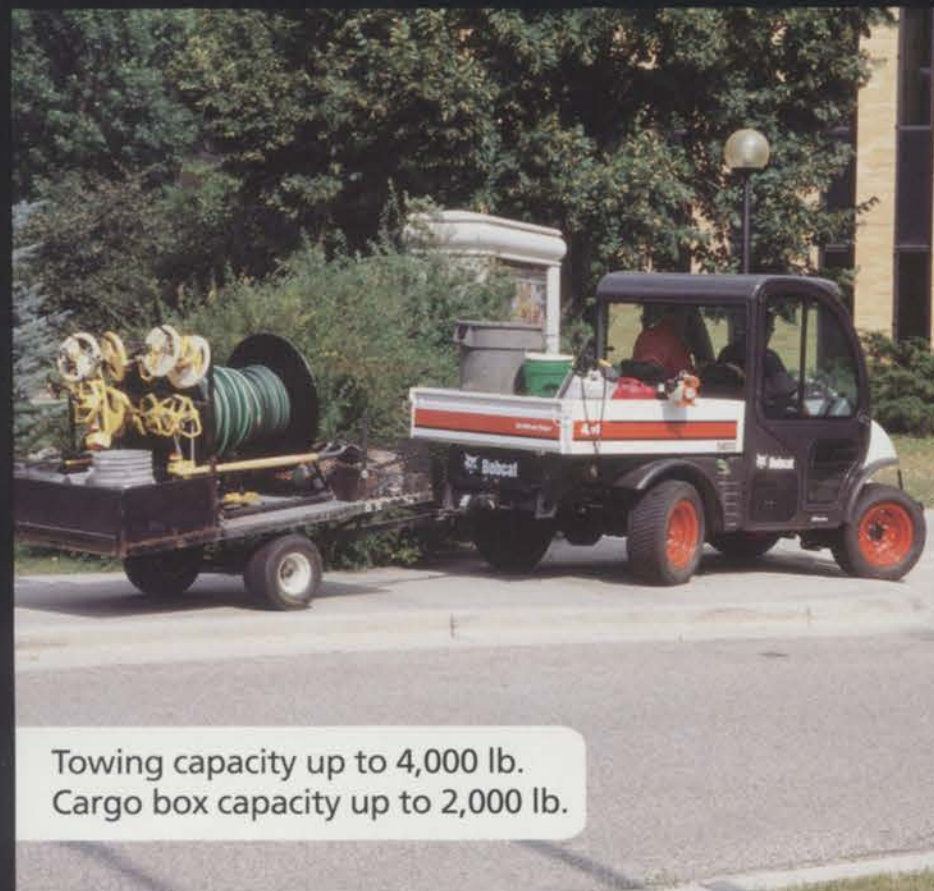
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www.clearychemical.com



Count on Cleary



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and they can't blame you!



Keep your greens *Poa*-free and they'll be looking for another excuse for their missed putt.

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*source: USDA



John Walsh
Editor

Get shorty

Golf has been in a growth spurt – just look at the numbers. In 1970, there were about 11 million players. Presently, there are about 26 million.

Thanks in part to captivating professionals like Tiger Woods, the game has never been more popular. Still, popularity doesn't necessarily translate to participation.

In fact, there's room to increase participation, and many individuals and associations are working toward that goal. The PGA of America, through its Play Golf America program, and the Golf Course Builders Association of America, through its Sticks for Kids Foundation, are encouraging more people to golf – and golf more frequently. Another initiative, the First Tee, which encourages young people to develop character and solid values through golf, currently has 125 chapters and 154 facilities throughout the country.

Such programs teach newcomers the game's rewards, as well as basics like etiquette, including speed of play. This issue of time is a considerable factor affecting participation. Some people say they don't have enough time to play golf, or they say the game takes too long to play.

As a result, some in the industry, including architects, have suggested focusing on courses that are fewer than 18 holes and 18-hole courses that are considerably shorter than 7,000 yards. This would take some creative marketing to work. "Culturally, we have to overcome the perception that you're not a wimp for not playing 18 holes," said MG Orender, president of the PGA of America, at the GCBAA's annual summer meeting.

Nine-hole courses present the challenge of maintaining profitability. Because green fees correlate with the cost of building and maintaining a course, a shorter course is less expensive to play. This benefits those players who say the cost of golf is another reason why they don't play, or at least play as much as they'd like.

A less expensive course fits the portion of the golfing public that wants to play nine holes. Owners might not be fond of golfers playing a round of nine because it's cheaper than a round of 18, but a round of nine is better than no round at all. The pay-off for owners is more players, more often.

Nonetheless, shorter courses – nine holes or 18 – buck the industry trend of developing 18-hole championship courses. Some of the 200 golf courses that will open this

year are longer than 7,400 yards, with as many as five sets of tee boxes. These courses cater to the better-conditioned golfers who hit the ball farther because of more instruction, better equipment, and more playing opportunities through more courses and tournaments.

Statistics show that in 1980, a professional golfer's average drive was 257 yards, compared with the current average of 286 yards, according to Doug Winfield, a mechanical engineer who designs golf equipment. This is because of more consistent golf balls with 300 to 500 dimples instead of the old standard of 336. New clubs, which are longer, lighter and lower-lofted than older models, also contribute to longer driving distances.

Course conditions, such as lower-cut greens and fairways, increased drainage and easier bunkers in which to play, also contribute to longer courses.

Golfers are hitting balls farther, yet many don't have time to play 18 holes regularly or courses that are longer than 7,000 yards. The executive short course could be part of a growing trend of developing shorter courses to allow busy people to play golf more quickly, more often and less expensively.

Some already have found success with this model. Outside San Francisco in Dublin, Calif., a Taiwanese real-estate developer, R.S. Lin, built the 18-hole Dublin Ranch Golf Course, which plays 4,331 yards from the front tees and 4,791 yards from the back tees. However, it isn't inexpensive because of things like maintaining 8,000-square-foot greens. But the concept behind the par-63 course was to develop one that could be played in three-and-a-half hours or less.

The industry is filled with smart and creative individuals who can address golfers' time and cost challenges through changes in course design, development and maintenance, whether on new or existing courses. If this happens, the industry likely could witness more courses like Dublin Ranch open – courses that experienced and novice golfers can enjoy.

Having more golfers in general is a worthy goal, not just increasing the number of 18-hole rounds played. Getting more people involved, and staying involved, in the game, regardless of ability, is better business for all courses, no matter what the length. GCN

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Calendar of events

Nov. 3-6

2004 PGMS School of Professional Grounds Management and 15th Annual Green Industry Exposition
Charlotte (N.C.) Marriott City Center and the Charlotte Convention Center
Call 910/695-1333 or visit www.ncturfgrass.com.

Nov. 9-11

Penn State Golf Turf Conference
Nittany Lion Inn
State College, Pa.
Call 814/238-2402 or visit www.paturf.org.

Nov. 14-16

25th Annual International Irrigation Show
Tampa (Fla.) Convention Center
Call 703/536-7080 or visit www.irrigation.org.

Nov. 14-16

2004 Golf 20/20 Conference
World Golf Hall of Fame
St. Augustine, Fla.
Call 904/280-4829 or visit www.golf2020.com.

Nov. 15-18

Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents 2004 Conference & Trade Show
The Myrtle Beach (S.C.) Convention Center
Call 800/476-4272 or visit www.cgcsa.org.

Nov. 16-18

New York State Turfgrass Association's Turf and Grounds Exposition
Rochester (N.Y.) Riverside Convention Center
Call 800/873-8873 or visit www.nysta.org.

Nov. 30 - Dec. 2

Illinois Professional Turf Conference
Pheasant Run MegaCenter
St. Charles, Ill.
Call 630/243-9483 or visit www.illinoisturfgrassfoundation.org.

Dec. 7-9

Rocky Mountain Regional Turfgrass Association's 51st Annual Turfgrass

Conference and Trade Show

Holiday Inn Denver International Airport
Call 303/770-2220 or visit www.rmra.org.

Dec. 7-10

2004 Ohio Turfgrass Conference & Show
Greater Columbus (Ohio) Convention Center
Call 888/683-3445 or visit www.ohioturfgrass.org.

Dec. 9-11

New Jersey Turfgrass & Landscape Expo
Taj Mahal Casino and Resort
Atlantic City, N.J.
Call 732/821-7134 or visit www.njturfgrass.org.

Dec. 15

The 6th Annual Organic Turf Trade Show
Smithtown (N.Y.) Sheraton
Call 516/541-4321 or visit www.neighborhood-network.org.

Jan. 5-7

Minnesota Green Expo
Minneapolis Convention Center
Call 888/886-6652 or visit www.minnesotagreenexpo.com.

Jan. 6-11

56th Annual Canadian International Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show
Metro Toronto Convention Center
Call 905/602-8873 or visit www.golfsupers.com.

Jan. 11-13

Virginia Turfgrass Council's 45th Annual Turf and Landscape Conference and Trade Show
Downtown Richmond (Va.) Marriott
Call 757/464-1004 or visit www.thevtc.org.

Jan. 12-13

Ninth Annual Heart of America Golf and Turf Conference
Overland Park (Kan.) Convention Center
Call 816/561-5323 or visit www.hagcsa.org.

Jan. 17-20

Annual Michigan Turfgrass Conference

Holiday Inn South

Lansing, Mich.
Call 517/321-1660 or visit www.michiganturfgrass.org.

Jan. 17-20

Turfgrass Council of North Carolina's 43rd Annual Turfgrass Conference and Show
Adam's Mark Hotel and Grand Pavilion
Winston-Salem, N.C.
Call 910/695-1333 or visit www.ncturfgrass.org.

Jan. 19-21

2005 Mid-Am Horticultural Trade Show
Lakeside Center at McCormick Place
Chicago
Call 847/526-2010 or visit midam.org.

Feb. 2-4

Turfgrass Producers International's Midwinter Conference
Hilton Cancun (Mexico) Beach Resort
Call 800-405-8873 or visit www.turfgrassod.org.

Feb. 7-12

Golf Industry Show
Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, Fla.
Call 800/472-7878 or visit www.golfindustryshow.com.

Feb. 15-18

The First Tee 7th Annual Meeting
World Golf Village
St. Augustine, Fla.
Call 904/940-4300 or visit www.thefirsttee.org.

March 2-3

Michigan Green Industry Association's 17th Annual Trade Show & Convention
Novi (Mich.) Expo Center
Call 800/354-6352 or visit www.landscape.org.

March 8-10

New England Regional Turfgrass Conference & Show
Rhode Island Convention Center
Providence, R.I.
Call 401/848-0004 or visit www.nertf.org. GCN

E-mail conference information to John Walsh at jwalsh@gje.net.