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Inset Photos: Mauh-Nah-Tee-See Country Club, Rockford, IL
Scott White, Golf Course Superintendent



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BEWARE OF
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INCORPORATED

There's a spot for a new controller on your course. How will you fill it?

Fact is, this used to be an easy answer. There were only a few choices in irrigation system controllers, and more or less they performed roughly the same. Well, that has changed quite a bit.

The demand for increased water conservation, more flexibility,

and better efficiency has led to dramatic breakthrough technologies, and many new options.

So what used to be a routine decision isn't. (And, of course, irrigation controller technology isn't something most of us stay as up-to-date on as say who's at the top of the leaderboard at a PGA TOUR event, or who was just voted off the island last night.)

So where to go from here? That's the million-dollar question. Literally — the right controller system can have that much of an effect. First off, don't just consider the brand. Instead, look at capabilities too. If you do, you'll discover your choice is simpler than you might think. Because there are significant differences. For instance, there's a control system that can offer much greater precision (to the second instead of the minute) in setting rotor run times. Why is this important?

Because shaving seconds of program run time can save hundreds of thousands of gallons of water over

a year. Sometimes as much as 40% in total power and water costs. This same system also allows any controller to act as a central control for

all the rest. Why does this matter? It's

a huge time saver if you operate without a central, or during a renovation. Instead of having to visit each and every stand-alone controller on the course, you can just go to one. (Or simply hook one up to a maintenance radio and control them

all. Or even better, connect one to the internet with a modem, and manage the whole irrigation system from anywhere you can access the internet, like the clubhouse—or perhaps the couch in front of your TV at home.) Then, there's the question of how easy the controller is to upgrade in the future—as more and more sensor and web-based technology comes

online. Here again, the answer is simpler than you might expect. Only one control system is totally software-based. Which means upgrading is just a matter of connecting the controller to a laptop

and taking only a few minutes to upload the latest software. What is this advanced system? It's the John Deere Aurora Control Series. Sure it might not be the first name you consider in irrigation, but when you look at everything it offers, it might be just the right one to fill the position. Like

to learn more? Call your local John Deere Golf distributor or visit www.JohnDeere.com/Aurora.



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JOHN DEERE
GOLF

ON THE WEB

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This month in the Online Extras section:

Assistant's view

Jeff Wichman: It's just grass

Equipment management

Stephen Tucker: Aerification time

Product focus: Seed

Superintendent Mike Swing's transitional ryegrass testing



FEEDBACK

We'd like to hear from you.

E-mail us at gci@gie.net with your thoughts and opinions.

Opportunity to influence

I just finished reading Monroe Miller's article on mentoring (page 30, July). Excellent advice, as always. Often, I think we fail to realize what an impact (and opportunity) we may have on those people we interact with during our day-to-day lives. Whether it be a chance encounter with a student, a longer tenured intern or even coaching a kid's sport during our non-work hours, there's a chance to set an example.

Monroe delivered that message well and I shared it with the Green Section staff. We all need to remember the role we play with the students selected to participate in USGA Green Section's week-long internship program. It may not be long, but I believe we have a significant opportunity to demonstrate important lessons for their future.

Kimberly S. Erusha, Ph.D
Director of Education
USGA
Far Hills, N.J.

Correction

The parent company of Chariot Run Golf Club was misrepresented in the July issue (Smart Irrigation supplement, page S16). Harrah's Entertainment owns Chariot Run. The editors regret the error.

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SECRET SHOPPING

As the publisher of Golf Course Industry and our sister publication, Lawn & Landscape, I'm occasionally "forced" to travel to events being held at nice resorts. Yes, it's a tough job, but I do my best to put up with it.

My most recent trip was to a well-known golf/conference facility in Georgia. It was a gorgeous place with a great course and I enjoyed some wonderful time with green industry colleagues. That said, a number of things – both good and bad – really struck me:

- Given the airlines' new restrictions on bags (e.g., charging \$50 to take your golf clubs along), why wouldn't every course that does any level of travel-golf business do a better job of promoting rental sets? The cost of bringing your clubs has, as the author Malcolm Gladwell says, reached the "tipping point" vs. the cost of renting them on site.

Rental revenue is found money for most facilities. Why not do a better job of promoting easy rental services at your facility for the typical harried business traveler? Club rental information, including the quality of the clubs you offer, should figure prominently into all your communications to guests and others coming to outings. Consider finding a way to encourage or partner with the event's organizing group to promote your club rental program as a convenience to attendees.

- The resort we stayed at did a helluva job of maximizing revenue from our group while apparently offering us value. For example, everyone in the group was offered a significant discount at the pro shop. It was a great incentive for golfers – and non-golfers – in our group to pick up that wind shirt or polo. It felt special. You sort of felt like you'd won a prize even though you played like crap (which I did).

- Speaking of prizes, the course also set up a closest-to-the-pin contest with a revenue-generating twist. The assistant pro was waiting on a par 3 with a table of golf shirts. If you bought a shirt for 40 percent off, you got a shot against the assistant pro. If you beat him, he

gave you your money back. If not, you still got a shirt for almost half off. I've seen similar setups before, but never in a way that felt like such a win-win for the golfer and never in a way that seemed to bring in dollars so easily. Of course, I might just be biased because I won a free shirt.

- I'm guessing that 95 percent of the participants in our group (about 100 people) had never seen the course. Why not provide at least one yardage book per group as part of the event package? Just build it into the package price. Obviously, it's an extra cost but it may help you attract repeat business. After all, do you really want participants to walk away from the outing hating your course because they had no idea what was in front of them most of the time?



Kevin Gilbride Publisher

As someone who ends up being a "secret shopper" at corporate outings, I thought it might be helpful to pass these observations along. Though I was in Georgia as a golf traveler, these observations don't apply just to destination courses. Most golf facilities have private outings and other events they can turn into creative, revenue-generating opportunities.

As someone intimately involved in the industry, I think it's also helpful to consider why these little things make a big difference. The bottom line is creativity: trying new things, listening to your customers and being willing to think differently about your facility and how you treat guests and drive revenue.

At what point will other services you provide reach that tipping point Gladwell talks about? Do you consistently seek to identify these opportunities? Does every employee across your organization know that his or her ideas are encouraged and welcomed? If so, we'd like to hear about your unique programs. Send them to us at gci@gie.net, and we'll print our favorites. **GCI**

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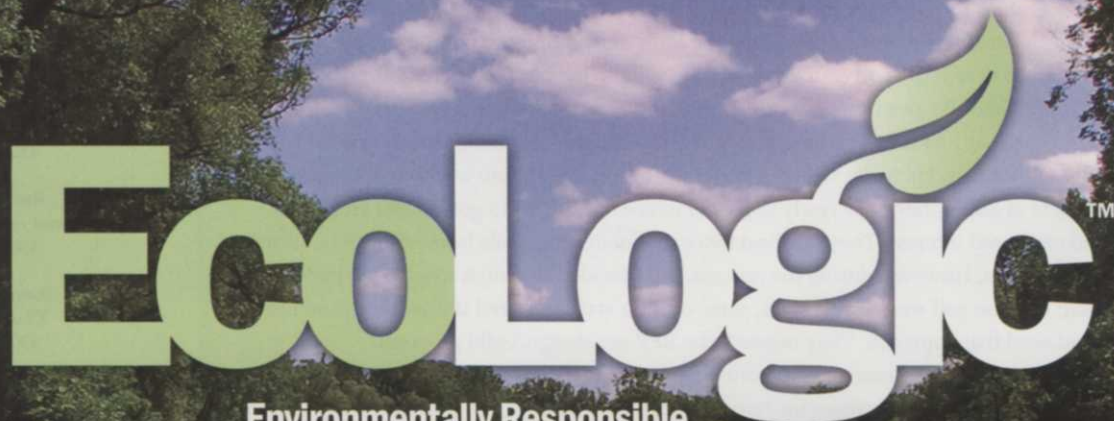
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A new golf course

Five years ago, the announcement of a new golf course usually got lost in the shuffle of 300 to 500 new golf courses being built. Now that the number of new U.S. course starts has dropped 99 percent to about three to five this year, the press release of a new golf course I'm designing in Mayetta, Kan., was big news, drawing inquiries from as far away as England. I can only be described as being a "happy camper" to have the chance to design this course. I will spend the next few months chronicling the ideas and techniques behind the process.

Of course, to design the golf course, we had to "sell the job" against incredible competition. The Prairie Band of Potawatomi decided to build a golf course almost as soon as it built its casino in 1998, but first it had to complete other important reservation facilities such as hospitals and schools. I actually visited with them around 2000 when working in the area.

By August of 2008, they were ready to go and issued an RFQ to 13 golf course architects who had expressed interest. They received twice that many proposals from others who heard about the process. However, during the process, they decided to switch to a design/build approach; because golf was new to them, some of their staff preferred this method, and other tribes had used that approach. They reissued the RFP as a design/build proposal.

Luckily for me, Native American pro golfer Notah Begay III lives in Dallas, knew me and was interested in designing golf courses for Native American tribes. He had completed one project as a consultant, but wanted to design his first signature course with a qualified golf course architect he could work well with, and we hit it off. He also had a relationship with an excellent golf course builder, Landscapes Unlimited, whom I also had used on previous projects.

We formed a team that probably was "the leader in the clubhouse" between Notah's star power and personal connection, the design/build experience of Landscapes Unlimited, especially in Native American courses, and my track record of already having designed the top two public courses in Kansas and a highly ranked Native American course in Minnesota, which happens to be the chairman's favorite course. But we took nothing for granted. I think we won the commission not so much on past qualifications, but on our hard work in putting together our proposal and presentation.

Our proposal addressed their specific concerns. We prepared a routing and some before and after pictures of what their course would look like. We discussed pros and cons of different clubhouse and maintenance area locations. We reviewed existing water tests and sent soil samples for soil tests. We showed how our design/build team would provide more than architecture, by designing them a golf course Web site, developing preliminary youth golf and soccer programs (one of Notah's passions) and showing Landscapes Unlimited's comprehensive budget control program.

We took great care to understand the land that's equally important in both Native American culture and golf course design. We discussed how their site had three unique site "zones" (agriculture, pasture and heavy woods) and how the design would take advantage of each. They knew that Notah and I had walked the land multiple times, in part because someone called security upon seeing strangers driving on the property. In one case, a council member helped tow my rental car from the mud. While nearly being arrested is not usually good business practice, in this case, I think it paid benefits in securing the job for our team. The decision came down just before Christmas 2008, which was a nice present. **GCI**

Design/Construction Journal

Over the next few months, Jeff Brauer's column will detail the ins and outs of his experiences participating in the design and construction of a new golf course in Mayetta, Kan.

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