

COURT TEST DUE ON TAX PAID BY COUNTRY CLUBS

CLEVELAND—Lawyers for Cuyahoga County administrators here are preparing for a court fight against charges that local country clubs and golf courses, some of which own very valuable land, are not paying their fair share of real estate taxes.

A suit filed this month by Iris Sales Company, a real estate management firm, contends that the county auditor, treasurer and board of revision are allowing the clubs to pay a special rate based not on fair market values (how much the land is worth) but on the land's current value as a golf course.

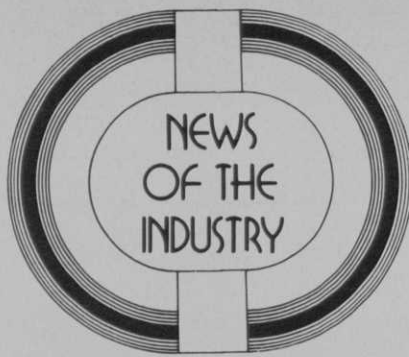
According to the suit, appraisals for the club property are too low and the clubs are paying taxes at a rate lower than other property owners.

The suit asks for an explanation of appraisal methods used for 30 clubs and golf courses in the county. It asks the court to find the tax methods discriminatory and to order a change.

County Auditor George V. Voinovich would not comment directly on the suit, but said area country clubs, some of which pay as much as \$30,000 a year in property taxes for golf courses, insist they are paying too much.

According to an investigation made by the Cleveland Plain Dealer, among seven of the wealthiest clubs, land values on the county books range from \$5,100 an acre at Pepper Pike CC—where surrounding residential land is valued at three times that amount—to Westwood CC in Rocky River where land values are even higher. The investigation found that at some clubs, land is valued by developers and realtors at an amount as much as 10 times more than county appraisals, and that some land surrounding the clubs is appraised at a value much higher than the club land, whereas other land is valued at about the same amount.

In recent years many clubs throughout the country have found themselves enveloped by rapidly developing residential areas where their land may be more valuable to a housing developer than to the club. Golf industry leaders believe



it is more discriminatory to tax any landowner based on what the land would be worth if he used it in the most profitable way. This method of taxation forces the property owner to exploit land instead of using it as he would like. If a farmer discovers his property is surrounded by high residential development property, would it not be unfair to tax his property equal to that which surrounds him. This would be tantamount to forcing him to become a developer when he would prefer to continue farming.

That a piece of land is more valuable to some people than to others should not be a criterion for determining property tax.

GCSAA ANNOUNCES MOVE TO KANSAS

DES PLAINES, ILL.—*The Golf Course Superintendents Assn.* announced it intends to move from here to Lawrence, Kan., on June 30 of this year. According to GCSAA Executive Director, Conrad Scheetz, the reason for relocating was to more centrally position the GCSAA offices for its members. He added that he anticipates less employee turnover and generally better working conditions. "Lawrence was chosen as the site of the move partly as a result of a survey conducted by the GCSAA," Scheetz said.

PENNA AND MITCHELL TEAM UP

WEST PALM BEACH, FLA.—The business affiliation of golf course architect *William F. Mitchell* with *Toney Penna*, a golf club manufacturer and former top-rated touring pro, was disclosed recently here. The new company will design and construct golf courses.

Penna is the president of a golf

equipment company bearing his name and was a designer of customized golf clubs. Mitchell has constructed, designed and re-designed some 200 golf courses in the United States and Canada and is currently building Quintado Lago CC in the Algarve, Portugal.

PRO GOLF CLASSICS TO BE HELD AT "BIG G"

WHITE PLAINS, N.Y.—Four \$20,000 tournaments will be held at Grosinger's G & CC, Liberty, N.Y., this spring, starting in mid-May and ending the middle of June. First prize for each tournament winner will be \$3,500, and there will be 50 money winners. Entry fee is \$1,250, which includes green fees, golf cars and buffet lunches for all four tournaments.

The scheduling of these tournaments will not conflict with any scheduled PGA Section tournaments in the Northeast, according to Professional Golf Classics, Inc. The events are particularly aimed at young touring and club pros.

For information, write: Professional Golf Classics, Inc., 381 Dobbs Ferry Rd., White Plains, N.Y. 10607.

USGA UPS U.S. OPEN PRIZE MONEY

NEW YORK—*The United States Golf Assn.* held its 79th Annual Meeting here at the Biltmore Hotel on January 27 where it was announced that this year's prize money for the U.S. Open, to be played at Oakmont (Pa.) CC, will be increased by \$25,000 to \$225,000 and that the winner's purse will be increased by \$5,000 to \$35,000.

Gene Littler was presented the Bob Jones Award "for distinguished sportsmanship in golf." The award was accepted for Littler by Isaac B. Grainger, a former USGA president.

Lynford Lardner Jr. of Milwaukee was elected to a second one-year term as president. Other officers, all re-elected, were: *Harton S. Semple* and *Lynn A. Smith*, vice presidents; *Edward L. Emerson*, secretary, and *Harry W. Easterly*, treasurer.

Next year's meeting, it was announced, will be held at the Biltmore on January 26.

continued on page 78

USGA SETS THE STANDARD

NEW YORK—*The United States Golf Assn. Green Section Conference* on golf course management was held here on January 26 at the Biltmore Hotel.

Marvin Ferguson, of Bryan Tex., was presented the Green Section award for his distinguished service to the turfgrass industry.

Presentations on the theme, Turfgrass Management, provided useful information for the some 350 superintendents who attended. Topics included: preparing a course for tournament play, organization and management of the labor force and nutrient application and turf physiology.

Joseph C. Dey Jr., commissioner of the Tournament Players Div., Professional Golfers' Assn., counseled attendees on what is expected on a tournament course. He prefaced his remarks by saying that championship courses are not chosen from courses that must be completely overhauled.

He stressed that major championship courses must be laid out with an evenness in their degree of difficulty and have continuity from course to course to prevent a set-up that favors one player's strength and exploits another's weakness. He favors courses that require players to use every club in their bags.

He advised superintendents to take full advantage of Green Section agronomists, who are made available to course superintendents as counselors.

Among the specifications for producing championship turf, set out by Commissioner Dey were: that grass on tees should be firm, level, and one-half inch in length; close-cropped fairways; putting greens, firm and clean, three-sixteenths-inch grass length, with positioning of hole done on day of play so that weather does not ruin a hole the night before the tournament; the hole should be five paces from any edge of the green and should not be tricky or steep within a three-foot radius of the flag. Dey cautioned

superintendents that, although it is not a desirable practice to limit watering of greens, from the standpoint of healthy turf, it is important that championship greens be as dry as possible; roughs should have a collar of two inch grass tapering to five inch grass; sand should be added to bunkers three months before a championship tournament to allow it to settle, and bunkers should have no steep lips on the rear; practice areas should be kept in the same manner as the course to simulate actual playing conditions; out of bounds should be painted on the ground or marked with large white stakes, with short stakes or painted lines to mark water hazards; the edges of car paths must be clearly defined; tee markers should contain helpful information, such as whether the course is fast or slow.

A distinguished panel presented helpful guidelines on the organization and management of the labor force. The discussion included such topics as what to look for in reviewing a pension plan in light of increased role of Social Security in retirement programs.

The panel also evaluated the effectiveness of college graduates as assistant superintendents. There were differences of opinion on this point with some saying training graduates was ineffectual, because they generally are learning the job for the first year or two and then move on to head superintendent positions, leaving the superintendent who trained them with another teacher-student cycle.

Another point of discussion was the relationship of grounds maintenance to the over-all budget. At the average 18-hole course, it was estimated that grounds maintenance should amount to 16 per cent and labor 11 per cent.

During the question and answer period the query was raised about the effectiveness of the mechanical trap rake. The panel said the rake had wide acceptance, but that users must avoid over raking (once or twice a week is good), which results in soft sand.

Although some attendees complained that presentations were too general, it was widely agreed that the conference provided much beneficial information.

FERGUSON RECEIVES GREEN SECTION AWARD



NEW YORK—Marvin H. Ferguson, of Bryan, Tex., has been named the recipient of the United States Golf Assn.'s 1973 Green Section Award for distinguished service to golf through work with turfgrass. Dr. Ferguson's contributions in the field have been varied and important over three decades.

Since 1968, he has been president of Agri-Systems of Texas, a firm engaged in consultation work and the design of golf courses. He also is a consultant for GOLFDOM.

As a young man, his work at the USGA Green Section in Arlington, Va., helped to establish the usefulness of arsenical materials for herbicidal purposes and resulted in the recognition of thiram as an effective turf fungicide. Later he was responsible for deciding which of hundreds of grass selection should be saved and moved from the Arlington Turf Gardens to the United States Department of Agriculture Plant Industry Station in Beltsville, Md.; one of the five bluegrass strains saved was later released as Merion bluegrass.

Dr. Ferguson's work at Texas A&M University, where he was a professor of agronomy for 15 years, was vital in the evolution of the USGA Green Section Specifications for Putting Green Construction, which rely heavily on his contention that matters of permeability and pore space distribution, together with the employment of textural layers to take advantage of soil-water movement phenomena, are vital criteria for evaluating putting green soils.

Dr. Ferguson succeeds Herb and Joe Graffis, co-founders of GOLFDOM, as recipient of the Green Section Award.