

They strive to be corny. Their goal is to let their creative juices flow like Niagara Falls — so they can think up as many cockamamie ideas as possible.

That's how golf course developer and operator Orrin Vincent and his creative crew at Kirkland, Wash.-based OB Sports developed destinations like Trophy Lake Golf & Casting, a new public golf course and fishing hole in Port Orchard, Wash., and the Gallery Golf Club, a new course and art gallery in Tucson, Ariz.

"We write down every goofy idea we have," Vincent says of his five-person staff's brainstorming sessions.

Then they look at the ideas and laugh out loud at the really stupid ones. But when the slapstick subsides, "we get back to reality," says Vincent, who founded OB Sports in 1972.

They discuss their ideas, no matter how zany, and try to fine-tune them into something original and smart — all in the name of golf.

"We monitor each other," Vincent says. "Everything is done in good taste. We respect golf so much that we don't want to do anything to make it hokie."

What OB Sports has done in the past five years is bring a new twist to the sport, as in themed golf courses. The company is marketing to golfers *and* enthusiasts of other sorts.



Trophy Lake's 7,200-yard golf course, a John Fought-design, is blanketed with fir trees and wildflowers.

Goofy Ideas Lead To Themed Links

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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Trophy Lake Golf & Casting is a perfect example. If you want to go fishing and you want to go golfing, but you don't have time to do both, you can go to Trophy Lake and try to score birdies and hook fish.

You can play 18 on Trophy Lake's 7,200-yard, John Fought-designed course. Then you can take to one of the property's four lakes, including the natural 26-acre Trophy Lake, to fish for bass and trout. The complex hosts golf tournaments and fishing tournaments.

If you're a fan of University of Washington sports, Vincent has a golf course for you. In the summer, OB Sports will open the Washington National GC, which features a Washington Huskies sports theme. The clubhouse will feature Washington sports memorabilia and history, and a restaurant shaped like the school's football stadium. Golf carts will be imbued in gold and purple, the school's colors, and will be labeled with names of Washington sports legends such as Warren Moon.

In January, OB Sports opened the Cimarron Golf Resort in Palm Springs, Calif. What do you do in Palm Springs, the land of more than 100 golf courses, to be different? If you're Vincent, you build a course with a European motif, featuring sod-wall bunkers and crushed, white-marble sand.

Vincent, who has a trickle of Las Vegas blood running in his veins, admits he modeled his themed courses after Sin City's themed casinos, sans the gaudiness.

Vincent's first themed course, Langdon Farms Golf Club, opened in 1995 in Portland, Ore. When OB Sports secured the land for the site, Vincent noticed a busted-up barn on the property. Rather than tear it down, Vincent fixed it up and adopted a farm theme for the course. He built a 22,000-square-foot clubhouse modeled after the old barn. Golf course

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Money Shot

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signage, menu food items and employee uniforms all feature the farm theme.

There are other themed courses, such as The Reserve, another Portland facility with a winery theme. You can bet more are on the way. Although OB Sports' facilities are mainly in the West and Southwest, other themed courses might pop up in the East, Midwest and South. Vincent will design and build you a theme course for a price.

He's also considering approaching professional sports organizations to see if they're interested in building golf courses with team themes.

Recently, a New Yorker phoned Vincent and asked him about building a course with a Wall Street theme.

"He asked me, 'What would I do for a Wall Street golf course?'" Vincent relates. "I didn't stop talking for an hour. Can you imagine a public course located just outside New York with that



The waters at Trophy Lake are more than hazards for golfers. They're fishing holes, too, and are stocked with bass and trout.

theme? Wouldn't that be something?"

Maybe some of golf's absolutists can't imagine that *something*. Maybe they think it would be tawdry.

Let them think that. The industry has been desperately seeking ways to bring more new players to the game, and Vincent might be part of the solution.

As long as he and his associates keep their creative juices in check (please, no New Millennium-themed golf courses!), the game could be a lot more fun—even if you're 20 over par.

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