

We've Got Mail

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for Golfdom Insider, an e-newsletter
put together by the Golfdom staff,
at www.golfdom.com.*

'Sharp' Job

I haven't been associated with American Golf Corp. for nearly three years, but I do feel compelled to respond to the nasty little article by Shane Sharp ("American Golf at the Turn," January).

AGC certainly has its faults and has experienced some hard times in the last three years as the economy tanked, play remained flat or down, and the "one new course per day" lunacy of the National Golf Foundation eventually resulted in significant overbuilding nationwide.

No doubt Sharp's friends have had reason to complain about conditions at AGC courses as the company struggled to reduce costs and remain profitable.

Eventually, they struggled just to remain alive, and now Goldman Sachs is about to dine on the body.

AGC's market is primarily public, daily-fee golf, including a fair amount of high-end public golf, with about 25 percent or 30 percent private clubs in the mix.

Most are not old-money, high-end clubs. AGC accepts all business risk for the owner and operates as if it were the owner, guaranteeing an annual minimum rent for use of his property vs. a percentage of the gross (if that exceeds the minimum rent guarantee). AGC covers all losses with its own cash.

For 25 years, AGC's business model produced much greater profits and growth as it provided affordable golf with better course conditions than its competitors.

However, once the market overbuilt and the economy tanked, AGC was exposed to crushing business risk and suffered losses for three successive years after completing the best year in its history.

When the dust settles, look for AGC's directors of maintenance to be running the golf course maintenance operations under Goldman. With some new financial support, they'll quickly fix the problems Sharp harps on.

**Mike Heacock, Agronomist
and former American Golf Corp. employee**

How Could You Forget Him?

I always look forward to reading this publication each month, but I was a little disappointed in December.

There is an article called "A Historic Design." While this was a well-written article and was mostly about Gary Panks, I was curious why the superintendent was never mentioned. They do have one, and he does a great job. He has more to deal with in maintaining the "culturally sensitive" areas than the director of golf operations.

Maybe I am a little worked up over nothing, but I am from the area and a good friend of superintendent Todd Huslig. I respect him and what he does.

**Clay Guck
Superintendent, Tierra Del Sol CC
Los Lunas, N.M.**

Editor's Note: Guck is absolutely right. We certainly should have mentioned Huslig in the article, and we apologize for the oversight.

Got something to say? We want to hear from you. You can e-mail your letters to Frank Andorka at fandorka@advanstar.com, fax to 440-891-2675 or send them via snail-mail to: 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130. Make sure to include your name and phone number for verification. Letters may be edited for length or relevance.

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