



How Not to Build a Golf Course

By Rob Schultz

The University of Wisconsin is publishing a book that's a must-read for everyone connected with golf courses. It's entitled: "How Not To Build A Golf Course."

The new book is brought to you by the same folks at the UW who wrote best sellers such as "How Not To Hire A Football Coach" and "How Not To Hire An Athletic Director." The foreword to all of them was kindly written by Judge Robert Parins, who authored that great epic, "How Not To Operate A Professional Football Team."

There are seven chapters to this soon-to-be classic on botching the construction of a golf course. Let's jump right into them.

•**The Murphy's Law Theory.** This must occur if you hope to mess up every major endeavor you ever try. In the UW's, and Madison's, case, this applies perfectly. This is an overview chapter to help you understand how the UW's system works.

For instance, the UW suggested about five years ago that it should build a new athletic/convocation center. That was a great idea considering the present structure housing the basketball team was built before the pyramids. The pyramids, by the way, are in better shape.

But, the UW and city officials, in their infinite wisdom, killed the idea and went back to the drawing board. That means it will take as long to build a new arena as it did for the UW to build a golf course (30 years and counting), and for Madison to build a new beltline highway (30 years), a civic center (30 years) and a convention center (five years and counting).

•**The Camel Theory.** You must follow this theory if you want to get off on the wrong foot. When the UW finally decided to build a golf course, it created a committee to make all the decisions regarding hiring an architect, general contractor, etc. Supposedly this was a good idea.

But they named the wrong people to the committee. Most of them know as much about golf courses as George

Bush knows about picking a vice president. This chapter is a perfect lead-in to the next chapter.

•**The "I Need a Vacation" Theory.** This explains how not to hire a golf course architect.

Hiring an architect was one of the first decisions the UW golf course committee had to make. They listened to most of the country's greatest architects and studied their bids. Then Robert Trent Jones, Jr. bounced in and offered to fly many of the committee members out to the San Francisco area to look at his offices and some of his golf courses.

The committee might not know anything about golf courses, but they certainly know they shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth. A few weeks after concluding their trip to California, guess who the committee hired as its architect?

•**The Conditions Are Too Perfect Theory.** This chapter explains how to take a golf course builder's dream summer and fail to get anything done.

It didn't rain from April until September. The UW started construction last fall and hoped to seed this fall. Instead, the UW announced it fell a year behind.

Included in this chapter are tips on how to let the project fall apart when the one committee member who's on the ball goes on a vacation to Europe. Other tips include paying extra to have weeds removed while construction crews are told to stay off the site and finding odd jobs around the house for a newly hired and bored golf course superintendent.

•**The Match 3 Theory.** The first step before deciding to build a golf course is to determine if you have enough money. This chapter explains how the UW thought it had enough money, then decided it didn't almost one year after construction started.

Since the UW decided it was way short of funds, members of the UW Foundation are traveling daily to a convenience store armed with one dollar bills, buying lottery tickets and praying

one lucky stub will finance the rest of the project.

•**The Mussolini Theory.** In every project, there's somebody who lives and dies for its completion. This chapter explains how to alienate those people who eventually turn out to be your worst nightmare.

When the UW decided to create a golf course committee, there were a couple of local people who deserved to be on it but were shunned because they were a bit obnoxious while keeping the project alive for more than 20 years.

Now those people are finally having their say. When the UW ran out of money, these people said they'll finance the rest... if the UW does it their way.

•**The Schubert Theory.** This explains how to leave everything unfinished.

Since nothing seems to ever get done at the UW, there's a feeling the golf course's completion date — if ever — will be sometime around the turn of the century.

That's too bad. The UW was armed with a great piece of property to build a golf course and seemingly enough money to assure its quality. But now? Who knows.

Jones designed too many frills (some holes have as many as six or seven tees, most of which have been cut out of the budget), the original overall design may be too difficult for the average golfer and the end result has the UW still asking too many questions at a time when the end result should be near.

The main question here is when will the UW do anything right? Professors are leaving in droves because they're underpaid, athletics are at an all-time low, cries of racism are being heard through campus. The school is becoming a laughingstock.

The UW golf course is just one more embarrassing chapter. But it's also a microcosm of everything that is wrong with the school.