

# PUBLIC RELATIONS

By Dick Morey

*Publisher, Southern Golf Magazine*

The big thought coming out of the recently held *Golf Summit '94* is what the golfing world should do about its Public Relations. The immediate response from Joe Beditz and Ed Van Dyke, National Golf Foundation honchos, seems to be, hire a PR agency. And the even more immediate reaction is to invite the four PR/advertising-type agencies, which just happened to attend the year's big conference in Scottsdale, to make proposals and bids for a PR campaign should one be decided on. One might just wonder what brought these PR people there, since they might never have been considered the best choices for a 'golf-oriented' PR campaign. Peanut butter or Mylanta maybe, but for golf one should question their savvy. But that's just a small part of the story. What the golf world has to do first is analyze its problem. So what is the problem? Let me give you the viewpoint of a fairly average golfer who plays all types of courses all over the country and has for 30 years or more.

## As I See It

The *big* problem in keeping our golfers, developing the occasional golfer into a regular and slowing the attrition from the ranks isn't one of Public Relations and selling the game to non-golfers in an across-the-board campaign of some sort. You can try to sell the pleasurable experiences of golf with print and TV and radio, but that isn't the problem and it isn't the way to go. The supplier group which makes up the bulk of the NGF membership thinks like this, since they envision bigger equipment and clothing sales if they can attract more bodies. The bulk of the dollars that support the NGF comes from that source and the rest of us contribute to the cause without too much direct or even indirect benefit. So, what's the real answer?

## The Real Answer

The real problem with our golf

world in attracting and holding people with a golf interest is the way golfers are treated and how they interface with the golf course and the establishment which runs their place of play. The basic problem is simply that we, as the people who run and keep the place of play, must become more 'customer conscious' and have much more of a *Personal Relationship* than we do presently. That's the PR we should be developing, and the golf business doesn't need to spend the dollars on a high-powered, expensive PR/ad agency to achieve this. The two major keys to accomplishing this are not even in the scope of the National Golf Foundation. In essence, their part is almost passive when it comes to this phase of how to attract and keep golfers golfing!

The first real *Personal Relationship* situation comes into play when the player approaches the pro shop tee time desk and enters into the world of play. Mostly, this 'tee desk' is relegated to a not-too-savvy assistant pro who has to serve his/her time doing this chore. And, believe me, most of these characters aren't the best PR for the game and/or the business of golf. Guess what I'm saying here is that the player seldom, if ever, sees the 'real pro' and has what one might describe as a pleasant pro shop experience. Yes, the PGA awards their "Merchandiser of the Year" award, but I have yet to ever, ever have this type fellow appear in his pro shop and 'sell' that great line of clubs and clothes he stocks. Never have I had the experience of this 'pro' appearing out of his cubby hole and inquiring how we found the course or give advance advice on how to stay out of trouble or play the course better. So, our first real PR problem is one the PGA will have to eventually answer, since its multi-million dollar budget hasn't done it yet!

## The Next Problem

The second biggest problem is one which concerns the bulk of the readership of *Southern Golf*. Yes, the superintendents (or course managers, as the GCSAA prefers to call them) play their part in this, making our golf courses more user friendly. The major problem is that players never see nor experience a visit with the superintendent's staff. As players our contact is never, never with the expert managers who work very, very diligently to keep the grass green and the course pleasing and an enjoyable place to play. Fact is, even at a private club, where the same players play time and time again, most members, aside from those who serve on the green committee, seldom even know the superintendent's name or have visited with him about the course. That situation is simply many times worse at the daily fee, public or resort course. This is all wrong!

Somehow, somehow, the course manager, the expert who keeps his course in great shape in spite of weather, pestilence and environmental problems, must find a way to interface with the golfer. Again, I must report that on all the many, many courses we have played on as representatives of *Southern Golf*, only once have we ever had the superintendent appear during our round or visit. At the Greenbriar, where Bob Mitchell manages the golf, we were very pleasantly surprised when Bob made sure his assistant Pat McCabe came out and visited during our round, since he, himself, was away attending the retirement party for an old friend 'super' over in Ohio. What a pleasant experience! We, as 'supers,' should try hard to find a way to interface with the golfer. It won't be easy, but our course managers must become more visible to the golfer. Maybe someone should be visiting with the golfer about how he liked the course, how it played and suggestions for improve-

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# Public Relations —

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ment.

## The Real PR!

The PR this game of golf needs more than anything else is a better *Personal Relationship*, not a public relations campaign. This right sort of PR will keep the 25 million golfers we have and, once the word spreads, we will attract the bigger numbers the NGF is concerned about.

**A PLAYER'S EYE VIEW** of Augusta National's first hole at the Masters. ►



## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

### NEW MEMBERS—APRIL 10, 1995

	Class
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<b>Tom Lundgren</b> . . . . . Kate Haven G.C. . . . . A	
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<b>Randy Witt</b> . . . . . Oneida Golf and Riding Club . . . . A	
618 Night Court, Green Bay, WI	W: 414-498-6503
<b>Michael Kactro</b> . . . . . Koshkonong Mounds C.C. . . . . A	
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<b>Randy Pankonen</b> . . . . . Pipestone Golf & C.C. . . . . B	
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<b>Thomas Lynn</b> . . . . . Jacobsen Textron . . . . . F	
1721 Packard Ave., Racine, WI	W: 414-939-1185

### RECLASSIFICATIONS—MARCH 13, 1995

<b>Eric Sundet</b> . . . . . Hastings Country Club . . . . . C to BII
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