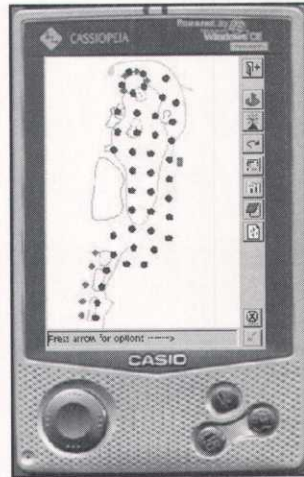
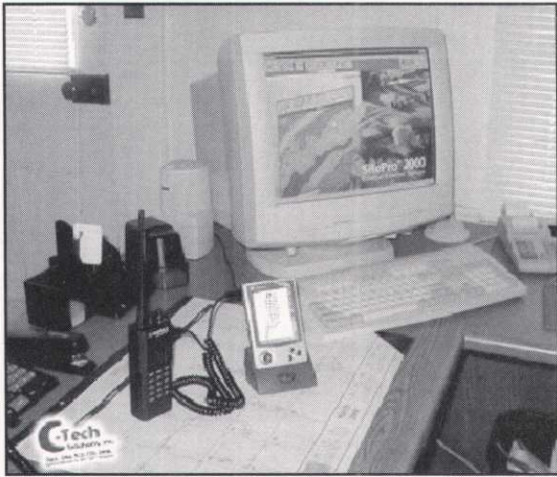


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GCSAA Introduces New On-Line Education Program

Participating in continuing education can be difficult in a profession where much of the day is spent on the golf course. To enhance accessibility for its members, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) is adding to its on-line education programming.

"The Art and Science of Maintaining a Functional Putting

Green" is now offered using on-line, streaming video technology. The new course features Milt Engelke, Ph.D. at Texas A&M University, and focuses on the components of a functional root zone and its importance in managing a top quality putting surface. The physical, chemical and biological components of the root zone are discussed in detail for

both native soil and sand-based root zone greens.

"We are excited about adding another on-line class to our curriculum," said Hannes Combest, GCSAA director of education. "We believe that in order to provide quality education for superintendents in the most accessible manner, this will be the path we need to take. We are planning two more courses that will be available by fall."

The class takes approximately 3.5 hours, and is broken into 20-minute segments to make it easy for the busy superintendent to complete in multiple sittings. Students who successfully complete the course and exam will be awarded .35 CEUs.

Topics covered in Engelke's course include:

- + Environmental limitations for bermudagrass and bentgrass on putting greens.
- + Physical characteristics of the root zone, optimum for the plant growth and development.
- + Mechanics of perched water table, layering and positive and negative results.
- + Flushing greens versus leaching .
- + Soil amendments, root zone activity and managing organic matter.

Registration for the seminar is available at www.gcsaa.org/learn/selfstudy/artandscience.html.

For more information: Contact Nicolas Shump, GCSAA education sales and program coordinator, at 785-832-3650.

-GCSAA Media Room

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Member Complaints-

(Continued from Page 14)

should always have immediate access to someone who can.

When complaints are dealt with in a way that shows the member that they are valued, their loyalty to the club is enhanced. Likewise, a complaint that points out less-than-excellent service serves as a perfect opportunity to increase the level of member service your club delivers. That process begins by developing a problem solving strategy.

Claim It. Most members who complain just want to be heard. When you receive a member complaint, you own it. That means you don't pass the buck. Listen to what the member is saying, write it down, and repeat it back to them. This will establish confidence in the member's mind. If you have to get back to the member, establish a mutually agreed-upon time.

Reality Check. Solve the problem and understand that, in reality, not all problems are solvable to the member's satisfaction. If the problem cannot be solved, explain to them why. Don't give excuses, give reasons.

The easiest way to solve the problem is to first ask the member what you can do to make them happy. The majority of time they will ask for less than what you were willing to give them.

How and Why. Employees at all levels must, in a structured environment, explore why the problem occurred in the first place. Ask, "What caused this to happen"? This should be done with every problem, every day.

Strategize. Develop a plan to keep the problem from happening again. If this is not done, you can be certain that the same problem will continue to occur. When this is the case, employee morale will deteriorate -- a situation that leads to an increase in member complaints and future member defections, and a decline in member usage of the club. Ultimately, the negative effects will take their toll on the bottom line.

Complaint handling is vital to the success of every organization, and while it is a critical component, it should be viewed only one part of a broader service strategy. If you focus solely on complaint handling, you may win a few of the battles, but still lose the war.

David Schreiber is president of The Customer Relations Group, Inc. which is an Atlanta based consulting firm which specializes in innovative hands on training for managers and employees, speeches, seminars, service audits, needs assessment and management consulting. For information call: (770) 395-1212 e-mail dschreiber@mind-spring.com or visit www.customerrelations.com.

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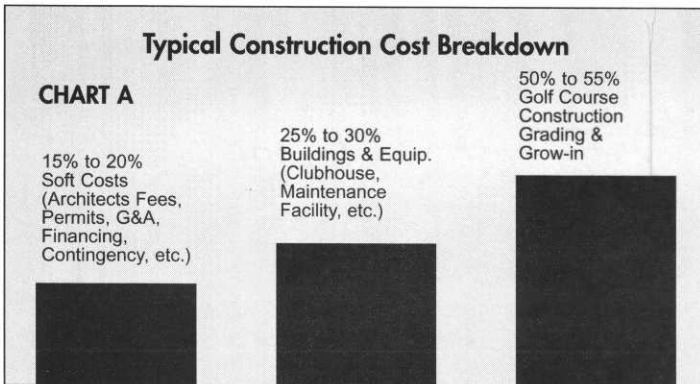
Golf Course Construction Costs

By RICHARD CREED

Regional Director, GVI Consulting

What is the cost to develop upscale golf? To help answer this frequently asked question, GVI Consulting, a national golf advisory firm, continuously compiles golf course construction cost data across the nation. To answer this question specifically for upscale private club golf courses, we took a representative sampling of 30 upscale recently developed golf facilities.

For purposes of this article, the cost data was catego-



rized into three major categories: Golf Course Hard Costs (the actual construction of the golf course); Building Improvement and Equipment Costs (the actual construction of the building improvements and equipment purchases); and Soft Costs (such as design fees, permits, construction management, etc.).

The data revealed a wide variance in total project costs (excluding land) from about \$7 million to about \$25 million, with a median cost of about \$14 million. We recognize that this is an extremely wide range, but this further exemplifies the many factors that can influence a construction budget. Essentially, the variance is related to two primary factors: Site and design specific characteristics (i.e. location, topography, soil type, etc.), and Owner/developer preferences (i.e. amenities, quality, golf course architect, etc.)

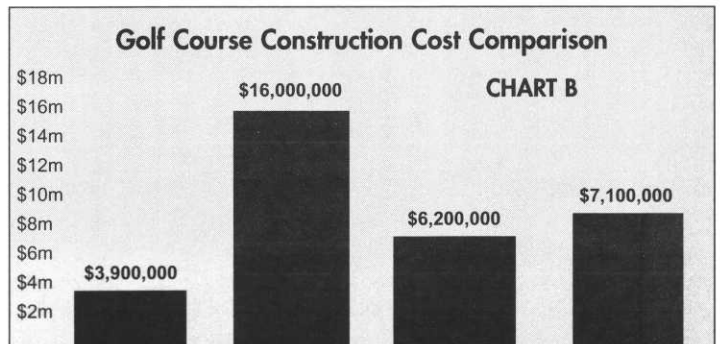
GVI has found there is a base level of core golf course construction items and then there are items added to the costs in the way of amenities and upgrades, much like buying a car and going from the base to the luxury model. When you eventually get down to the construction cost of the golf course itself there is a relatively tight range.

To begin, we will first present a typical breakdown of the total project cost of an upscale golf development. Next we will focus on the costs associated with just the golf course construction, known as the hard (or direct costs). Then we will provide a range of specific cost items that can

be easily segmented from a cost budget. Finally, we will discuss the impacts of other cost components such as the clubhouse and soft (or indirect) costs.

When first looking at a golf course construction budget we believe it is helpful to consider the cost breakdown among the golf course, building improvements, equipment, and soft costs. Chart A provides the reader with an illustration of how we see the allocation of costs involved in the construction of an entire golf course project.

The chart illustrates that actual construction of the golf course typically accounts for 50 to 55 percent of the total cost (excluding land). Golf course construction includes grading and site preparation costs, and grow-in (also known as maturation). As an example, assume that the total project costs are \$14 million, based on typical ratios, approx-



imately \$7.0 to \$7.7 million of the total cost might be allocated to golf course construction.

So how much does it actually cost to construct an upscale golf course? We have discussed in general those items that make up a construction budget. Now we will discuss in more detail the costs associated with just the golf course construction. Hard construction costs, typically include the following categories:

- * Grading and Mobilization
- * Drainage
- * Rough & Finish Shaping
- * Green Construction
- * Tee Construction
- * Bunker Construction
- * Grassing and Seed Preparation
- * Bridge Construction
- * Cart Path Construction
- * Irrigation System
- * Lakes and Water Features, and
- * Grow-In Period (Maturation)

(Continued on Page 25)

Construction Costs-

(Continued from Page 24)

Chart B illustrates the range of actual golf course construction costs (rounded to the nearest \$100,000) for an upscale project, along with the median and the mean.

The chart demonstrates a wide range in costs from a low of \$3,900,000 to a high of \$16,100,000. Reasons for this wide range generally come down to several factors. The topography of the site is one factor - a hilly site may require a developer to cut and fill and move large quantities of dirt, whereas a gently rolling site may require very little earth movement.

On the other hand, a flat site may also require a lot of grading to improve the design, playability and aesthetic appearance of the golf course. The data reveals the cost associated with grading can range from as low as \$300,000 to as high as \$6,000,000 or more for one 18-hole golf course. That said, when grading is removed from the equation, the range tightens from about \$3.0 million to \$9.0 million, and a median of about \$5.0 million. Other major factors can include the amount and quality of the irrigation system, number of bunkers, quantity and quality of water features, and the amount of drainage.

Some other, and easily isolated cost items include the cost of cart path construction, the irrigation system, grow-in period, and (although not a hard cost) the golf course architect fee.

The range of several key construction items varies. Most notable is the cost of the irrigation system and golf course design fee. The low-end of the range is a typical course in say the northeast or northwest, where extensive turf coverage is not required. The upper end range is indicative of an upscale course in an arid climate such as Southern California or Arizona.

We also mentioned the golf course design (or architect's) fee. This item also indicates a wide range, with the low-end indicative of the local or regional architect, and the upper end indicative of a name designer, such as Tom Fazio, Jack Nicklaus, or Greg Norman. The range of cart path construction and grow-in is somewhat less variable and more consistent from project to project.

Although we have focused primarily on golf course construction, when reviewing a construction budget it is also important to recognize the fact that not all budgets are alike, and contain a variety of other cost components.

In addition to the golf course, most golf projects are developed with a clubhouse, and every golf course requires a maintenance facility. Other building improvements can include the cart barn, remote restrooms, snack bar, starters kiosk, and irrigation pump house. Also included in building improvements are the costs of FF&E, maintenance equipment, and the golf cart fleet (if not leased).

The other aspect of construction is the soft costs (permits, engineering, architect and design fee, construction

management, financing costs, and contingency). Both building costs and soft costs can vary greatly between projects.

For example, a modest but well-appointed clubhouse (say 15,000 square feet) at a private club may cost \$3.0 million to construct. However, a clubhouse of similar quality but 35,000 to 40,000 square feet may cost \$6.0 to \$8.0 million. When looking at soft costs, a golf course constructed on the coast may be considerably different than one constructed in an inland area, as the coastal project will likely undergo a lengthy and costly entitlement process.

Additionally, a Jack Nicklaus or Tom Fazio designed course will cost far greater than a lesser-known local or regional architect. Finally, another aspect not yet discussed is the cost of off- and on-sites, or roads, infrastructure and utilities. These items are often site and location specific, so we have excluded them from this discussion, however, they must also be considered when reviewing a cost budget.

So, what is the cost to develop an upscale golf project? When looking at the core golf course construction cost, there is a relatively consistent range. However, it is important to recognize that variances come into play, such as site/location specific items and owner/developer preferences. What we have provided are useful guides and ratios, and a breakdown of specific cost items, so one can be more informed when reviewing a construction cost budget.



Expanded Membership Opportunity for Golf Course Employees!

During its recent meeting, GCSAA's Board of Directors approved changes to the Associate membership classification, making it more accessible to all golf course employees!

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GCSAA Announces Internet Project

The project, entered into jointly with Raleigh, N.C.-based XS Inc. will begin with a "soft" launch in a pilot mode so that GCSAA and XS Inc. can work with buyers and sellers to develop the best possible service prior to making a decision on a full-scale Internet commerce presence. The pilot program will involve a limited number of product categories and the use of focus groups to collect feedback on the initiative. GCSAA will undertake a "launch, learn and re-launch" approach, continually making improvements based on feedback from its members.

"This service is just a continuation of GCSAA's philosophy that began in 1996 to employ the World Wide Web to become a more effective and efficient organization and offer the same for its members," said GCSAA President Tommy Witt, CGCS. "As part of the due diligence process, we are taking a cautious approach to the implementation of Internet commerce services. However, with the assistance of our members, industry partners and XS Inc., we believe this project will significantly advance the profession and the industry."

"From the outset, our goal was to provide a 24/7 environment that enables superintendents to execute their jobs in a more efficient manner," said GCSAA Immediate Past President R. Scott Woodhead, chairman of the GCSAA Internet Strategy Committee. "This project is the next step toward that end."

XS Inc. brings a strong set of complementary and proven capabilities to GCSAA. It has operated commerce sites in the agricultural market since 1999, including www.xsag.com and the online buying portions of www.ecotton.com and www.agriculture.com. XS Inc. specializes in building neutral public exchanges, as well as custom-developed private exchanges that can support distribution needs and relationships.

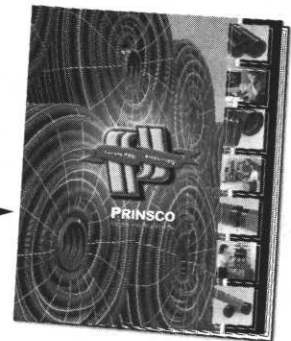
"We are enthusiastic about our selection by GCSAA to be its partner in this venture," said Harry Albert, director of XS Inc. Specialty Unit. "There is a high-level of mutual respect for what the two organizations represent. We are impressed by GCSAA's efforts to bring increasing value to its membership, which includes superintendent purchasers and affiliate industry suppliers."

The timeline for implementation of the project will involve an industry meeting at GCSAA headquarters in Lawrence, Kan., on April 17, immediately followed by a series of activities to solicit industry participation. Subject to

the resolution of a few remaining contractual agreements. Evaluations from members, feedback from participating industry partners and survey input will be used to determine future steps.

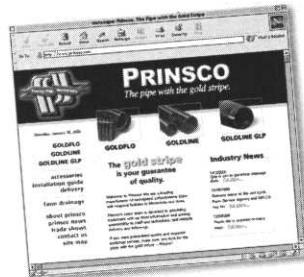
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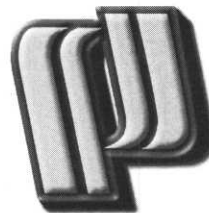
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February 27, 2001

MGCSA Board Meeting Highlights

Dr. Phil Larson, Associate Dean at the U of M sent a letter thanking the MGCSA for their support of the Turfgrass Extension position at the University. Paul Eckholm explained to the Board that the decision to assist with funding of this position came at the last MTGF meeting and it was necessary to move ahead with it at that time to avoid losing the candidate. A motion to split where the funds come from within the budget, 50% from research and 50% from general funds passed.

Eckholm handed out literature on the "Drive for the U" campaign that he has initiated and designed to increase exposure of the turfgrass working group at the University of Minnesota and the work that is done at the St. Paul Campus, as well as furthering the physical condition of the research area on campus. The campaign includes among other initiatives, a request from MGCSA members any donation from their clubs of equipment or supplies.

125 members were in attendance at the Hospitality Night in Dallas. Some members have said the cost for the Hospitality Night is becoming expensive. Affiliate dues and registration costs currently help pay for Hospitality Night. Schirck expresses that the Hospitality Night should be viewed as an opportunity to meet and talk to people in our profession.

The Conference & Education committee has discussed

changing the dates of the GCSAA regional seminars and possibly the Mini-Seminar to January instead of March.

Bade reports that his committee is considering finding a keynote speaker with a leadership/motivational presentation. He reports that arranging speakers has been going very well, several have been confirmed including, Dr. Rossi (Cornell), Brad Klein (Supt. News), Bob Vavrek (USGA), Jon Powell (U of M), Brian Horgan (U of M), Bill Larson (T &CC) to speak on his creek project, Karen Olson (Giants Ridge), and someone from the Raptor Center. Invitations have been sent to Dr. Watschke (PSU) and Reed McKenzie (USGA-Hazeltine).

Rick Traver reminds Board of the importance of writing articles for Hole Notes and encourages members to submit articles for publication.

Mike Brual shared samples of salary surveys and discussed the details, particularly with the course budget portion. Eckholm stated that a detailed survey would be the only effective way to gain budget numbers. Brual with work on detailed budget survey to present at next meeting. Rick Fredericksen handed out results of the seasonal staff wages survey and discussed the details.

Eckholm asks Board if we should give members the choice of not printing personal phone numbers and addresses in the Membership Roster. Discussion followed with a motion being made to exclude home information from the roster.

Mike Brower reports that negotiations are underway with current MTGF Executive Director Larry Vetter, on a new employment agreement. Brower reported that Bade and his committee are doing an excellent job on lining-up speakers for the annual conference. He also reported that the annual conference has been changed to a Tuesday-Thursday format for several reasons, including to avoid a sharp decline in attendance on Friday afternoon. Discussions continue at MTGF meetings with regard to implementing strategies to increase attendance at the annual conference, most notably by affiliations other than the MGCSA. Brower reported that the Minneapolis Hilton will again serve as the official hotel for the annual meeting.

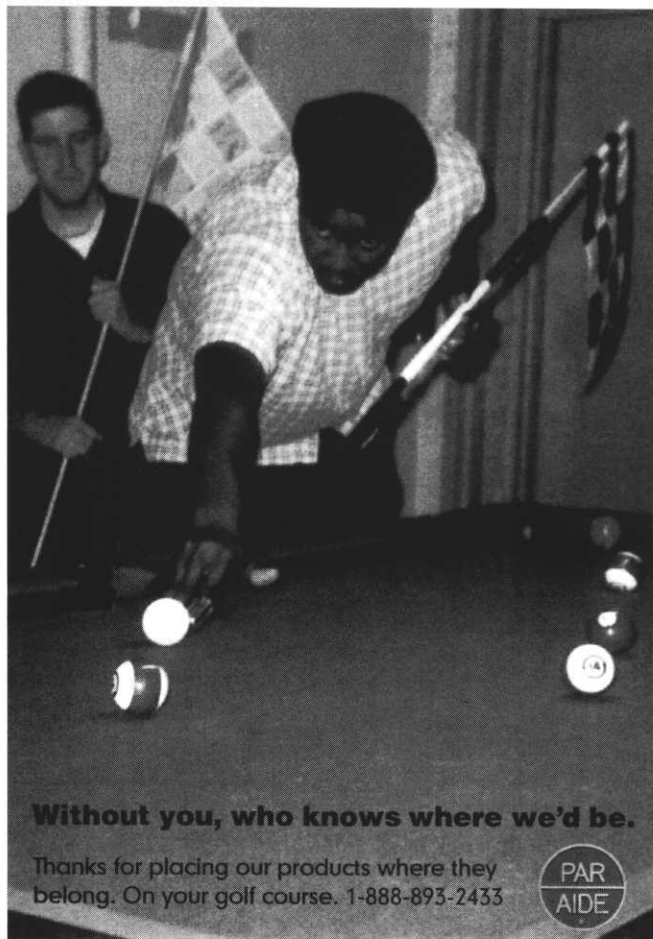
Dr. Jon Powell (U of M) reported that the 2001 Field Day will be held on Thursday, July 26. Registration will begin at 8:00 AM with the program beginning at 9:00 a.m. The tour will begin at 9:30 a.m. and run through 12:30 p.m. Powell reported that there are efforts underway to make the experience broader with the addition of a tour for arborists.

Research funds have been distributed to the USGA-\$2,000, GCSAA Friends of the Foundation-\$5,000, O.J. Noer Center-\$1,000, GCSAA- \$1,000.

The Minnesota Turfgrass Research Benefit Week takes place June 4-8, 2001.

Dr. Jon Powell noted that he is looking for clubs to participate in a dollar spot study. He would also like construct a USGA green for research at the U of M, and will be seeking assistance from vendors and members on this project.

Jeff Johnson reported that the future strategy for awarding scholarships will emphasize less scholarships, and awarding only the most deserving people. Mike Nelson of Dakotah Ridge will be working on the Scholarship Scramble with him.



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