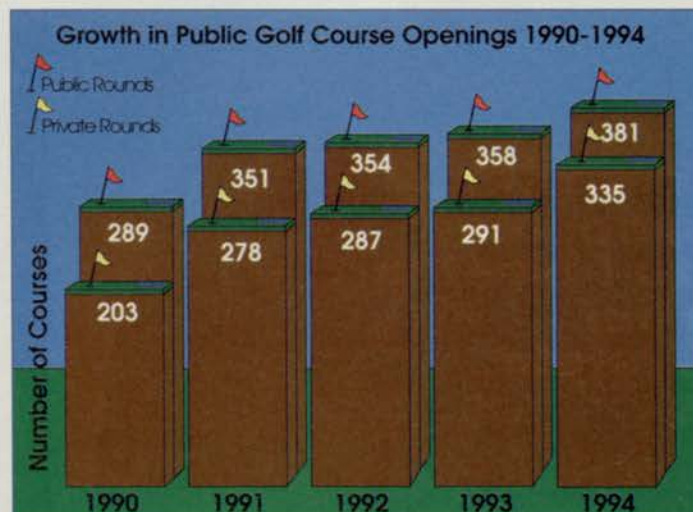


Public course supers are urged to tell customers about golf's 'good' story



While the number of golf courses keeps growing, the public—including a lot of golfers—still has concerns.

■ The number of U.S. golf courses continues to grow, but the number of golfers and the number of rounds they played the past five years remained flat.

Golf course superintendents can spark golf's renewed growth by being more proactive in their communities, by inviting school groups to their courses and by speaking to local civic groups and clubs, said an official with the National Golf Foundation, Jupiter, Fla.

Richard Norton, the foundation's vice president of operations, told about 300 superintendents here

this past February that the aging of baby boomers favors golf's continued popularity into the foreseeable future. But to continue growing, golf must address issues troubling some of the American public. Superintendents can help in this education program, particularly at public courses. That's

where golf shows its greatest future growth potential.

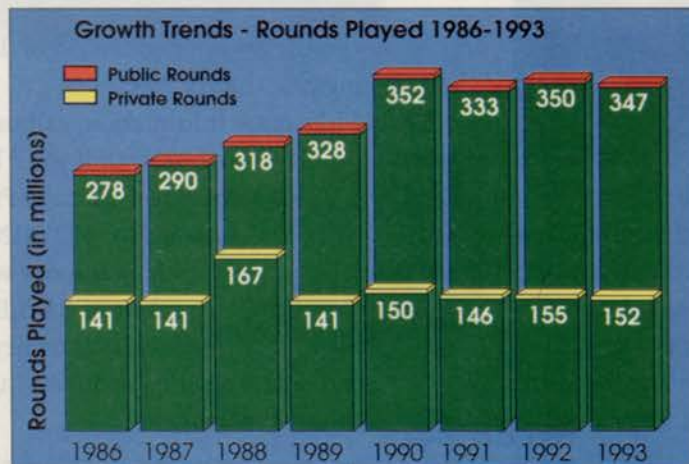
"Public golf is where the action is," said Norton at the GCSSA Conference.

For example, 80% of the nation's 24.5 million golfers play on public courses. Of the 381 new courses (or courses undergoing expansions) in 1994, 335 were public.

"Public golf is the entry point for millions and millions of Americans to the game of golf," said Norton, adding that even here, there are some glitches.

For instance, only 21% of public golfers are women compared to 33% at private clubs.

"We in the golf industry must do a better job of welcoming and developing female golfers at our public courses," said Norton.



Also, 54% of public golfers describe themselves as occasional golfers compared to just 10% for private club members.

"We must also look again at existing players, the large number of people who come in

Only 21 percent of public golfers are women, compared to 33 percent at private clubs, according to NGF research.



Richard Norton:
'We tend to be perceived as exclusive.'

and out of the game over a period of years," said Norton. "We have to find ways to get these people to play more rounds."

Although public golfers outnumber private golfers by almost four to one, they spend far less per golfer to play the game.

This is evidence that golf is

not exclusive, said Norton.

The NGF estimates that public golfers spent \$530 each, generating \$10.4 billion this past season. Private golfers spent about \$2,610 and totalled \$4.7 billion.

Another misconception that superintendents can help correct is the view that golf is "environmentally insensitive." This could be tougher.

NGF surveys show a surprisingly large number of golfers aren't convinced that golf courses are, themselves, "good for the environment." In fact, 41% of public golfers and 22% of private golfers described themselves as neutral to the issue. And, 23% of both categories feel that golf courses use too much water, while 34% of public golfers and 23% of private golfers feel that fertilizers and chemicals used on golf courses pollute lakes and streams.

Again Norton called on superintendents at public courses to reach out to golfers and non-golfers alike in the communities in which they work, and help deliver golf's positive message.

—Ron Hall