

Why golf entertainment centers are booming

| Advisers of the Year

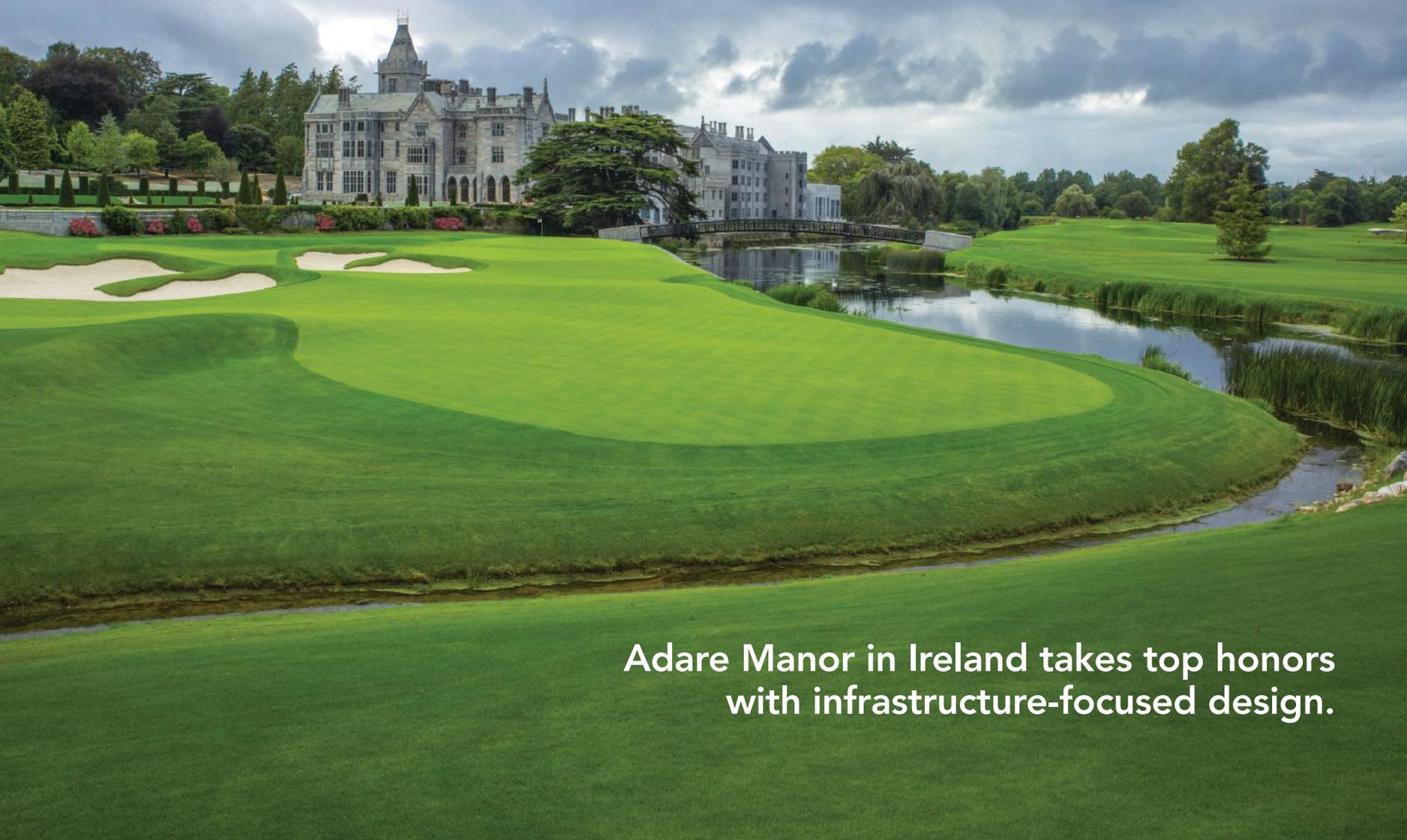
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Number of golfers increased in 2018, but poor weather blamed for drop in rounds

The health of the golf industry may be trending up after several years of decline. While the total number of rounds played decreased slightly in 2018 for the third straight year, bad weather was the primary cause, according to the National Golf Foundation's (NGF) annual Golf Industry Report.

Pellucid Corp., an independent industry analyst, also found that the weather in 2018 was largely to blame for the drop in rounds. Pellucid founder Jim Koppenhaver said that it was the worst year for weather in the past eight years but that utilization improved from 52.5 percent to 54 percent. Utilization measures the number of rounds played compared to the number of available rounds.

The average green fee increased by 0.8 percent to \$52, according to Pellucid. The median fee was \$44.

The NGF reported that the number of players rose and that off-course golf participation continued to increase. Off-course participation includes golf entertainment centers such as Topgolf, stand-alone driving ranges and computerized golf simulators. That market grew by almost 10 percent in 2018 to 23 million participants, 9.3 million of whom play off course exclusively.

As for traditional, on-course golfing, the annual survey found that 24.2 million Americans played in 2018, up a tick from 2017 but down from a peak of 30 million in 2003. Last year, 434 million rounds were played, down 4.8 percent from 2017 and below the 10-year median, which is about 458 million.

Golf course closures continued at a strong pace. There were 198.5 course closings, compared to only 12.5 openings of 18-hole-equivalent courses in 2018. That brings the current total to 16,693 courses at 14,613 facilities in the U.S., and 38,864 courses worldwide.

The Golf Industry Report pointed out



UDO KROENER/ADOBESTOCK

Rounds played (in millions)

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
458	466	469	456	434

An estimated 434 million rounds of golf were played across the U.S. in 2018, a 4.8% year-over-year decline. For many regions, 2018 was among the top 10 wettest years on record. The average weather-related fluctuation typically ranges between 2% and 3% either way, as Mother Nature has a major influence on a game played entirely outdoors.

Source: NGF Golf Industry Report 2019

that the current totals of roughly 16,000 courses and 24 million golfers are about on par with figures from 20 years ago, before the boom in popularity and course development.

Koppenhaver figures that the industry will reach equilibrium in nine years if the number of rounds remains flat.

“Rounds used to be tied with population growth, but that stopped in 2000,” Koppenhaver said at the PGA Merchandise Show in January. “Population growth is now being driven by diversity, which plays away from our base.”

He said the golf participation rate has dropped from a high of 12 percent to 7 percent. The Golf Industry Report said

golf participation is at 10 percent, which is higher than the numbers for basketball, tennis, baseball or skiing.

The NGF is a nonprofit trade associated founded in 1936. Its mission is to promote golf and provide members with information from its research team.

Chambers Bay reopens with renovated greens

Chambers Bay Golf Course has finally re-sodded its greens, five years after PGA players complained bitterly at the U.S. Open. The old fescue greens had also received negative feedback from regular customers, who complained about uneven surfaces.

In golf, it's important to choose your partner carefully.



Photo by Wood Sabold

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The \$230,000 project to replace the fescue with poa annua grass required closure of the publicly owned course for seven months.

Course operator KemperSports and Pierce County, Wash., which owns the track, coordinated with the United States Golf Association on the project after three greens developed turf health issues leading up to the U.S. Amateur Four-Ball Championship. (The event ended up being moved from 2019 to 2021).

KGMI Radio reported that Chambers Bay officials hope to be awarded another U.S. Open in the future and felt upgrading the greens was necessary in order to be considered.

When the Robert Trent Jones Jr. course opened in 2007, it was one of only a few courses in the U.S. with fescue greens. It has since been determined that poa annua is better suited to the climate at Chambers Bay, south of Tacoma, Wash.

PGA purchases Nextgengolf

The PGA of America has acquired Nextgengolf, a Boston-based player development company, as part of its efforts to grow the game, especially among younger players. Financial terms were not disclosed.



Kris Hart

Nextgengolf, which was founded by Kris Hart, conducts team-based golf tournaments and experiences for young adults, college students and high school students across the country. It also provides innovative digital content and platforms that support those efforts.

Designed to enhance golf's long-term growth, Nextgengolf also fills a generational gap by providing playing opportunities in urban markets that target millennial and Gen Z players.

Nextgengolf has three platforms: the

National High School Golf Association, the National Collegiate Club Golf Association and the Nextgengolf City Tour. It runs more than 200 team-based golf tournaments nationwide.

A PGA of America spokesperson said that while details are still being ironed out, the initial expectation is that the PGA of America brand will be licensed for use with Nextgengolf operations.

Texas resort to have Margaritaville theme

Jimmy Buffett's leisure-lifestyle hospitality company, Margaritaville Holdings, will open its first resort in Texas in 2020. A deal has been signed to convert La Torretta Lake Resort & Spa north of Houston.

The resort, which includes an 18-hole golf course managed by KemperSports, will close June 4 for a year-long renovation. The Golf Club at La Torretta will remain open during that time.

Slated to reopen in the fall of 2020, the venue will be called Margaritaville Lake Resort, Lake Conroe. Two of the dining facilities will be rebranded as Buffett concept restaurants: a LandShark Bar & Grill and a 5 O'clock Somewhere Bar & Grill. There will be 360 guest rooms, a tennis center, a spa, multiple pools and a 45,000-square-foot conference center.

The par-71 course measures 6,900 yards and was designed by Dave Marr, Jay Riviere and Jeffrey Blume. It opened in 2008. Gensler is the project architect, and McCarthy Building Cos. is the general contractor.

Golf-club vending machine gets first try in Florida

Cadi recently unveiled an automated golf club kiosk at The Legends at Orange Lake Resort in Florida, where it has just finished its first introductory use.

The Cadi kiosk is a vending machine that allows a customer to use a credit card to rent a club or clubs to try out. If you like the club, keep it and your credit card will be

charged the purchase price. If the club isn't for you, you can return it and only be charged \$10 for the trial. And if you don't like the first club you try, return it to the kiosk and you can try another

within the rental period at no additional cost.

Participating manufacturers include Titleist, TaylorMade, Callaway, Cleveland and Scotty Cameron.





Drones are helping make course operations more efficient.

An eye in the sky

A few innovators are using drones to cut water use and pinpoint turf issues. Some predict that use of the technology will grow rapidly. **BY ROBERT J. VASILAK**

Most every weekday, just before noon, Kevin Hauschel carries his drone to its designated launch site, attaches its propellers and sends an all-systems-go text to a pilot more than 2,500 miles away. Promptly, the drone launches and begins its GPS-programmed, 20-minute flight across Meadow Club's 18-hole golf course in Fairfax, Calif. It's a routine that might, for some, get tedious. But Hauschel, golf course superintendent at the San Francisco-area club, watches in wonder. Every time his drone takes wing, he sees something most other superintendents cannot: the future.

On the rare occasions when drones are operating at U.S. golf properties, they're usually making the flyovers we watch on YouTube. After storms, drones might be dispatched to search for downed trees, broken fences and other damage, or to identify holes that may not be playable. Superintendents sometimes use them to

document the progress of a renovation project. The Secret Service has considered using them to provide "spy-in-the-sky" security for the president when he's golfing.

What Hauschel is doing, however, is completely different. His drone is outfitted not only with a camera but also with sensors and other sophisticated equipment that can measure the amount of moisture in Meadow Club's soil and diagnose the health of its grasses and plants. When the drone completes its mission, it flies back to its launch site and automatically uploads the data it has collected to Greensight Agronomics, a Boston-based company that operates what it describes as a "next-generation agricultural intelligence platform."

Within hours, Greensight digests Meadow Club's data and posts an analysis, which Hauschel can access via a computer or smartphone. The analysis is part

of an undertaking that Hauschel calls "still mostly experimental" but capable of radically changing the way golf courses are maintained. It enables him to make informed decisions about where and when to water and fertilize, and it spots diseases before they become visible from the ground.

"I learn something new about our golf course every day," Hauschel said. "It's darned near bulletproof technology. It allows me to stay ahead of problems."

It also helps Meadow Club save money. Hauschel began working with Greensight in the spring of last year, and within months he was able to move a member of his irrigation team to a different job. While he thinks it will take two or three seasons to fully determine the cost savings, he's knows the club is getting a return on its investment.

"We know we've saved on water," he said. "Last year we had the hottest sum-

mer on record, and we had our best irrigation efficiency ever.”

Although drone technology has been used by farms and vineyards for years, it's only slowly being adopted by golf courses. Thomas Bastis, one of the PGA Tour's competition agronomists, estimates that fewer than 100 U.S. golf properties are deploying drones to monitor their turf conditions.

“This is emerging technology,” said Bastis, a former superintendent of California Golf Club in San Francisco. “People are just starting to find a comfort level with it.”

Bastis said he thinks most superintendents still view drones the way people once viewed the first airplanes, the first automobiles and the first computers. They see them as curiosities that aren't particularly relevant to their livelihoods. But that's not how he and Hauschel and other early adopters view them. They're tapping drones for all they're worth, and they believe that the rest of America's superintendents will eventually follow.

“If you aren't flying,” Hauschel said, “you're falling behind.”

Partnerships pay off

While Meadow Club's drone flights are controlled by GreenSight, Hauschel keeps his eyes on the drone whenever it's in the air. He's obliged to because the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) prohibits commercial drones from flying without ground-level supervision by a licensed pilot.

When it comes to adding a drone to a course-maintenance program, FAA certification is just one hurdle to clear. The other major one is the expense. A drone like Meadow Club's costs thousands of dollars, and the required insurance brings an additional cost.

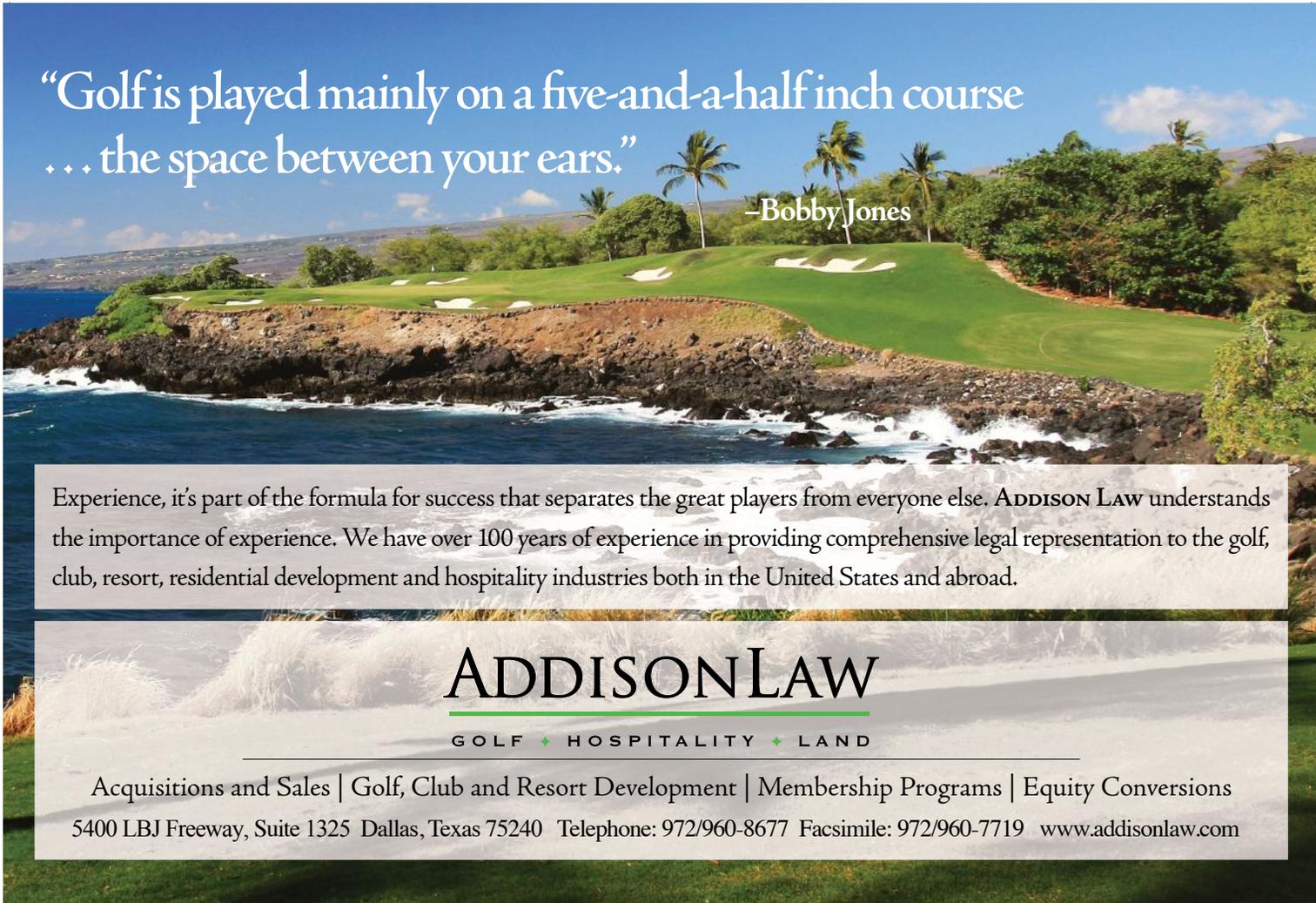
Those obstacles may lead superintendents to partner with providers such as Drone Elevations, MapGage, NexDrone, Summit Drones and Texas Drone Co. Hauschel considered such options, but he chose GreenSight because it offered

a complete turnkey package, including the drone, the cameras and sensors, the analytics platform, the cloud-based data storage, FAA compliance and the insurance. GreenSight, which has 64 U.S. customers and 11 in Canada, typically leases its equipment and services for \$825 a month.

But most of all, Hauschel said, he chose GreenSight because it offered daily flights, which are crucial to reducing Meadow Club's annual \$300,000 water bill. The data he receives is always up to date, so he can target areas in need instead of irrigating indiscriminately.

“In California, water is gold,” he said. “This technology has the potential to change how we think about irrigation.”

Water savings may be the most significant benefit that drone technology offers to golf courses. Last year, The Toro Co. became a minority investor in GreenSight, and Bastis said engineers from all the major irrigation companies are testing ways to integrate their systems with imaging data collected by drones.



“Golf is played mainly on a five-and-a-half inch course
... the space between your ears.”

—Bobby Jones

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It's possible that in the future, Toro and GreenSight may integrate their technologies so seamlessly that Toro's irrigation systems would operate autonomously. Superintendents would be free to tend to other matters.

Something similar might eventually happen in regard to the application of fungicides and pesticides. Today, grounds crews often spread chemicals across entire fairways. But if a drone can identify a problem area and communicate its exact location (perhaps to a self-driving, GPS-connected sprayer), the use of chemicals could be greatly reduced.

"We're revolutionizing how maintenance can be done and turfgrass can be managed," said Jason VanBuskirk, GreenSight's vice president of sales and marketing. "Superintendents who understand the data that's being delivered can do more than they ever imagined."

Overcoming obstacles

One of these days, Meadow Club's drone

might be able to tap the full range of its capabilities.

GreenSight's drones can fly autonomously. They can be housed in canopies that double as charging stations, and they can be programmed to make flights automatically, weather permitting, at whatever time a superintendent wants them to. Instead of watching his drone make its appointed rounds, Hauschel could be doing something else.

But the FAA won't let him, because it isn't convinced that remote-controlled drones will work as advertised. GreenSight has petitioned for a waiver on the regulations that prohibit autonomous flights, and VanBuskirk hopes to get it sometime this year. The thing is, he's already been waiting for months.

Even without the waiver, though, GreenSight expects to have 2,000 customers within the next five to 10 years.

"It's a process," said VanBuskirk, a former superintendent. "I'm happy that younger generations of superintendents are coming into the business, because

younger people accept the technology right away. They have an affinity for it."

Given the golf industry's resistance to change, it's no surprise that more superintendents haven't embraced drone technology. But in the 21st century, time waits for no one. Consider how quickly email supplanted snail mail, and how digital maps have made paper maps nearly obsolete. When digital tools enable people to do their jobs more effectively, they're adopted quickly.

"The golf courses that are using this technology are in the innovator stage," Hauschel said. "We're just learning how to use it. We still have to prove that the technology works, and that's the hardest part."

The handwriting is on the wall, however. In an era when lowering the cost of course maintenance could spell the difference between black ink and red ink on a balance sheet, operators are looking to drone technology. And a generation from now, superintendents may be wondering how they ever got along without it.

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Why everyone's investing in golf entertainment centers



Arcade-style driving ranges and high-tech simulators are introducing golf to new customers. But how can traditional golf courses take advantage of the trend?

BY JIM TRAGESER

On a typical day, Del Mar Golf Center is busy with golfers and even some non-golfers. The driving range and teaching facility has long been one of the primary training centers for golfers in the San Diego area, including PGA Tour professionals such as Pat Perez.

But 18 months ago the facility added Toptracer, and the new technology has expanded its clientele base.

“This is more for groups. Half of them won’t even be golfers,” said Matt Clay, the facility’s general manager. “It’s a different experience. You can go with your friends,

Matt Clay, general manager of the Del Mar Golf Center in Del Mar, Calif., with the popular new Toptracer technology in use at the facility.

play golf, enjoy a beer. It complements our existing range . . . doesn’t steal from it.”

Toptracer was developed to make it easier for viewers to follow the flight of shots when watching golf matches on TV. But Topgolf, which owns the technology, has adapted it for driving ranges and is quickly adding facilities across the U.S. and in Europe.

"I've very happy with how we've done," said Clay, who installed six Toptracer bays at Del Mar Golf Center. "We've been able to expand our food and beverage service because of the new clientele, and we expanded our café."

That's not unusual. Topgolf has 49 facilities in the U.S., and many of them have set records for alcohol sales in their areas.

Customers are more focused on the social experience than on improving their golf game, prompting Topgolf to adopt the slogan, "Creating moments that matter for everyone."

It's that wide appeal that has caught the interest of other companies.

ClubCorp acquired Topgolf competitor BigShots Golf in the fall. Dave Pillsbury, CEO of ClubCorp, said Topgolf has proved that the model works.

"These golf entertainment concepts have provided the marketplace the lowest-friction environment to be exposed to golf," he said. "All you need is a credit card, and you can enjoy the magic of our sport."

BigShots is also marketing golf simulators. Companies such as TruGolf, aboutGolf, Golfzon, Full Swing and SkyTrak offer an extension of golf training and coaching as well as an arcade-like experience translatable to non-golfing venues.

At Del Mar Golf Center, the arcade-style games included in the Toptracer software, such as closest to the pin, longest drive and target practice, are increasing business more than serious golfers looking to improve their game.

"We don't compete against the golf courses in San Diego," Clay said. "We're competing with the beach and other things a family can go do together."

Welcome to golf entertainment

Golf, a sport grounded in centuries of tradition, has been slow to adapt to change. But interactive driving ranges and computerized golf simulators are turning that stereotype on its ear. This new technology is creating new revenue streams and, maybe



most important, new avenues to attract non-golfers to the sport.

Topgolf, BigShots, Drive Shack (formerly American Golf Corp.) and other entrants into the golf entertainment center sector all feature some common elements: multi-deck driving ranges, computerized scoring, food and beverage service and big-screen TVs showing live sporting events.

In a 2017 interview in *Golf World* magazine, Topgolf's largest investor, Tom Dundon, compared golf entertainment centers to bowling centers.

"What's key is making the game accessible," he said. "You can just show up with nothing and start playing. Other than bowling, I can't think of another sport that offers that accessibility. I don't think golf was that way 10 years ago."

Golf entertainment centers aren't only competing against each other; they're also fighting for customers in an increasingly crowded entertainment market, with established family entertainment centers built around bowling alleys, miniature golf,

BigShots gives the experience of being inside a giant pinball machine with neon lights and loud music, brightly colored targets and sound effects to let players know when their ball has found a target.

go-karts, video arcades and newer entries such as rock climbing, trampoline centers and even ax-throwing.

All of them follow the basic blueprint established by Huish Family Fun Centers in the 1960s and boosted by Nolan Bushnell, the founder of Atari, when he started Chuck E. Cheese in 1977. They combine food and beverage service with a variety of active entertainment options where families and friends can have a shared experience.

Toptracer President Ben Sharpe said those examples of social entertainment are what his company is modeling.

"What you need to do is build a business that's sustainable, that gets people to want to come back again and again," Sharpe said.

He said the Topgolf team is constantly



looking at new ways to bring in new folks and to bring regulars back. In addition to a wide variety of regular activities at the venues, they present theme nights and special programs to excite people.

Keith Hamilton, president of Luby Publishing, which publishes Bowling Center Management and Entertainment Center News, said golf entertainment cen-

Topgolf customers are more focused on the social experience than on improving their golf game, which shaped the company's slogan: "Creating moments that matter for everyone."

ters have grabbed the attention of other family entertainment centers.

"You're going after an entertainment dollar. There's a whole world of entertainment out there," he said. "Topgolf seems like something that could be in competition."

Joe Poelking is the owner of a small chain of bowling centers in southwestern Ohio and a former board member of the Bowling Proprietors' Association of America. He said golf entertainment centers share the same traits that make family entertainment centers successful.

"If you go out and play a round of golf, you're looking at four or five hours," said Poelking, an avid golfer. "With Topgolf, [it's] two hours. When you go out and play golf, you're playing with three other people.

With Topgolf, you can have eight people at one of these stations playing a game and your colleagues are in the next booth."

Simulating golf

Golf simulators are a marriage of 1970s club-fitting swing monitors and golf video games. But today's technology offers an immersive re-creation of the golfing experience. With a 6-foot-high screen showing your ball heading onto a fairway, hitting into a simulator comes close to the feeling of playing golf.

Golf is far ahead of most participatory sports. Only running and bicycling, with their programmable treadmills and stationary bikes, have realism similar to what golf simulators offer.

And the same computer software that allows a golfer to play a simulated round at St. Andrews' Old Course or Pebble Beach Golf Links also allows for all kinds of arcade-style games, such as aiming for targets and longest drive contests. It can

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Dave Pillsbury, CEO of ClubCorp, said ClubCorp acquired BigShots as part of its strategy of growing the sport.

even provide live, head-to-head competition over the internet with players spread around the world.

Some simulators can be converted to other sports. Soccer, baseball and hockey players can practice kicking, pitching and shooting with systems from TruGolf and High Definition Golf.

TruGolf and aboutGolf both began their corporate lives as publishers of golf video games for home computers, and that gaming heritage is coming to the fore in their latest models.

Mason Jones, brand manager for TruGolf, said his company is looking to online games such as Fortnite for inspiration.

“No one probably wants to watch someone play click golf” on a video game console, he said. “But what if you have good

amateur players? Pretty soon we’ll have networks of players, and people will want to watch that.”

He points to NBA 2K, a simulation game that is attracting viewers.

“The Utah Jazz have their own gaming division: five-on-five NBA 2K teams. People go online and watch the Utah Jazz 2K team take on the Philadelphia 76ers 2K team,” he said.

Erik Anderson, executive chairman of TopGolf, has said his company looks more like a sports league than anything else.

“We get 80 million visits, more than any other major league sport except for baseball,” he said. “We are trying to broaden that, and Topgolf has the scale and scope to grow the game.”

But despite 74 million fans globally and 11 million people playing on Toptracer, Anderson still worries about the competition.

“Most people worry about their big competitors,” he said. “What keeps me up at night is, ‘How do I get kids off Fortnite?’”

Anderson believes in golf’s social interaction and the act of hitting something.

“Topgolf aspires to be a brand that you can’t live without,” he said. “We are trying to put golf at the center of this connected sports and entertainment place.”

Topgolf backed that up with its 2016 acquisition of the multiplayer online World Golf Tour game for PCs and mobile devices. And the company announced at the 2019 CES Consumer Technology Expo that the first Topgolf Lounge virtual gaming nightclub will open outside Seattle later this year.

Growing golf

Some people say the golf industry has reached a tipping point in regard to simulation technology and gaming.

“It’s now something you have to have to compete,” said Randall Henry, CEO at aboutGolf. “People expect to have an indoor experience. The outdoor golf course shouldn’t look at it as competition but look at it as an additional way to draw

people in.”

Henry said simulators’ popularity took off about 15 years ago when a new generation of computers and graphics cards made a big step forward in visual realism.

Now, not only are driving ranges buying his firm’s simulators but so are bowling alleys, cruise ships and family entertainment centers.

Henry said it’s in those non-golf venues that simulators have the greatest ability to attract new players to golf.

“They think they need to be a golfer to enjoy it, but they can have fun whether it’s their first time or they’re experienced,” he said. “It’s less intimidating than going out on a golf course.”

The challenge, though, is that in some areas, progressive businesses have already cornered the market.

Last summer, Mike Wieck and his family purchased two 9-hole tracks in Grand Island, Neb. He said they looked at installing simulators to provide an option during the winter when the courses were closed. But nearby was Bearded Buffalo Golf, an indoor facility with three aboutGolf simulators.

Nick Papke, owner of Bearded Buffalo, said he had been looking for an opportunity to start his own business, and the golf simulator facility filled a niche. He said his first year was busiest during the cold winter months.

“Not being a part of the golfing community made me a little nervous,” he said. “But they have welcomed me to the industry. I have had multiple owners and pros from courses in and around Grand Island come in to play.”

Bearded Buffalo is hardly alone. Both aboutGolf and TruGolf have sold simulators to standalone simulator venues across the country.

Golf entertainment centers and simulators are big and shiny. But the question for the golf industry is how – or if – they will affect the business of golf.

Pillsbury said the whole point of ClubCorp acquiring BigShots was to grow the sport.

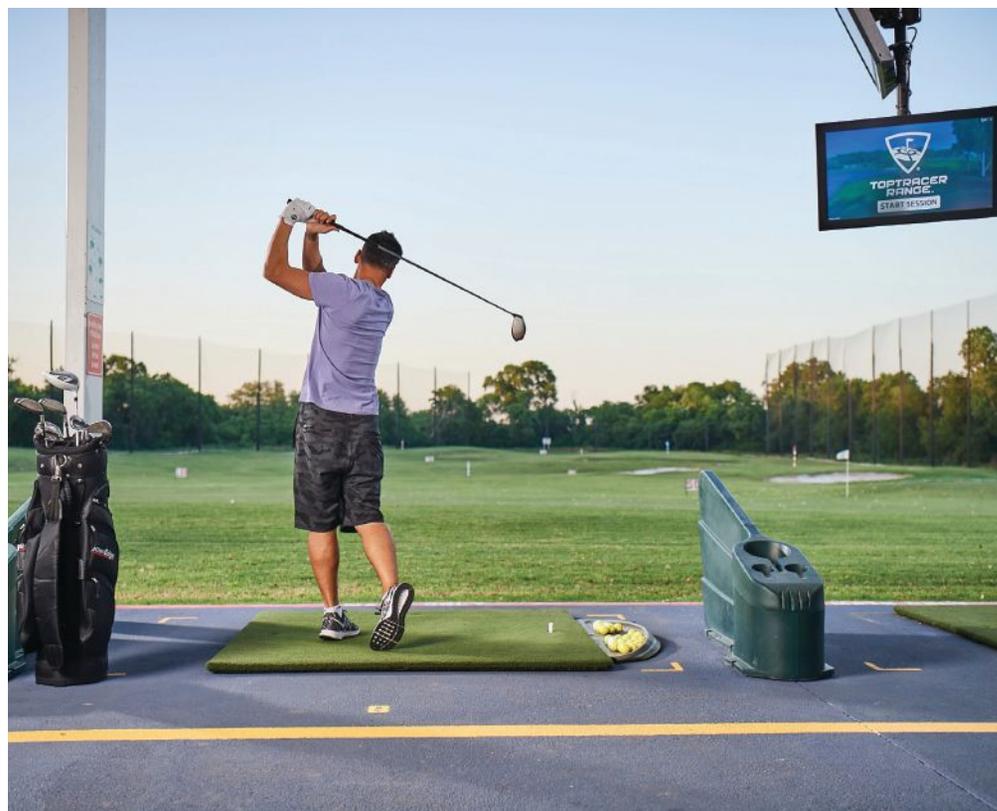
Tech for the serious golfer

Sean Mehaffey is a Toptracer regular at the Del Mar Golf Center for two reasons: the experience of using the technology and the data it gives him for his game.

A serious golfer, Mehaffey uses his Toptracer cell phone app to enter which clubs he hits and the number of shots. The cameras and software then track each shot. The relevant information is displayed on widescreen monitors, along with a visual representation of the balls' flight, and it calculates an average distance for each club used.

"Where else do you get numbers like this?" he asked. "Where else do you get this feedback?"

After warming up for a few minutes, he set the Toptracer device to simulate holes at Spyglass Hill Golf Course. He was still on the driving range in real life, but the widescreen monitor to one side showed him a simulated view from the first tee box at Spyglass. After he hit his drive, the software calculated where the shot would



have landed, and showed him what his second shot would look like.

"Normally [on a driving range], you'd hit your driver 10 times, then your irons," he said. "When will you ever do that on the golf course?"

Mehaffey said he finds the natural playing rhythm of hitting a drive, then hitting a fairway wood or long iron, followed by an approach shot, is a much better way to practice golf than just hitting a bucket of balls.

"The published data from Topgolf is that 52 percent of the customer base is interested in learning more about golf," he said. "Those folks would not normally set foot into a regular golf facility. There's too much friction. Our goal is conversion, ultimately, to membership. It's a funnel, and the top of the funnel just got a lot bigger."

Branching out

As aboutGolf's Henry points out, simulators are increasingly allowing golf to reach beyond the golf course or driving range.

Golf simulators are starting to show up in family entertainment centers and at bowling alleys, which are now calling

themselves bowling entertainment centers.

Hamilton, who publishes Entertainment Center News, said golf entertainment centers may need to offer more than just golf to thrive long term.

"If you're going to build a center, you're going to build it with the (family entertainment center) in mind," he said. "We are not seeing any traditional bowling alleys being built. They're building it with (family entertainment centers) in mind. It's like an entirely new industry sprung out of an old industry."

Nuresh Maredia wrote a recent white paper on entertainment centers for Hotel & Leisure Advisors. He said that golf entertainment centers are catering primarily to

young adults and older teens, but that they may want to expand their marketing down the road.

"I think eventually they will aim for families," Maredia said. "You don't need to know golf. You can just pick up a club and start swinging."

Pillsbury said the entire golf entertainment concept, both the interactive driving ranges and the simulators, are very much in flux, and things are changing rapidly.

"It's a little bit like the wild West," he said. "There's a rush going on. It's great for consumers, and it's great for golf. There are several competitors in the space, and everyone's moving quickly to tie up markets. It's an interesting time."

Ownership & Management



TROON recently closed another big deal, acquiring OB Sports. From left are OB Sports COO Phil Green, Troon CEO Tim Schantz and OB Sports President C.A. Roberts III.

SALES RECAP

Troon acquires OB Sports and Green Golf Partners

Troon, the world's largest golf management company, has added to its heft by acquiring OB Sports and Green Golf Partners in separate transactions. With the additions, Troon provides managed services to more than 475 18-hole-equivalents at 450-plus locations around the world.

OB Sports was the ninth-largest management company with more than 70 golf courses at the time of the acquisition on April 1. Green Golf Partners operated 18 public and private courses in five states when it was acquired on April 30.

OB Sports will continue to operate under its existing brand. Phil Green, chief operating officer of OB Sports, and C.A. Roberts III, president, will remain in their roles. Both were principals of the company along with Orrin Vincent, who founded OB Sports in 1972.

"We are truly excited about the new collaboration and for the opportunity to

advance and grow with Troon," Green said. "Troon's resources, combined with the company's worldwide marketing reach, will help our existing clients while also providing a wonderful opportunity for our OB Sports associates to grow and prosper."

OB Sports had been looking for a way to allow Vincent to retire and leave with his equity. Troon was looking for a way to expand its offerings.

Troon CEO Tim Schantz said OB Sports fills several niches at Troon that were previously not strengths.

"They do more daily fee and certainly have more municipal locations than we have inside the broader Troon brand," he said. "They're in the Pacific Northwest in a really heavy way, which is an area we're not in but are interested in. They do some maintenance-only contracts. They have some things that weren't exactly where we were focused. They have a construction

division where they can do projects like bunker renovations on an in-house basis. That's intriguing to us."

Most of OB's courses are in the West or Midwest. It manages two outside the U.S.: Royal Blue Golf Club in Nassau, the Bahamas; and Dumbarnie Golf Links in Scotland.

Green Golf Partners strengthens Troon's presence in the Midwest. The company is based in Indianapolis and has courses in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Wisconsin and Florida. Matt McIntee, a former executive with Crown Golf, founded the company in 2011.

"The addition of Green Golf Partners, combined with Troon's existing portfolio in the Midwest, will serve as the catalyst to opening a new Troon office in Chicago, designed to service current and future clients throughout the region," Schantz said.

McIntee and other Green Golf Partner execs will continue to serve their existing client base.

These latest deals follow Troon's acquisition of Boston-based RealFood Consulting in February and the July 2018 purchase of Cliff Drysdale Management, the nation's largest tennis management company. Troon previously acquired Honours Golf and Caddiemaster.

Schantz said the deals were driven by the caliber of people.

"One strategy we have is building a company that's filled with great talent and great people, making sure you have the best talent to deliver your management services," he said.

Schantz, who took over as CEO of Troon on April 1, said OB Sports and other Troon brands will not bid on the same contracts, as business development efforts will be coordinated. OB Sports will maintain its office, which is across the street from Troon's corporate office.

Arcis closes deal for Dominion's five remaining courses in Texas

Arcis Golf in April purchased Dominion Golf Group's remaining properties, pick-



Blake Walker

ing up five new Texas courses. The acquisition brings Arcis' total portfolio to 70 courses.

The newly acquired courses are Onion Creek Club, River Place Country Club and Twin Creeks Country Club (all in the Austin area), along with Lantana Golf Club in Dallas and

Dominion Country Club in San Antonio.

Arcis Golf was founded in 2013 by

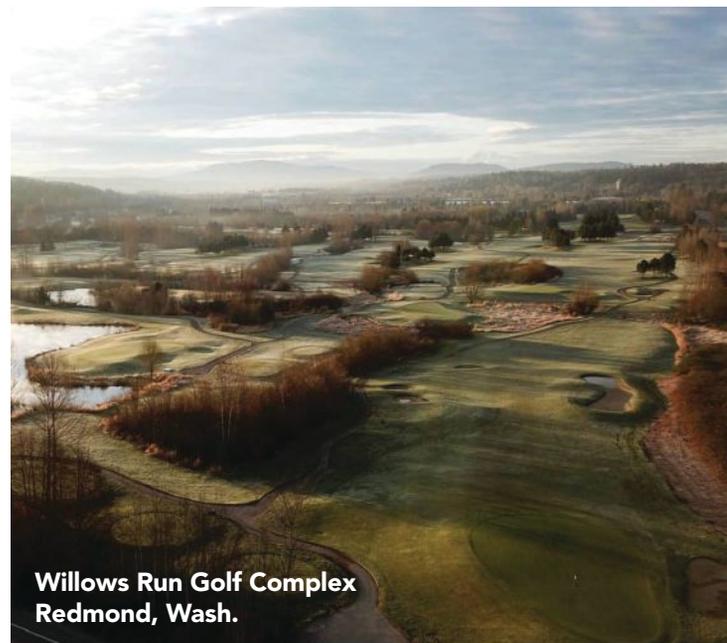
Blake Walker, who continues to lead the company as CEO. It began by acquiring the three courses of BrightStar Golf, and after a series of individual course purchases, bought CNL Lifestyle's 46 clubs in September of 2014.

Dominion was founded in May 2006 by Steven Held and was headquartered in Austin. Its portfolio grew to six clubs at one point, but Dominion sold one of its properties, Bridlewood Golf Club in Dallas, to Advance Golf Partners in 2017.

Paul Allen course sells for \$11.3 million

A multicourse golf center co-founded and developed 25 years ago by the late billionaire Paul Allen was sold in March.

Access Golf sold the Willows Run Golf



Willows Run Golf Complex
Redmond, Wash.

Complex in Redmond, Wash., to Sasada Sports International for \$11.3 million.

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Access Golf is a subsidiary of Vulcan Inc., the holding corporation that managed Allen's business and charitable interests before he died last year.

Allen, a co-founder of Microsoft, and his former brother-in-law, Brian Patton, bought the 296 acres on which the club was built for \$1.5 million in 1993.

Mike Whitton, the San Diego managing partner for Troutman Sanders LLP, represented Sasada Sports in the deal. Whitton said the purchase was being negotiated with Vulcan last year before Allen passed away.

Willows Run includes two 18-hole courses, a 9-hole par-3 course, a miniature golf course and two clubhouses.

N.J. township spends \$11.2M on country club

The former Rock Spring Country Club has been purchased by the township of West Orange, N.J., for \$11.2 million.

The acquisition will keep the 138-acre site as open space — with the 18-hole golf course open for public play for at least two years. It will be financed with a \$12 million bond sale.

Rock Springs Country Club merged with Montclair Golf Club three years ago, and earlier this year the unified club decided to sell the Rock Spring property.

Township officials have hired KemperSports to run the course as a public track for the next two years while long-term plans for the property are determined.

OTHER SALES

■ A group of current and former members of Cleveland Country Club purchased the Shelby, N.C., club. The sale price was not disclosed. The member group formed a nonprofit entity to acquire and run the club.

■ The Walton County, Florida Board of County Commissioners in March approved the purchase of the 192-acre DeFuniak Springs Country Club, a private club, for \$48,000.



PHOTO BY DAVE SANSOM/COURTESY OF TROON

MANAGEMENT RECAP

■ **Billy Casper Golf (BCG)** has been hired to operate the city-owned Stonetree Golf Club in Killeen, Texas, the second Texas course for the Virginia-based company.

Under a five-year deal, the city will pay BCG \$90,000 annually to run daily operations at the 7,200-yard, par-72 course, with additional bonuses offered for meeting certain performance thresholds.

The course has had an average annual operating loss of \$318,000 during the past five years, according to local media reports.

■ **Troon Privé** signed deals to manage two private clubs in Kentucky and Georgia. Hunting Creek Country Club near Louisville, Ky., opened in 1964, with the initial track designed by a club member. The course was updated by Arthur Hills in 1989, with a full renovation by Spencer Holt in 2010. The club became member-owned in 1972 when the members purchased it from its founding partners, V.V. Cooke and Paul Semonin.

The Standard Club, a private club in the Atlanta suburb of Johns Creek, Ga., was founded in 1867 and relocated in 1987 to its current north-Atlanta address. The club's 18-hole golf course was designed

by Arthur Hills and opened for member play in 1987. Golf course architect Mike Riley redesigned the course in 2005.

■ **KemperSports** has finalized a management contract with the Oneida Nation to manage the tribal-owned Thornberry Creek at Oneida in Green Bay, Wis. The 27-hole property is the official course of the Green Bay Packers and hosts the Thornberry Creek LPGA Classic.

Thornberry Creek includes a 68,000-square-foot clubhouse with a sports pub and grill and multiple banquet venues.

■ The owner of Royal Manchester Golf Links in Mount Wolf, Pa., has hired **Brown Golf** to run the course.

Royal Manchester is the fourth property Brown has added to its portfolio in the past 15 months. It now operates 28 courses.

John Brown, CEO of Brown Golf, said the firm plans immediate upgrades in the course's booking technology to allow for text-based and web chat booking, as well as interactive voice booking.

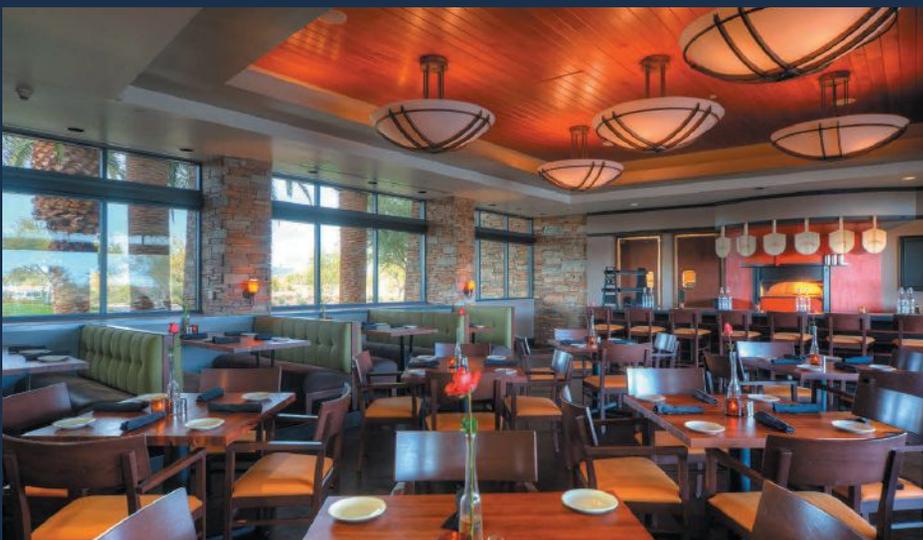
The par-72 course is owned by Talen Energy. It was designed by Timothy Freeland and opened in 2010. It is 20 miles from Brown Golf's corporate headquarters in Camp Hill, Pa.



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Moving toward a seller's market

Prices are gradually rising, which could slow redevelopment of golf course land.

BY JIM TRAGESER

It wasn't too long ago that bargain seekers were scooping up golf clubs and that developers were converting courses into residential lots. While there are still some bargains to be had, the market is shifting in favor of sellers, albeit very slowly.

The capitalization rate strengthened in 2018, with an average cap rate of 10.1 percent, compared to 10.6 percent the prior year, according to an annual survey by the Society of Golf Appraisers (SGA). The net income multiplier also improved, moving from 8.2 to 8.6.

Earning potential is the strongest factor in determining what a buyer is willing to pay, said Ralph Brekan, a real estate appraiser with the Brekan Nava Allen Group.

"The typical buyers are looking for properties that are either seasoned – that have a stabilized property with \$4 million in gross revenue or above – or upside down properties that are mismanaged and can be turned around," he said.

Doug Main, executive vice president of the real estate services firm CBRE, prepared the annual golf course sales survey for SGA. He said there is a slight increase in what buyers are paying compared to a course's earning potential. He emphasized that conditions remain quite strong overall, with the average income growth rate of 2.9 percent outpacing the expense growth rate of 2.3 percent.

"Golf has struggled for a number of years, but over the past few years it has

appreciably improved," Main said.

He said 2019 should be about the same for investors as 2018.

Larry Hirsh, president of Golf Property Analysts and a member of SGA, said he, too, sees a calm year ahead.

"Gross revenue multiples and cap rates and things like that are still fairly stable, and it just depends on how a property is performing," Hirsh said.

He cautioned against relying on reports that list average or mean prices for golf course sales.

"That's a very deceptive metric," he said, "because it doesn't really measure the common denominators."

Reported sale prices can vary wildly year to year depending on what is on the mar-



SGA Survey of Golf Course Financials

	2019	2018
Overall Capitalization Rate (Avg.)	10.1%	10.6%
Net Income Multiplier (Avg.)	8.6	8.2
Discount Rate (Avg.)	14.0%	14.1%
Income Growth Rate (Avg.)	2.9%	2.8%
Expense Growth Rate (Avg.)	2.3%	2.6%
Marketing Period (Avg.)	9.5 mos.	9.3 mos.
Broker Sales Commission (Avg.)	4.4%	3.9%
Loan-to-Value (Avg.)	66.1%	67.0%
Interest Rate Range	5.0-12.5%	5.0-13.0%
Interest Rate Average	7.5%	7.3%
Amortization Period (Avg.)	21 years	20 years

Source: Society of Golf Appraisers

ket, he said.

Hirsh said cash flow becomes the determining factor of the price at \$3 million-plus.

Brekan said there is some disconnect, with potential sellers wanting more for a property than it's worth. But in the end, he said, if owners want to sell, they are lowering their asking prices to market value in order to move the properties. He said few potential sellers are holding back and waiting for rates to rise.

Main said the vast majority of sales are at the lower end of the market, what he called "mom and pop" operations – courses that sell for less than \$3 million. He said a purchase of this type isn't necessarily profit-driven. It may be a vanity purchase, the chance to own a golf course; or it may be a desire to save a beloved course from closing.

Both Hirsh and Main have seen city and county agencies step in to do just that. They

want to maintain the property and prevent it from being developed.

"There's one that was purchased in eastern Pennsylvania within the last six months that the municipality went in and bought for a lot more than it was worth as a golf course," Hirsh said. "They're trying to preserve open space."

Main said municipalities have access to capital and they have residents with strong opinions.

"A municipality looks at it as a form of recreation . . . a service," Main said. "It's cheaper to do it this way than to build it. The person operating it now may not be breaking even, but a municipality can lower fees and spend less on quality and get more quantity."

He said some communities are willing to run a golf course at a loss in order to provide an amenity for the community.

There is also an increasing amount of

The township of West Orange, N.J., in April purchased the Rock Spring Country Club golf course, which had closed after the club merged with Montclair Golf Club, for \$11.2 million. The township reopened the Seth Raynor design this spring under the management of KemperSports.

community resistance to the redevelopment of golf courses – resistance that is likely to factor into the decisions of investors who are considering buying courses for conversion to other uses.

"There is more of a pushback from homeowners," Main said. "They realize there's going to be a loss in their value" if the neighboring course is developed.

In cases where golf courses were built as part of residential communities with surrounding homes, homeowners are fighting conversions, arguing that the course was an implied amenity tied to the original sale. Brekan said that last year a developer lost his bid to build on a course even though there were no covenants or zoning to prevent it. The neighboring homeowners argued that since the golf course had been built as part of the residential community, there was an implied contract to maintain the course, and the court agreed.

Brekan said the courses that can be redeveloped most easily are those not surrounded by housing developments.

But Main said economic pressure to pursue conversion can still outweigh community resistance. In regions where the housing market is tight and open land is scarce, the pressure to convert a struggling course to residential use can be strong.

"It's not a trend, but it is top-of-the-mind at every course," he said.



Ryan Doerr
President/Owner
Strategic Club Solutions

Advisers of the Year

Whether helping a club revitalize its slumping membership, turning around a struggling F&B operation or guiding a course owner through a complex financial transaction, these outstanding consultants have made a difference for their clients.

BY JIM TRAGESER AND KEITH CARTER

PHOTO BY KAT SCHLEICHER

Lots of things can go wrong at a golf facility. But most problems fall into one of two categories: a management or operations challenge or a physical facilities challenge.

Fixing such problems is often far more challenging than identifying them. And for many operators, the solution is outside their area of expertise.

For example, at La Crosse Country Club in Wisconsin, membership rolls were shrinking and revenues were flat. The board of directors wasn't sure how to address either issue.

Across the country, the city of Alameda, Calif., faced a different challenge at its Corica Park golf complex. Its courses were showing their age and needed major improvements. But city officials faced serious financial pressures, primarily because of the cost of reclaimed water.

So what do you do when you don't know

what to do? Turn to experts for help. That's what both La Crosse Country Club and the city of Alameda did, and the end results were far better than they could have imagined.

That's the power of a good consultant.

To identify this year's top consultants and advisers, Golf Inc. asked readers to nominate experts who went above and beyond to help them meet their challenges. We narrowed the list down to seven.

Ryan Doerr Strategic Club Solutions

When board members at La Crosse Country Club were trying to develop a strategic plan to address declining membership and revenue, they realized they needed help.

Tom Sahlstrom, a longtime member,

said the board interviewed three consulting firms before deciding on Strategic Club Solutions, headed by Ryan Doerr.

"We needed someone who was third-party, separate from the local community, who could be objective and honest with our comments and concerns," Sahlstrom said.

Part of the challenge was that the clubhouse manager, the course superintendent and the head pro all reporting directly to the board.

"They knew something wasn't right, but couldn't quite put their finger on it," Doerr said. "At the end of the day, nobody was really managing the club. The board had taught management to do as they're told. The board was kind of reacting, because there wasn't a plan."

Doerr helped the board understand the value of a strategic plan and the value of

La Crosse Country Club in Wisconsin sought a third-party consultant independent from the local community to provide an objective, honest evaluation of members' comments and concerns. Club officials chose Strategic Club Solutions for its expertise.





having a strong GM to lead and manage staff.

He also helped with a GM search, bringing in R. Steve Watson, first on an interim basis and then permanently.

Now, a year later, the club has seen its membership grow, and food & beverage income is up.

Doerr said the strategic plan the board adopted put an emphasis on the basics, such as ensuring that members know how they can refer a potential new member.

“Sometimes [members] don’t know how to go about it, even if they’re confident and proud in their club,” he said.

Watson said the strategic plan Doerr helped craft emphasized social use of the club grounds, even in the off-season.

“Basically, food & beverage was shut down in the winter,” he said.

The club converted the grill into a white-linen, candlelit dining area, which contributed almost \$40,000 in revenue last year. And the club has staged a variety of new events, such as cross-country skiing, bourbon tastings, wine tastings and an indoor putting championship.

“Anything we can do to keep the members in the habit of thinking, ‘We’ll go to the club first,’” Watson said.

Doerr said the key to getting the board’s buy-in and support was to engage the membership in the process. The first step was to conduct an in-depth survey of the membership to find out what they liked

about the club and what they wanted to see improved?

“The survey laid out the members’ opinion of where we can use some help,” Doerr said. “We weren’t handing the keys over to the GM to do what he wants; we had a plan together.”

Mike Holtzman

Profitable Food Facilities
Worldwide

For many golf and country clubs, food & beverage operations are one of the greatest expenses. But Mike Holtzman’s firm, Profitable Food Facilities Worldwide, has been advising and consulting clubs on F&B for more than 28 years. He knows not only how to keep costs under control but also how to increase revenue and design kitchens for maximum efficiency.

One of his most successful assignments was this past year at Club Pelican Bay in Naples, Fla. Holtzman was brought in to review food and labor costs and to evaluate the kitchen operation. The goal was to improve the numbers and speed up service.

He reviewed food-cost data for the club’s 350-seat restaurant and found that while french fries was the most-purchased item on the menu, the club was spending \$40,000 annually to make those fries. Holtzman revamped the specifications and

reduced the cost by \$18,000 a year, and not one member noticed the change.

In evaluating the club’s labor cost, he found it was paying for more than 2,500 hours of overtime annually. After Holtzman completed a labor analysis and educated the Pelican Bay team on labor management, overtime was reduced to just 45 hours for the entire year of 2018.

The kitchen layout also had hampered the club. On busy days members had to wait up to 45 minutes for their food. After a minor \$20,000 remodel recommended by Holtzman, serving times on busy days were reduced to an average of 20 minutes.

Dean Wochaski & Bill Nauroth

Golf Maintenance Solutions

It’s all about the team at Golf Maintenance Solutions (GMS). Dean Wochaski, founder and co-president, is quick to share credit for the company’s success with partner Bill Nauroth and consultants Stephen Schendel and David Downing II, both part of the executive team.

All are former superintendents with many years of experience, which Wochaski said provides valuable insight for clients. And that experience, coupled with an emphasis on balancing strong agronomic



practices with fiscal responsibility, allows them to look at their clients' operations differently.

"The key to our success is understanding the objectives before stepping on site, and then digging in with the management team and superintendents," Wochaski said.

GMS looks at each golf course individually and bases its recommendations on the strengths and weakness of that specific golf course and how it can build sustainability.

One of the company's biggest successes in the past year was engineering a turnaround at Casa Blanca Golf Course in Laredo, Texas, for Touchstone Golf.

"The course was in really bad shape for a long list of reasons," said Doug Harker, Touchstone's CEO. Making a bad situation worse, the course had no superintendent.

So Touchstone sent out an SOS for



Wochaski and Nauroth's team. *GMS* brought in an interim superintendent to stabilize day-to-day operations. Then they worked to set up systems that *Touchstone* could use in the future to sustain the condition of the course. An agronomist examined the course's infrastructure, equipment and personnel and produced a plan to

address short-term needs. He then provided a blueprint for long-term maintenance and capital improvements.

The *GMS* team came up with a long-term road map for the property that included an agronomic program, labor models and best practices to assist the new superintendent.

"This document itself is worth the cost of the interim assignment," Harker said. "We believe, in part due to *GMS*' help, Casa Blanca in the not-too-distant future will be a golf course turnaround-of-the-year candidate."

Derek Johnston

Global Golf Advisors

Handling complex financial transactions, such as the sale of *The Clubs* at St. James Plantation, is always a challenge. Derek

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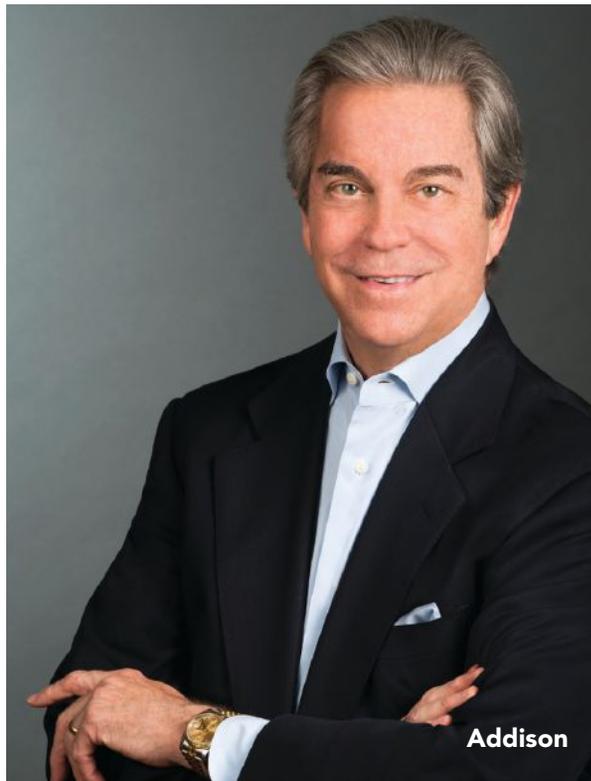
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a CPA and a ranked equities analyst was a great complement to our team's deep private-club experience and analytical expertise," Johnston said.

Randy Addison Addison Law

Randy Addison, the lead counsel and senior partner of Addison Law, was a key player in successfully converting Glenwild Golf Club and Spa in Park City, Utah, to a member-owned club last year.

A 2014 attempt to sell the club to members had ended badly, with several member disputes and 85 percent of members voting against the proposal. Three years later, a new members committee decided to try again and brought in Addison, who has extensive experience in club conversions, acquisitions and sales, to spearhead the new effort.

Addison worked with the committee to develop a new conversion plan and directed the due diligence process. He was involved in extensive negotiations with the seller, DMB, on the terms of the deal. And

he collaborated with the board to create a new equity membership plan and drafted membership documents.

His work extended to holding informational sessions with members to get them on board. And as the decision time approached, he put together the package for the member vote on the proposal.

"Thanks to the conversion plan and extensive work done by Addison and the member committee, the acquisition and \$7.5 million in funding was approved by 95 percent of members," said Phil Hildebrand, past president of the Glenwild member acquisition group. "The result was a successful closing of the deal in June 2018."

Glenwild members were so impressed with Addison's work that they retained his firm to provide continuing legal services to the club following the closing.

Steve Graves Creative Golf Marketing

In late 2017, after seeing rising attrition rates and stagnant membership growth, leaders of Corral de Tierra Country Club

Johnston of Global Golf Advisors (GGA) helped guide the families who owned the club through the deal without a hitch, said Jay Atkinson, who represented the owners during last year's sale to Troon.

The sale included five golf courses at the Southport, N.C., club as well as clubhouses and sports clubs at four locations.

Johnston said his first step was a comprehensive valuation and exit strategy review. The report included evaluating and quantifying the possible financial and reputational effects of various options.

Working with the owners and their representatives, Johnston helped craft what was ultimately a successful go-to-market strategy. And then he worked closely with the legal team from the law firm of Greenberg Traurig to finalize the sale.

"Our owner group was extremely pleased with the value added by GGA, and thrilled with the outcome for our owner group and our membership," Atkinson said. "GGA developed a confidential memorandum for the five-club portfolio and acted as advisers. The results met the owners' objectives and just as importantly, achieved the targeted sale price."

It was a special project for Johnston because it was his first opportunity to work with his brother Craig, who had recently joined GGA's transaction advisory practice.

"Craig's background as a KPMG alum,



near Monterey, Calif., reached out to Steve Graves and his Creative Golf Marketing team for help revitalizing the member-owned club.

Graves' first step was to hold a workshop that resulted in the formation of a task force to formulate a long-term membership-growth plan.

Working with club leaders, he changed the club's membership model to allow it to transition members to a nonrefundable, nontransferable initiation fee. They also approved a new policy that required payment of dues for 12 months following formal notice of resignation.

Graves' strategies generated \$450,000 in nonrefundable initiation fees, including more than \$200,000 in nonrefundable equity initiation fees, which previously would have created a future refund liability.

And, he launched a marketing plan that resulted in the addition of 88 members, including 35 who were younger than 45. Club officials said the influx of new members allowed the club to move forward with several capital improvement projects.

Marc Logan Greenway Golf

It was time for the city of Alameda in the San Francisco Bay Area to revamp Corica Park's golf courses. The North Course was built in 1927 and had not been updated since 1967. The South Course, built in the 1950s, had last been renovated in the 1970s. The city issued a request for bids for the two 18-hole courses and a 9-hole, par-3 course in 2011. Greenway Golf was among the bidders.

Marc Logan, a Australian native, cut his professional teeth on courses where water was scarce. He teamed with George Kelley in 2001 to found Greenway Golf, and the duo had the experience the city was looking for.

During his first visit to the course, Logan said, he was struck by the physical limitations of the site, which would make a reduction in water usage difficult.

"The biggest challenge was it was dead



flat," he said. "There was no internal drainage. The only way to make it sustainable financially was to bring in dirt."

But he was undaunted.

"There's a solution to every problem," Logan said. "You've got to get creative, and that's the job of the consultant. Sometimes it may not fit into the box of what everybody sees as the standard."

He consulted with Rees Jones, architect of the South Course, to make sure that bringing in dirt to raise the elevation would work.

Logan used a planning process called DIME to get everyone on the same page. DIME is an acronym for Design, Infrastructure, Maintenance, Environment.

"It's a way the average person can understand the issues," he said. "If it's a club board, a city council, they can understand that these elements have to be in place or the course won't be successful."

With numerous large-scale construction projects going on throughout the Bay Area, Logan was able to obtain fill dirt for free. He then convinced the city to invest in a new irrigation method so less water would be necessary. The number of sprinkler heads was increased from 1,100 to more than 6,000, and hundreds of new catch basins were installed to capture and store rainwater for irrigation.

"We increased the storage capacity for water by more than 2,000 percent," Logan said. "We have target areas where bunkers don't get watered; native areas get special irrigation."

The changes save about 1 million gallons of water per year.

Logan's renovation elevated 330 acres by about 8 feet. It also landed him a 50-year deal to manage the facility.

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Tiger, Hanse sign on for new courses at Hawaiian resort

Pacific Links International has lined up two of golf design's biggest names for a major project in Hawaii.

Tiger Woods will design one of two new courses for the long-planned redevelopment of the shuttered Makaha Valley Resort. Gil Hanse will design the other course, with construction expected to start in 2020.

The courses will be part of a 644-acre, mixed-use development on lush, rolling terrain on the west side of Oahu. Pacific Links founder Du Sha hopes it will become a world-class golf destination.

Pacific Links has a large customer base in China, and its network of affiliated and reciprocal clubs has grown to more than 400 properties around the world. Its membership roster in China is in excess of 17,000, with an aggregate population of more than 125,000 golfers from participating network clubs.

The long-planned re-build has been marked by promises that were later withdrawn. In 2015, Pacific Links announced a \$200 million renovation of the resort with Greg Norman named to lead the course redesign. A year later, it was announced that the cost had been upped to \$300 million.

The latest plan calls for a mixed-use redevelopment with a wellness center, time-shares, residential units, vacation villas and restaurants. A cost estimate for this plan has not been announced.

Originally developed by Hawaiian businessman Chinn Ho in the late 1960s, the resort was acquired by ANC Hotels Hawaii Inc. in 1979. The hotel was shuttered in 1995 but reopened in 2001 after Towne Realty Inc. purchased and renovated it. The original 18-hole golf course continued to operate until 2011. The property has changed hands several times since 2004, with Pacific Links acquiring it four years ago.



AP PHOTO/MATT SLOCUM

TIGER WOODS has agreed to design one of two new courses at the Makaha Valley Resort on the island of Oahu in Hawaii. Architect Gil Hanse will design the second course, with work set to begin next year.

In addition to the golf courses, the first phase of development will include an arts and community center and a health and wellness center. Subsequent phases will add time-share properties, golf villas and multifamily residential units.

Woods' TGR Design will design the North Course, which will be near the Waianae Mountain Range and offer views of Oahu's highest peak.

"We focus on finding spectacular locations to design distinct and memorable golf courses," Woods said. "The Makaha Valley on the west coast of Oahu is truly one of these unique and special locations."

Hanse, whose recent projects include the Streamsong Black course in Florida and Pinehurst Resort's redesigned No. 4 course in North Carolina, will develop the South Course. Built on sloping topography that includes several natural washes and significant elevation changes, it will be patterned after classic California courses such as those at the Riviera, Bel-Air and Los

Angeles country clubs.

An opening date for the Makaha Valley courses has not been announced.

DuPont CC converting course to practice area

Changes are coming to the longtime home of the LPGA Championship, and one of its three 18-hole courses will be converted to a practice facility.

DuPont Country Club, which hosted the LPGA Championship from 1987 until 2004, is in the process of converting its full-length Montchanin Course to a par-3 course and practice area. The other two full-length courses, Nemours and DuPont, will remain unchanged. (The LPGA Championship was played on the DuPont course.)

Located in Wilmington, Del., where it began as a sports complex for employees of the DuPont Co., the country club was purchased last year by DuPont heir Ben

duPont and former DuPont executive Don Wirth.

An indoor practice facility will include simulator stalls equipped with TrackMan technology. They will be designed so they can be opened when weather permits to hit onto the range.

duPont told The (Wilmington) News Journal that the upgrade will also include three new swimming pools and a large fitness center near the clubhouse.

Ground was broken in January, and construction is being handled by the George E. Ley Co. Plans call for completion before the American Junior Golf Association tournament in August, according to Golf Course Architecture.

Omni Barton Creek reopens after \$150 million renovation of property

Omni Barton Creek Resort & Spa in Austin, Texas, reopened in early May

after undergoing a \$150 million renovation. Included in the revamp are significant improvements to three of the resort's four full-length golf courses.

Additions to the resort, which originally opened in 1987, include a second hotel tower with 180 rooms, a new fitness center and a 13,000-square-foot spa with an adults-only pool.

Omni Hotels & Resorts owns and operates 10 golf resorts, including Omni La Costa Resort & Spa near San Diego, which has hosted both PGA and LPGA events. Omni recently signed a development deal with the PGA to operate a golf resort at the \$500 million PGA headquarters being built in Frisco, Texas. It will feature two championship courses and a nine-hole short course.



An aerial view of the Omni Barton Creek Resort & Spa, where work recently wrapped up on a major renovation of the resort and its golf courses.

The Fazio Foothills course at Barton Creek closed for renovation in April 2017 and reopened last June. The Coore Crenshaw course was then renovated, and it reopened in December. The Fazio Canyons course renovation is set to be completed by the end of this year. The Fazio and Coore & Crenshaw design firms are handling the updates.

An Omni Barton Creek spokesperson said about \$6 million of the renovation budget went into the three golf courses.

The Palmer Lakeside course, which is operated by Omni Barton Creek and located 25 miles northwest of the resort, has remained opened throughout the process. Designed by Arnold Palmer, Ed Seay and Robert Walker, the 6,400-yard, par-71 course opened in 1986.

PHOTO COURTESY U.S. ARMY



U.S. MILITARY personnel in South Korea can now play the River Bend Golf Course at U.S. Army Garrison-Humphreys, courtesy of a \$47 million investment from the South Korean government. The Robert Trent Jones II-designed course also serves as a flood control basin, with water in play on 17 of the 18 holes.

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The Westin Resort Costa Navarino in Greece is adding two more golf courses.



Greatness in Greece

World Golf Hall of Famer José Maria Olazábal is designing 2 courses for a spectacular Greek seacoast resort. **BY KEITH CARTER**

When a globe-trotting member of the World Golf Hall of Fame describes a golf course site as one of the most beautiful places he's ever seen, it gets your attention.

But that's how José Maria Olazábal, who has transitioned from being one of Europe's top golfers to one of its most active course architects, describes the spectacular cliff-side location in Greece where he recently launched construction on two courses for The Westin Resort Costa Navarino.

The designs by Olazábal will join two existing courses on the site: one by Robert Trent Jones II and the other by European Golf Design. Adjoining two luxury hotels and private residences, the courses are all built with a goal of making the scenic southwestern coast of Greece an international golf destination.

Olazábal, 53, turned to architecture as his illustrious playing career wound down. Costa Navarino is his 21st project. His designs include such high-profile tracks as the Olazábal Course at the Mission Hills

golf complex in China. The bulk of his projects have been in his native Spain. They include Pula Golf Resort, which has hosted the Mallorca Open, and Real Club de Golf de Sevilla, site of the Spanish Open. He just wrapped up his first project in Qatar, and he's begun design work for a course in Turkey.

Though he's now focusing heavily on designing, Olazábal's legacy as a golfer is secure. Recognized as one of the greatest European professionals in history, he's had more than 30 tournament wins, including two Masters championships. He played on seven European Ryder Cup teams and captained the 2012 European team that pulled off the "Miracle at Medinah" comeback. In 2009, Olazábal followed in the footsteps of his countryman and close friend, the late Severiano Ballesteros, and was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame.

The two courses under construction in Greece, developed by TEMES SA, overlook the Bay of Navarino and offer panoramic

views of the countryside and the Ionian Sea. Shaping is underway on the first of the two layouts, which is scheduled for completion in late 2020. Grading has begun on the second, which will open a year later.

Here, in his own words, is how Olazábal describes his architectural style, his design influences, and why he's so enthusiastic about his project in Greece:

My basic course design philosophy is the land tells you what to do. I try to use the elements that the site provides. After that, you tailor the design to take every type of golfer into consideration. From there, you either soften or intensify the natural features so weekend players can play it with minimal struggle. You add in tricky templates and features to test the best and to add character.

My career as a player gave me the opportunity to travel the world and play some of the best golf courses. They were

clearly an inspiration. Whenever you play a golf course and there are certain elements of that course that you like, or you see how the architect made a great use of the land, it sticks in your mind. If the opportunity arises, you use some of that in your designs.

Many architects and courses have influenced my philosophy, both classic works and more contemporary designs. I am sure it will not be a surprise that I mention Augusta National by Alister MacKenzie and Bobby Jones as an influence. But there's also Valderrama (by Robert Trent Jones Sr.), Loch Lomond (a Tom Weiskopf-Jay Morrish design) and, certainly, the Old Course at St Andrews.

The setting at Costa Navarino is breathtaking. When I first visited, I went to the top of the hill and took in the whole scene. The massive bay is just amazing. You have to go there to see it for yourself, but the scenery is stunning. It is one of the most beautiful places I've been on Earth.

The sites for these courses are very different from the resort's two existing courses. (Those) are directly on the coast. The land for our two new courses is around 100 meters above sea level on an undulating plateau along dense forests and a cliff. So the setting offers a lot of contrast for golfers, even before starting the design details.

The Constantakopoulos family, which is developing Costa Navarino, is a remarkable story. Capt. Vassilis Constantakopoulos grew up in the region before leaving to go to sea at a young age. He had a spectacular career and huge success with container ships before eventually returning to the area. His vision was to create a destination for tourism that would benefit the people in the region so that they could have jobs near their homes. He opened Costa Navarino 10 years ago. Sadly, he passed away a few years later and his son Achilles took over. We became friends over the past few years, and our teams spent about two years planning the new courses.

The impact of this project in promoting Greece as a golf destination will be massive. When Costa Navarino has four golf courses, it will become a golf desti-



nation that will be very attractive for the international golf traveler. It will also make the game more popular within the country and hopefully encourage many youngsters to try the game.

The Costa Navarino developers have always been very sensitive to the environment in everything they have done at the existing hotels and golf courses. They have been recognized for their water management and renewable energy practices and for their biodiversity and landscape protection programs. We are happy to follow in those footsteps. For example, we use only water from natural surface drainage, and we use renewable energy from a photovoltaic park next to two of the holes we are building.

There were severe restrictions on tree clearing on the site, and it was tricky to route the golf courses, even though the property is huge. Our team spent countless hours trying to find the right balance. But it was worth it, and I am happy with the solution.

What I like most about designing is to be able to see how everything evolves and develops. You have a piece of land, and you first picture the hole and then start to build it and finally finish it and have it perfectly grown. That is a process I have always enjoyed. It is no different at Costa Navarino, even though we still have a ways to go until we finish.

José Maria Olazábal describes his new golf course designs at the Westin Resort Costa Navarino in Greece.

Sometimes when you draw a hole on a piece of paper and then you actually build it on the land, you realize that you can improve it with some changes on site. For example, when you clear the area and you find a wonderful tree that you can integrate into the design. Sometimes it is the little things that can be done while the construction is going on that make a difference. That's why I like to pay enough visits to the construction site to make the best use of all elements.

My core team has been together for more than 10 years now, and after all this time we have a system for how I involve myself and how we deliver so we can all be proud of the work. Matthias Nemes runs the company, Toni Ortner is our golf architect, and Sergio Gomez is my manager.

We just completed Education City Golf Club in Qatar, which was an extremely complex project. We were really happy how it turned out and thought that the next one would be a lot easier to plan and build. But all projects have their own specific challenges, and so does Costa Navarino. I quite like the fact that Costa Navarino already has a great reputation. Most of my other designs were at brand-new developments. Here, everyone, at least in Europe, knows about Costa Navarino.

Renovation of Ye

Adare Manor and Northwood Club, which take top honors in this year's annual competition, both focused first on infrastructure.

BY JIM TRAGESER

A high-end resort hoping to lure The Ryder Cup to Ireland and a prestigious country club that has hosted the U.S. Open both set out to elevate the quality of their golf courses through renovation projects.

And both hit home runs. Adare Manor in County Limerick took top honors in the public category, and Northwood Club

in Dallas won in the private category of the 2019 Renovation of the Year competition.

What both projects had in common was an emphasis on ensuring that the foundational elements were in place to allow the renovations to last for many years to come. Building-block features that most members or visitors might never notice

were at the heart of these renovations – items such as high-tech drainage, grass species suited to the local climates and improved irrigation.

Most of this year's 10 honorees tackled such foundational issues and made big improvements for golfers at the same time. We honor five private clubs and five public facilities.

the ar

First Place

Adare Manor

Limerick, Ireland

Owner: J.P. McManus

Architect: Tom Fazio

Contractor: Atlantic Golf Construction

The stunning house dates to the 1700s, and the golf course, designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr., was added in 1995. But when local businessman and billionaire J.P. McManus purchased the resort in 2015, he wanted to take it to the next level and publicly stated his intent to host a Ryder Cup.

A man who made much of his fortune in horse racing, McManus revels in competitiveness. McManus decided to re-do each hole.

Architect Tom Fazio's focus was on preserving the natural beauty and existing topography of the site while still making it playable.

To increase the challenge for high-end golf travelers, Fazio elevated the greens and surrounded them with tough runoff areas. And, given the rain that Ireland is famous for, the team installed Sub-Air technology to bring air movement beneath the putting surfaces. Improved drainage and sand capping were added throughout the course to make it playable year-round.

There are now 77 tees across 18 holes, and while the elevated tees may be tough to stick, the lack of any rough makes recovery shots realistic.

Course Superintendent Alan MacDonnell said that extensive drainage improvements keep the course playable in any weather.

"The old Robert Trent Jones Sr. design was loved by many of our guests, and Tom Fazio has ensured that guests who are returning can still relate to the old design, as the routing remained the same," MacDonnell said. "However, the improved presentation, detail, the new green complexes and playability are noticeable immediately, and the response to the changes from guests since opening has been remarkable."

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

"No expense spared. Spectacular setting that is augmented by the golf course aesthetic. Looks beautiful and playable. Infrastructure and agronomic upgrades will prove valuable."

Adare Manor
Limerick, Ireland

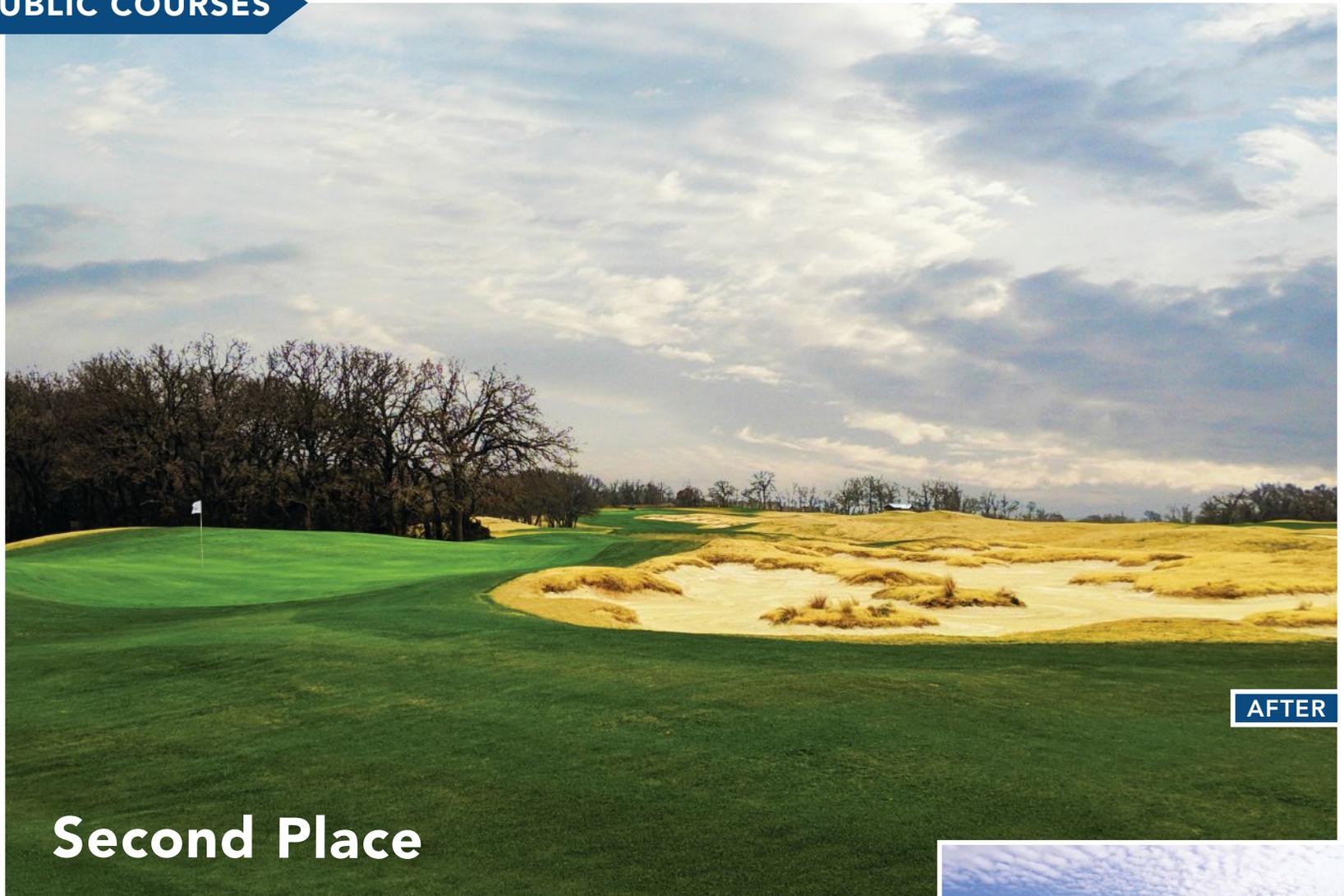
AFTER

BEFORE



RENOVATION OF THE YEAR

PUBLIC COURSES



AFTER

Second Place

Texas Rangers Golf Club Arlington, Texas

Owner: City of Arlington
Architect: John Colligan
Contractor: Landscapes Unlimited
Budget: \$8.5 million

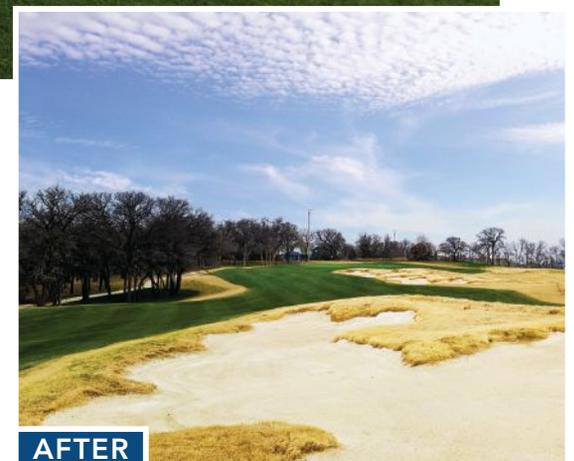
WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

“This renovation is more like a total redo. The entire course is unrecognizable, and the renovation is absolutely worth every penny. Great work by a congruent team that seems to have accomplished the impossible. Kudos to all.”

Outdated drainage and topsoil erosion had led to a point that this municipal course was punishing good shots with high-crown fairways and small greens that kicked shots off to the side. Also, since the course had opened in 1982, better courses had come to the area, and the city realized this was hurting play.

Through a series of meetings, the city’s wish list was established. It included a total length of more than 7,000 yards, a par-5 hole longer than 600 yards and a large irrigation lake. And because it was a municipal course, it was important that the new design have low maintenance costs.

Architect John Colligan redesigned the course with wide fairways and large greens that reward good shots. The larger greens allow for more pin placements, resulting in less wear on the greens. A more



AFTER

efficient irrigation system helps control maintenance expenses.

Since the course re-opened, demand is such that the city is able to charge more per round. And, the improved drainage is leading to fewer canceled rounds, which improves revenue. The new range and practice area are popular with local golfers.

Congratulations to
The Country Club of Mobile
on being recognized as a Finalist for
Golf Inc. “Renovation of the Year”

Thank you to The Country Club of Mobile, Jerry Pate Design,
Bradley Klein and Wadsworth Golf Construction for the dedication and teamwork.



Hole#2 - Par 3



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RENOVATION OF THE YEAR

PUBLIC COURSES



WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

“Impressive project that provides benefit to the community while improving the golf course. Interesting use of parkland/links characteristics into a cohesive aesthetic. Wonderful transformation of mild, featureless parkland into a functioning, engaging golf course.”

AFTER

Third Place

Sunset Valley Golf Course

Highland Park, Ill.

Owner: Park District of Highland Park

Architect: Rick Jacobson

Contractor: Wadsworth Golf
Construction

Budget: \$4.5 million

Deferred maintenance had degraded the condition of the course, and its location in a flood plain led to numerous closures every year.

“The overall goal of the master plan was to improve infrastructure while enhancing the golf experience for all levels of golfers to provide long-term sustainability for the golf facility,” architect Rick Jacobson said.

The renovation provided better drainage for storm water, rebuilt all tees, upgraded the greens to USGA standards and created a heartland look and feel that is consistent with the course’s location. The introduction of elevation changes and habitat restoration gave the course a more vibrant feel.



BEFORE

RENOVATION OF THE YEAR

Honorable Mention

The Phoenician Golf Club

Scottsdale, Ariz.

Owner: The Phoenician

Architect: Phil Smith

Contractor: Frontier Golf

As a destination resort, The Phoenician needs to stay at the forefront of golf course design, and ownership felt the previous 27 holes seemed a bit cramped. The decision was made to remake the course into an 18-hole showcase.

Architect Phil Smith was given the task of designing a new course that would mirror the beauty of the Sonoran Desert while maintaining the reputation of the resort. Smith took a classic approach,



eliminating hidden hazards and bunkers and allowing golfers to see what lies ahead so all decisions are conscious.

The resort reports that even with a 33

percent reduction in the number of holes available, golf revenue is up nearly 4 percent from before the renovation.

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RENOVATION OF THE YEAR

PUBLIC COURSES




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Honorable Mention

Bobby Jones Golf Course Atlanta

Owner: The Bobby Jones Golf Course Foundation
Architect: Robert Cupp
Contractor: Wadsworth Golf Construction Co.
Budget: \$6.5 million

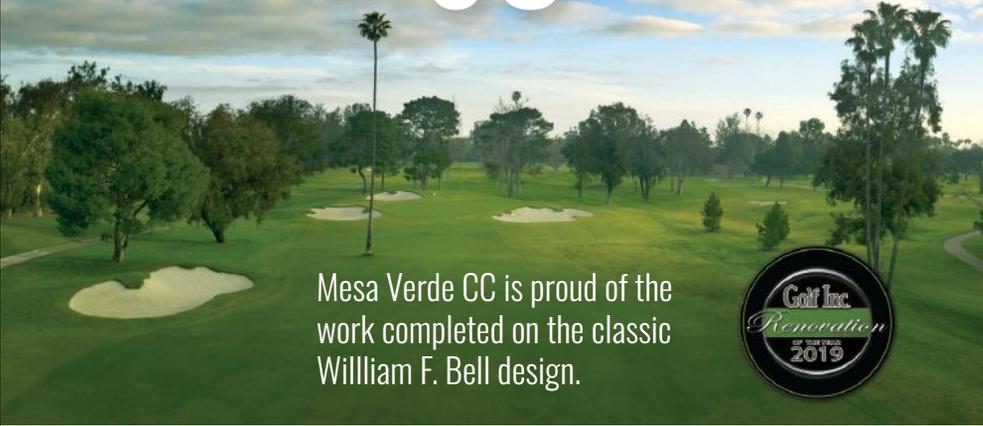
Decades of neglect had turned this course into a poor reflection of its legendary namesake. But given the space limitations of the site, a high level of creativity would be needed to rejuvenate the course.

In his final project, architect Robert Cupp created a reversible 18-hole course with just nine fairways. Each fairway shares two sets of tee boxes and two greens (much like a horseshoe pit). Each direction is a 9-hole course, with one direction named Azalea and the other Magnolia.

Adding to the innovation is use of the Longleaf Tee System, with multiple tee locations on each hole. The tees are unmarked, and each golfer is free to select the tee they want to hit from. There is also no rough, only fairways and greens, and numerous trees were removed.



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RENOVATION OF THE YEAR

PRIVATE COURSES



AFTER

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

“What a difference. The changes are very noticeable, including the removal of trees, which improved playability and turf health. Literally a breath of fresh air. This new course offers something for all skill levels and is the talk of the town.”

First Place

Northwood Club

Dallas, Texas

Owner: Membership

Architect: Tripp Davis

Contractor: Landscapes Unlimited

Budget: \$11.5 million

Northwood Club was started in 1946 by some friends who were frustrated by the wait times at existing Dallas-area country clubs. They found a plot of land, hired William Diddel as architect, and four years later the course opened. Just two years after that, Northwood hosted the U.S. Open.

But time took a toll on the course, and it just wasn't what it had been. Nor was it what the members wanted it to be. The greens needed attention, and the underlying foundations of the course – the

drainage, irrigation, cart paths – needed updating.

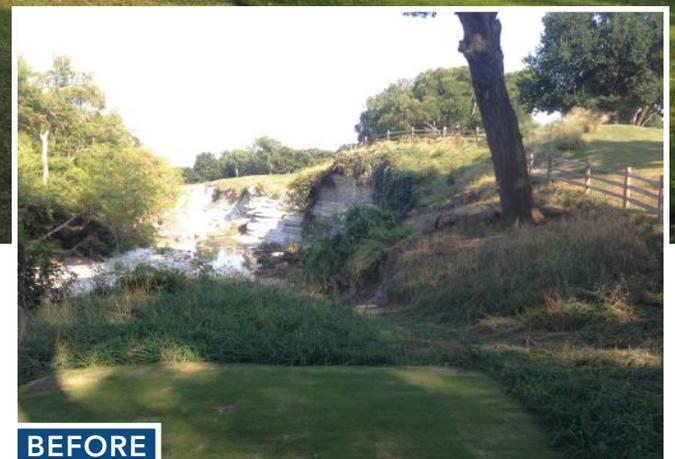
The renovation by Tripp Davis & Associates focused on both improved playability and low maintenance costs.

“We had over a dozen different grass species throughout the property before the renovation and have now narrowed that down to three for a more uniform look and increased efficiency in maintenance across the property,” said Kevin Carpenter, director of agronomy at the club.

The types of grass chosen for the renovation have lowered the amount of fertilizer and pesticides needed to maintain healthy turf. In addition, some 200 trees were removed, which allowed for more light and better turf health.

A new irrigation system has reduced the amount of water needed, and the new course has much better drainage.

There were not many photos of the original layout, but Davis looked over photos



BEFORE

of other Diddel courses and went on road trips to visit some of them.

“Mainly, we were working to bring out what we knew to be Bill Diddel at his best,” Davis said. “Having worked at Wichita Country Club in Kansas, another Diddel course but with original Diddel greens, we could see what his tendencies were and take the best of it for the modern game. We also researched his variety of bunker styles over his long career . . . which we let inspire what we did at Northwood.”

General Manager Jon Davis said the club's resurgent popularity is the result of word-of-mouth excitement generated by members. The renovation is so popular that members are bringing in friends to show off something they're very proud of.

RENOVATION OF THE YEAR

PRIVATE COURSES



Second Place

Playa Grande Golf & Ocean Club

Rio San Juan, Dominican Republic

Owner: Discovery Land Co.

Architect: Rees Jones

Contractor: Green Ball Golf Construction

Budget: \$8 million

A series of ownership changes at this residential development had left the course in poor shape. The Robert Trent Jones Sr.-designed course was suffering from shrinking greens, weed-infested fairways, a broken irrigation system and dilapidated cart paths.

New ownership brought in Rees Jones to redesign his father's layout. While moving several holes to accommodate a new



CONGRATULATIONS

Northwood Club

We are proud to have been part of the TEAM for this special renovation project.

Hole #2 | photo credit: R. Kevin Carpenter



partnering with



RENOVATION OF THE YEAR

resort hotel, Jones kept it a seaside course, with 10 of the holes running alongside the Atlantic.

Additional tees were added to accommodate a wide variety of skill levels while maintaining some strategic options for stronger players.

The greens were rebuilt to USGA standards and reshaped to reward good approach shots. Chipping areas were added to replace rough around the greens. Concrete cart paths were installed, and the fairways now have better drainage.

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

“Wow! Location, location, location! This new design confirms that location and beauty can create a masterpiece. There is no doubt that this renovation will be a case study in the golfing world. Kudos to the team and members.”



AFTER



CONGRATULATIONS

Texas Rangers Golf Club

We are proud to have been part of the TEAM for this special renovation project.

photo credit: Trey Kemp



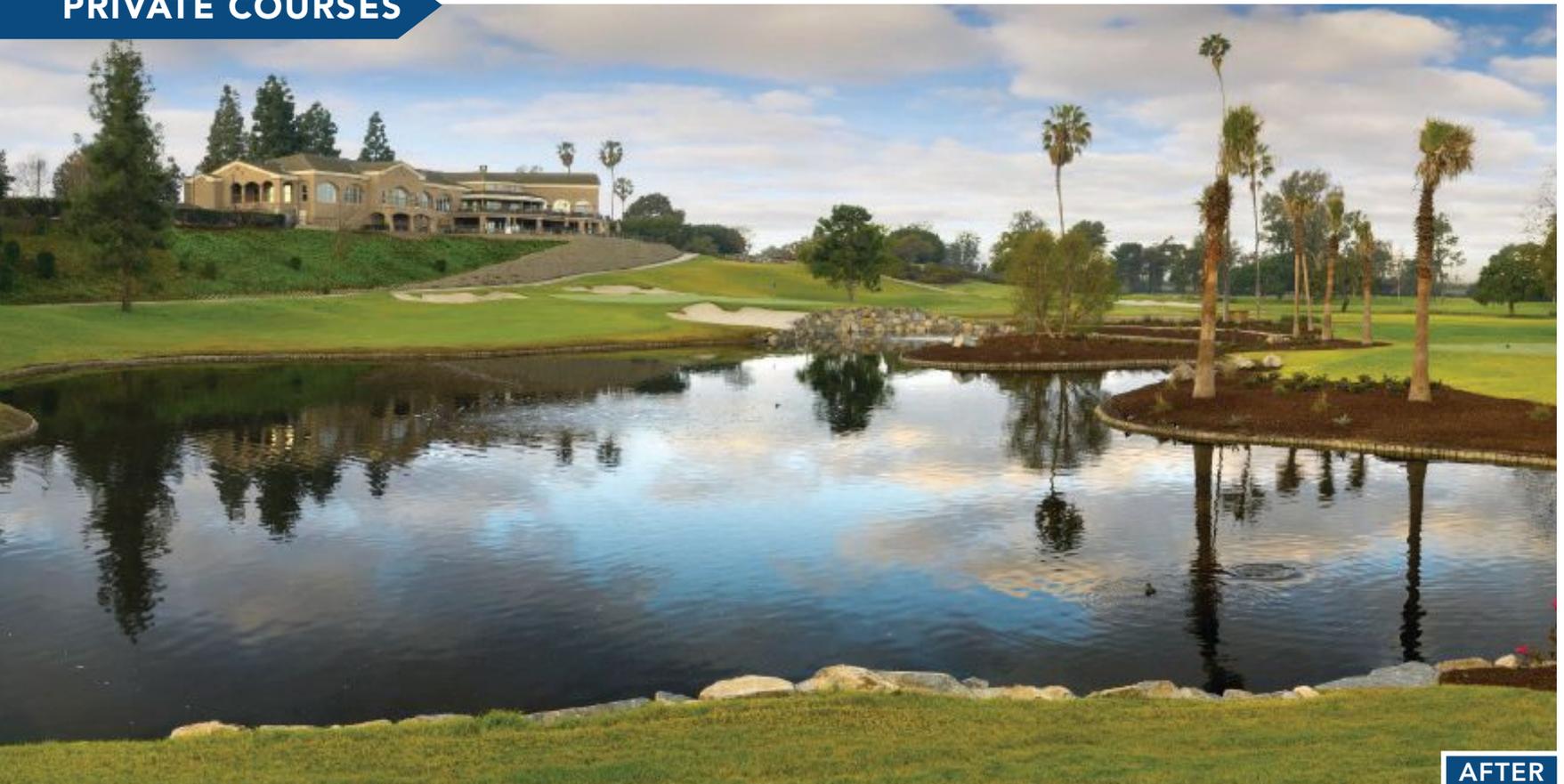
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RENOVATION OF THE YEAR

PRIVATE COURSES



Third Place

Mesa Verde Country Club

Costa Mesa, Calif.

Owner: Membership

Architect: Cary Bickler

Contractor: Landscapes Unlimited

Budget: \$4.1 million

Well-intentioned attempts to redesign this 1959 William Bell design had left it a bit of a disjointed mess in terms of layout. Lines of trees had been planted, requiring changes to the way some holes were played as the trees matured.

In 2012, the board of directors developed a master plan to improve the course's playability – and reputation. Architect Cary Bickler was charged with restoring the course's original design characteristics using modern technology, and the course had to remain open during the process.

The four-phase plan began with ren-

ovating the existing bunkers and adding 18 more. The second and third phases involved rebuilding several greens to USGA standards and upgrading the tee boxes. The final phase involved planting trees to replace those that had been taken down and upgrading the signature lake on the 18th hole to give it more appeal.

Since the renovation, the club has gone from having 33 memberships for sale to having a waiting list of families wanting to join.

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

“Simple changes with significant impact. Used existing conditions wisely with maximum effect.”



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RENOVATION OF THE YEAR

PRIVATE COURSES



BEFORE

Honorable Mention

The Country Club of Mobile

Mobile, Ala.

Owner: The Country Club of Mobile

Architect: Jerry Pate Design

Contractor: Wadsworth Golf Construction Co.

Budget: \$9 million



A hurricane, city drainage projects and a series of remodels through the years led The Country Club of Mobile to realize that its classic 1922 Donald Ross golf course was no longer recognizable.

In addition to restoring the aesthetics and playability of the course, the club directed Jerry Pate Design to improve the infrastructure. Drainage and irrigation took up the largest part of the budget, but with more than 100 inches of rain per year, having a new collection pond and other water features on the course was imperative.

Since the renovation, interest in membership has grown by 25 percent, and a new lawn near the first tee has allowed the club to gain revenue by hosting weddings.



AFTER

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RENOVATION OF THE YEAR

Honorable Mention

Taiheiyo Club Gotemba Course

Shizuoka, Japan

Owner: Taiheiyo Club

Architect: Rees Jones

Contractor: Inaji Landscape & Construction

Budget: \$5 million



The flagship of the 17-course Taiheiyo Club is the Gotemba Course. But the 1977 Shunsuke Kato design needed an update in order to maintain its place of prestige on the Japanese golf landscape. Rees Jones led the renovation, which was performed at night under lights to allow the course to remain open during the day.

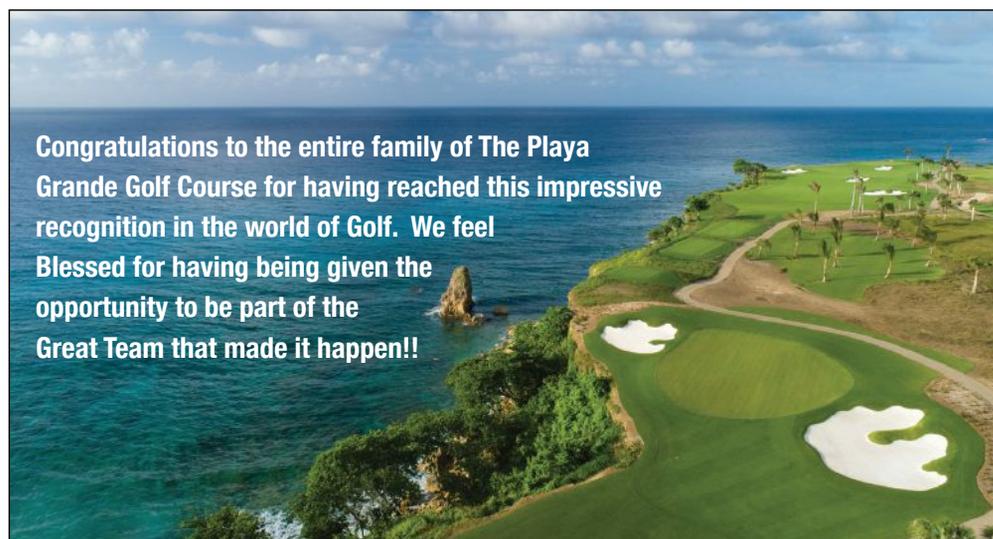
All tee boxes were rebuilt, and some were moved to adjust the length of the holes. Other adjustments to the course included updating the bunkers and adding chipping areas near some greens to afford more recovery opportunities.

ABOUT THE JUDGES

Darryl Bartlett is senior project manager at NMP Golf Construction, which is based in Vermont. He is also president of Fall Brook Golf Construction in Dartmouth, Mass.

Greg Martin owns Martin Design, a golf course architecture firm. He served as president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects in 2016-17.

Frank Benzakour, CCM, was previously general manager and chief operating officer at Edge-wood Country Club in New Jersey. Prior to that, he was chief operating officer and general manager at The Village Club of Sands Point in New York. He teaches management at Fairleigh Dickinson University.

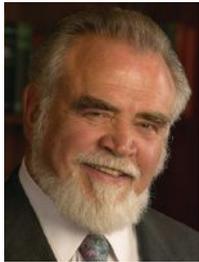


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Kohler permit blocked; CMAA elects Ruder

No. 1 Herb Kohler Jr.



The Whistling Straits developer's plan to build a luxury golf course along Lake Michigan received a setback this spring when an administrative law judge rejected a decision by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to approve a key environmental permit for the course. Environmental organizations have opposed plans for the course pushed by Kohler, who also developed Blackwolf Run. The judge ruled that the Department of Natural Resources failed to follow proper procedures during its evaluation and that Kohler Co.'s proposed environmental mitigation efforts were inadequate. Company officials said they plan to appeal the decision.

No. 2 Randy Ruder



The general manager of Beach Point Club in Mamaroneck, N.Y., is the new chairman of the Club Management Association of America (CMAA). Ruder, who has been at Beach Point Club for the past 25 years, was elected chairman at CMAA's annual conference in Nashville, Tenn. Mark Bado, general manager of Myers Park Country Club in Charlotte, N.C., was elected vice president, and Brian Kroh was chosen secretary-treasurer.

No. 3 Brad Faxon

The PGA Tour Champions regular is part of an investment group that recently purchased Metacomet Golf Club in East Providence, R.I., from its members. Plagued by heavy debt and decreasing membership, the club had been up for sale since last fall. Faxon said he has played the course for more than 40 years and at one time was club champion. The owners group is planning a number of improvements to the Donald Ross design.

No. 4 Andi Irwin & Jamy Rankin

The two women are leading an effort to revitalize River Forest Country Club in Freeport, Pa. Irwin and her husband, Steve, recruited Rankin, a former Ford Motor Co. executive, and her husband to become co-owners of the club. To encourage more interest, especially among people who've never played golf, the team has added activities and entertainment such as Whing Golf (played with a thrower and a putter), drone racing, a speakers series, live music and stand-up comedy.

No. 5 Robert Flaxman

The Arizona developer, who was involved in projects such as Mountain Shadows Resort in Paradise Valley and Montelucia Resort in Scottsdale, is one of numerous high-profile individuals charged by the Justice Department with paying for false entrance-exam scores to help their children get into college. Flaxman, founder and CEO of Crown Realty & Development, apologized for his actions and reportedly agreed to plead guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and honest services mail fraud for paying \$75,000 to help his daughter cheat on her ACT exam.

No. 6 Marilyn Smith

The LPGA co-founder and two-time majors winner died recently in Goodyear, Ariz., at age 89. A Topeka, Kan., native, Smith was known as a strong-willed competitor and one of the LPGA's most enthusiastic promoters during its early days. She won 21 LPGA tournaments, including back-to-back Titleholders Championships in 1963 and 1964. Smith was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 2006.



AP PHOTO/ROSS D. FRANKLIN

No. 7 Keith Foster

The veteran golf course architect was sentenced to 30 days in prison and one year of supervised release in connection with the importing and sale of items made from endangered species. He was arrested in December 2018 by federal officials, who charged him with bringing into the U.S. nearly \$400,000 worth of endangered wildlife species or endangered species parts. He reportedly sold the items between 2014 and 2018 at the antique and exotic merchandise store he operated in Middleburg, Va.



No. 8 Renee Powell

The PGA Hall of Famer and longtime teaching professional has been elected the PGA of America's first at-large director. Powell was the second African American on the LPGA tour and the first African American woman elected to PGA membership. She will join 14 district directors, two independent directors, the PGA Tour representative and four officers on the PGA board of directors. Her term runs through the 2020 annual meeting. She is head pro at Clearview Golf Club in East Canton, Ohio, a club her father founded in 1946.



No. 9 Fame Tate

The veteran Ladies European Tour player purchased Stanedge Golf Club in Derbyshire, England, this spring. Tate represented Great Britain and Ireland in The Curtis Cup in 2002 and 2004. She also had several Top 10 finishes in Asian Tour events before a shoulder injury led to her early retirement. Stanedge Golf Club is a 9-hole track that opened in 1934 and was lengthened in 1995.



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Featured clockwise from top: Turtle Bay Resort, Kahuku, Hawaii; Cape Wickham Golf Links, King Island, Tasmania, Australia; Alpine Country Club, Highland, Utah; Calvert Crossing Golf Club, Calhoun, Louisiana.



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