

GOLF COURSE CONSTRUCTION | GOLF COURSE MAINTENANCE  
TURFGRASS MANAGEMENT | AGRONOMY | PRUSA'S POINT & NEWS

# GOLF COURSE<sup>®</sup> INDUSTRY

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I N T E R N A T I O N A L



LAUNCH ISSUE!  
VIEW VIDEO

THE SCIENCE  
OF SCHEDULING

IS YOUR GOLF COURSE  
DRAINAGE UP TO STANDARD

THE BENEFITS OF  
TURF GROOMERS

## RED DRAGON REBUFFED

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

TANK-MIXING TACTICS

SUPER SOLUTIONS

**SPECIAL FEATURE:** GOLF RESORTS ... HAVE THESE GETAWAYS EXCEEDED THEIR USE-BY-DATE?

By Martin Moore and Tony Cunzio, Principals – Flagstick Golf Course Construction Management

# GOLF COURSE CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT: WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Like many of this magazine's readers, we have set foot on hundreds of golf courses during our careers. Some are a feast for the eyes with their lush fairways, healthy greens, and the evident attention to detail paid by the architect, builder and superintendent. Other courses look rough around the edges, prematurely worn-out and badly in need of a facelift.

Cover Story



**The breakdown** between these great and not-so-great golf course is difficult to assess. It is not private versus public facilities, not pricey versus bargain greens fees, nor is it geographical location or the type of terrain. Indeed, we have seen far from ideal plots of land transformed into world-class golf courses, and, sadly, we have witnessed pristine tracts fall short of their potential.

With utmost respect for the many parties involved in planning, designing, constructing and maintaining a golf course, we acknowledge that, generally, it is a combination of factors that will make or break the final result. Yet, precisely for that reason – the complexity of golf course development – we believe that construction management is the single most important piece of the equation.

Golf course construction management...the name lacks the glamour of golf course architecture, it has none of the visibility of golf course maintenance, and it is generally unknown to the golfing public. However, ask developers of successful golf courses

and they will tell you: Without the daily oversight and expertise of their construction manager, there would have been no one to guide the building process and keep the moving pieces aligned and to acceptable quality standards.

Before going further, it may be useful to define golf course construction management. Just like the golf course architect or superintendent, the golf course construction manager is a highly-trained professional. He/she must be familiar not only with all aspects of how to build a golf course, but also with methods of pre-planning, scheduling, budgeting, construction coordination, turfgrass grow-in, and even maintenance and operational best practices.

Our company, Flagstick, has been the leader in this field for over a dozen years. When we introduce our services to clients we like to say that golf course construction management provides a valuable combination of on-site technical knowledge, experienced leadership, and a highly specialized management program. This



Mission Hills Haikou, China



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About Flagstick



Flagstick is the world's leader in golf course construction management. With offices in North America and Asia, and experience managing golf developments in over a dozen countries, Flagstick transforms the visions of golf course architects and developers into reality.

In recent years, Flagstick has managed the construction of five of Asia's top ten resort golf courses, and in 2011 managed construction at four of China's top six new courses. Flagstick is a proud member of the Golf Course Builders Association of America.



Constructions

Agronomy

Special Features

General News



service keeps construction in-line with specifications and protects the client's investment while ensuring the golf course architect's vision becomes a reality. This, we think, is the best way to convey the value of our work: we transform the dreams and visions of the planning phase into physical reality through proper techniques and comprehensive coordination in the construction phase.

Golf course construction management is especially of value to the project owner and the golf course architect. It is the owner who chooses to hire the construction management company, and they do so for good reason. Most golf course developers are not experts themselves in golf design and construction, and so it is critical that they hire knowledgeable and reputable professionals to help them make the most of their major investment. With experienced experts managing the construction process, cost overruns are prevented, quality control is enforced, and the detailed specifications of designers and engineers are adhered to.

Engaging an experienced construction management company

is also in the interest of the golf course architect, especially when his/her project is being built in a foreign country, far from the home office. Architects rarely have full-time representation on a construction site, so if they visit once every month or two months, they do not have nearly enough time to police all the minor concerns that could have significant long-term consequences. Given this fact, without a full-time construction manager the architect's vision may be gradually obscured to the point where the final product is far from what he/she intended. Construction managers act as a central touch-point for everyone on the project, a liaison between all parties, and this responsibility is most crucial when communicating the architect's golf course vision to the contractor who will then build it.

We think it is not only important to talk about the benefits of hiring a construction management company, but also the risks of not doing so. Over the years, we have seen a number of projects proceed without construction management, which puzzles us because the cost of this service typically makes up a tiny



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portion of the overall construction budget. In such cases, the owner often chooses an "owner's representative" – typically someone with insufficient, or at least insufficiently diverse, golf construction experience – to manage construction and enforce proper methods and practices upon the contractor.

We make the following statement as objectively as possible: this approach to construction rarely works. The reason is that without a authoritative and experienced voice directing construction in the field, the architect's vision is easily compromised with cut corners, lined pockets and lack of commitment to doing things the right way.

Furthermore, the owner's budget can be compromised when proper methods and practices are not upheld. Effective construction management requires the ability to adapt to unique site circumstances in a way which those without experience could not. Hiring a firm with this ability can save the owner substantial sums of money and it will absolutely improve the final quality of the golf course.

When built right, using reliable materials and supplies, and according to the design specifications of expert architects and engineers, a golf course should be healthy for decades. However, the future health and maintenance of a golf course can only be as good as the construction foundation it was given. In other words, a course that was poorly built or built with inferior materials will never have the chance to be maintained to the highest quality standards, no matter how talented the superintendent may be.

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