Can this be true—an article on golf in AWCI’s Construction Dimensions? You may be as surprised as one contractor when he was asked for his input. He kept thinking the interview was another one of those jokes by his fellow contractors. Like the time they had phoned and he had bought into a vacation package to the Bahamas on a non-existent cruise ship. But this one is for real. Every issue we keep our noses to the grindstone—and there’s nothing wrong with that—but we figured there was nothing wrong with letting our editorial hair down either. As golf has always been a popular component of AWCI conventions and conferences, and we know a lot of you like the sport, we thought we’d take a light-hearted look at the subject through the eyes of the folks who play, whether for blood, money or fun.

In Search of the Perfect Place to Putt

As most golfers search for the perfect course in the same way that fishers seek out the perfect fishing hole, we decided to ask which golf course has proven to be the best each contractor has ever played.

Three courses were voted the best of the best: Arrowhead near Littleton, Colo., Pebble Beach in California, and Ko’olau outside Waikiki.

Arrowhead “is in a mountain setting and is well designed, capitalizing on its natural surroundings without disturbing the rocks, vegetation and trees,” according to a Colorado contractor. “The 13th hole is probably the most picturesque in the whole country—the tee box is positioned way up high. You have to hit the ball between two ponds and onto the green, which is about 500 feet below.”

Perhaps not surprisingly, the other vote for Arrowhead came from another Colorado man. “Sitting at the bottom of the mountains with rock formations rising hundreds of feet above the
is such a natural setting that you can be putting and have deer walk calmly across the green.”

Both Pebble Beach fans came from California. “Pebble Beach is historically one of the greatest of golf courses,” says one. “It used to be called the Old Crosby Clambake. It is very relaxing and has some great shots over the ocean.”

His view is shared (no pun intended) by another Californian. “When it comes to enjoying views, Pebble Beach is the best I’ve ever played. It is one of the most beautiful scenes you’ve ever seen. I go down there just to walk around, never mind playing golf!”

A Pennsylvanian reckons Pebble Beach is good, too, but nearby “Cypress Point has even more spectacular views while also being a very challenging course.”

Talking of challenging courses with a view, “The most difficult, challenging and beautiful course I’ve ever played was with the AWCI guys in Oahu,” recalls an Ohio golfer. “It has an insane, 165 degree slope rating.” This course is also one of the three picked by another Colorado contractor. “Ko’olau outside Waikiki on Oahu lays claim to being the toughest golf course in the nation based on its slope rating (something like 162 compared to 130 for a ‘merely difficult’ course). It is incredibly tropical and lush, nestled in a valley at the base of cliffs that appear to rise straight up. It’s more like a scene from Jurassic Park with a golf course cut through it.”

He also recommends another course in Hawaii, “The Kiele Lagoons course in Kauai, Hawaii, as well as the Ocotillo in Chandler, outside Phoenix, Ariz.

“In the lagoons course, the holes run along the ocean, with a view of a large lighthouse off the point and the port. It’s incredibly scenic, as well as being very well maintained.

“The Chandler has a clubhouse, the 19th hole as they like to say, which won an award for “best clubhouse.” It’s a meticulously maintained course with not a single blade of grass out of place. A waterway follows most of the course, adding to the difficulty as well as the scenery.”

A Texan likes “La Canterra in San Antonio because it has some of the neat- est holes I have ever played. One of the signature holes has a 60-foot bluff drop-off from the tee box.”

Another course that caters to those who are not “vertiginously challenged” is The Bridges at Pancho Santa Fe outside San Diego, which another Californian reports is “an exclusive course and little-known golf course that just opened up. It has engineered bridges that span 180 yards across canyons that you hit your ball across. There’s more sheer beauty in the canyons, hillsides and ravines on that course than you’ll ever find on any other course. It’s also immaculately kept with manicured fairways. They use a new type of grass for the greens that puts better than any other green. Until you play it, you’ll never know how good it is. I did play at Jack Nicklaus’ Cabo del Sol golfcourse down in [Los Cabos] Mexico, designed around the ocean, which is also very pleasant.”

Moving further north, a contractor from Washington gives his seal of approval to Tenon Pines in Jackson, Wyo. “It’s a combination of the difficulty of the course—its length and narrowness and the many water and sand traps—and the scenic,
mountainous surroundings. The course lies at the of the Teton Mountains.”

Valhalla Golf Club, in Louisville, Ky, is the choice of a Kentucky golfing enthusiast. “The PGA Championship was held there this summer. The variety between the link-style front nine and the back nine makes it a very interesting course. It’s also immaculately cared for and very challenging.”

Another golfer from California also likes well-cared-for courses, particularly “the Quarry in Palm Desert, which has very few members and is absolutely immaculate—there’s no such thing as a bad lie or a bad piece of grass.” The same impressed a New Hampshire contractor about the Painted Desert in Las Vegas, “which has a great layout and is very well maintained.” One of the Californians had a runner-up, LA Country Club North, founded in the 1920s, for being the best course to relax in.

“You Disconnect, Then You Bond”

Ain’t that the truth? Which brings us to some philosophy that a couple of Californian contractors offered as to why so many folks play golf (Does this something about all golfers, or just Californian golfers?).

“I play golf about four times a week with customers, competitors and employees. Golf mirrors what we do at work every day. There are winners and losers, but at the end of the day, we’re all still friends, whether it’s on the golf course or in the daily process of bidding and contracting. I think that’s why, when you get contractors golfing together, good stories and good fun are the result. It helps our relationships and, after four hours away from phones and other problems, everything seems a little bit easier.”

The second echoes these sentiments: “The whole idea of golf is being able to relax and be totally focused—no office, no cell phones. There are very few places where you don’t take your cell phone these days, and the golf course is one of them.

“The whole idea about golf and being on a golf course with peo-
people you’re doing business with is that when conflicts arise, you’ve already been through five hours on the course together and, therefore, you’re more inclined to resolve that conflict. It’s a way to introduce people. You’ll never close a job by taking someone golfing, because it isn’t a sales tool so much as an operational one.”

The Lighter Side of Golf

Given that golf can be anything from a profession to a pastime, it has its serious, even quasi-religious moments as well as its lighter side. So we asked contractors what their most instructive, interesting or even amusing experience had been on the links.

For the golfer from Washington, it was the time “we were playing with a four-some and one of the guys teed off. The ball went out 90 yards, hit a tree and ended up behind us! We all got out of the way real quick!”

The Texan remembers the time he was “standing on the fairway when some friends approached in a golf cart. They stopped about 5 feet away and thought they had put the cart in reverse but then proceeded to run the cart all the way up my leg. I’m lying on the ground, they’re on top of me, none of us can move, and we are all hurting ourselves laughing. My ankle hurt, too, but I finished the round.”

Another vehicular incident was reported by a Californian, when “a friend, the worse for having demolished a gallon jug of his favorite drink, appropriately named Mudslides, drove his car too close to a deep sand trap and slid right into it.

“‘This was at one of our all-day, annual Contractor Scrambles, at which the rules are bent and cheating is accepted and even expected. The winner is the person with the best eraser on his or her pencil. And one or two carts end up in the lake because somebody drank too much. Those are the funniest days, when you
have a group of friends who are not good golfers but who enjoy golfing.”

Some of you may have been present at an AWCI tournament when the Kentucky contractor “put a token in a ball machine to get some practice balls and forgot to put a basket underneath the ball drop.” It’s unlikely anyone was present, however, when the Colorado contractor was “playing ‘jungle golf in the rain in Mexico after a few too many cocktails, to the percussive accompaniment of a large boom box.”

The golfer from Pennsylvania was most impressed with the quasi-jungle setting of a golf course on a Caribbean island, which he shared with green monkeys and other assorted exotic animals.

If letting your hair down characterizes the most amusing incidents for some, it was saying exactly the right thing at the right time that impressed another Californian. When I was in college, I took a course in golf because I needed two units in PE to graduate. For three months we hit these little whiffle balls that only go about 20 yards when you hit them at full tilt. On the last day, we finally were allowed on a real golf course. One of the foursome got a hole-in-one and instead of jumping up and down, he turned to the instructor who was playing with us, handed her the club and said quietly “I think that’s an ‘A,” and walked off. He got his ‘A’

One of the philosophical Californians gets a lot of his thrills, over and above a club’s historical links and view, the peace and “bonding” opportunities it offers, from another aspect of the game. “Golf is all about the gambling. On Saturday, we go out and play in a sevensome with say a $10 bet four ways that gets all of the combinations—a bet on the front nine, on the back nine and then two bets on the 18. Then you have bets between individuals. Then at the end of the game, you’ve got to figure out how much everybody owes, which can get pretty intense.”

For one of the Georgians, the most rewarding experience was when some “retired guys let me be the deep player in a foursome, because I was still learning. They took the time and had the patience each and every week to give me pointers.

If it’s not too much like asking an angler for the size of the one that got away, we asked what the most satisfying shot was each contractor had ever made.

“Chipping one in when you’re off the grain is the most satisfying shot,” says a Californian. “It’s not like a hole-in-one, which most people never get to make.”

“I made a 3-foot putt once,” jokes a Californian. “But I finally made a hole-in-one with a very easy shot on a 150-yard hole. The reason it was so satisfying was that it was 28 years in the coming.”

The Pennsylvanians crowning shot was the one that caused him to win an important game recently.

The Ohio golfer’s “most satisfying shot
The Last Laugh

Looking at the lighter side of golf could hardly be complete without a look at a good golf joke or two. Unfortunately, most of them involve sex and/or religion for some reason (is it only in the West that the Holy Trinity plays so much golf?), which makes them hard to print and still be politically or even socially correct. A handful did make it passed the censor’s eagle eye, however. Here we go:

*A Catholic priest was coming in on nine and had a terrible sand shot to make. A kid standing there suggested the father open up his stance and move the ball further forward on his left foot. The father makes the best sand shot in his life and he keeps making the best shots ever as the lad follows him around the course offering suggestions. The father is ecstatic as he shoots par for the first time in his life, and can’t thank his young mentor enough.

The young man says, “That’s okay father. That’ll be a hundred bucks.”

“What do you mean?” asks the father.

The kid says, “Well, I’m the pro here, that’s what I charge for a lesson.”

“Oh my goodness, I didn’t realize we were making a contract. But I’ve got to admit, you’ve helped my game tremendously. I don’t have $100 on me, but the 7 o’clock Mass on Sunday is real good for collections. Can you come to Church at 7 on Sunday for the money?”

When the kid agrees, the father asks, “And would you bring your mother and father?”

“I guess so,” replies the kid, “But why?”

To which the priest replies, “Well, after I’ve collected, I’ll marry them for you.”

* * * *

When a man makes a terrible slice down a fairway running next to a freeway, the ball hits a bus and a horrible accident ensues. Naturally, the man finishes his game and finds a highway patrolman waiting for him at the 18th hole.

“Are you that guy who hit that terrible slice onto the freeway that caused that terrible accident?” he asks.
When the golfer admits to this fact, the patrolman asks, “What do you intend to do about it?”

To which the golfer replied, “Well, if I move my left hand a little bit more to the right . . . .”

He replies: “I set my alarm for 5:30 a.m. When it goes off, I shut off my alarm, nudge the wife and ask, “Golfcourse or intercourse?”

So she says, “Wear your sweater.”

* * * * *

A couple met at Miami Beach and fell madly in love. They were discussing how they would continue their relationship after their vacations were over when the man admits,

“It’s only fair to warn you, Mary Jane, that I’m a golf nut. I live, eat, sleep and breathe golf”

“Since we’re being honest, Joe, you should know that I’m a hooker,” she replies.

“I see,” Joe says pensively Then, he smiles and says, “It’s probably because you’re not keeping your wrists straight when you hit the ball.”

* And for those who may not think golf is everything it is cracked up to be and who have suffered through this article, the last joke is for you: Why is golf called golf? Because all the other four-letter words were used up.

About the Author
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Bill returns home from his regular Saturday game of golf with Harry. His wife asks about his day, to which Bill replies, “Oh, I played pretty well, but it was a long day.”

When his wife asks why Bill replies, “Well, on the 3rd hole, we’re quite a ways from the clubhouse, Harry just up and dies of a heart attack. I tried mouth-to-mouth, I tried everything, but he just died.”

When his wife says, “That’s terrible,” Bill replies earnestly, “You’re damn right it is. All day long, ‘hit the ball, drag Harry, hit the ball, drag Harry’”

* * * * *

Four married men are playing a round of golf and naturally get to talking.

First Man: “You have no idea what I had to do to be able to come out golfing this weekend. I had to promise my wife that I’d paint every room in the house next weekend.”

Second Man: “That’s nothing, I had to promise my wife that I’d build a new deck for the pool.”

Third Man: “You had it easy. I had to promise my wife I’d remodel the kitchen.”

They continue to play when they realize the fourth guy hasn’t said anything and query him.