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GOLF BUSINESS



CHANGING COURSE

LAGGING BEHIND CHANGING TIMES AND TRENDS,
INDIAN WELLS TRANSFORMED ITSELF INTO A RESORT
DETERMINED TO STAY AHEAD OF THE GAME

GADGETS FOR A GREATER GOOD
THE WHAT AND WHEN OF ADAPTING TECHNOLOGY

MAXIMIZING MILLENNIALS
BRIDGING THE WORKFORCE GENERATION GAP

Top of the Rock is an over-the-top golf experience located in Missouri.



Bringing Life To the Landscape

Most golf course operators can't relate to Top of the Rock, located at Big Cedar Lodge Resort in Ridgedale, Missouri. However, the moral of this story is anyone with imagination can find unique, creative ways to redo a property.

For Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris, following his ingenuity has been a driving force in his personal and professional life. "Mr. Morris has the vision and creativity for all of this," says head professional Eric Smith. "He can look at the landscape and bring it to life."

Morris recruited legends Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer and Tom Watson to contribute to his dream high atop the stunning property overlooking scenic Table Rock Lake. Nicklaus designed a world-class, nine-hole par-3 course so good that Morris convinced the PGA Champions Tour to include the course as the first and only par-3 to host a regular-season event, in conjunction with its nearby Buffalo Ridge 18-holer.

The Arnold Palmer Driving Range has 16 target greens, recessed night-

time lighting and is made entirely of artificial turf, including the practice bunkers (white-sand turf) and greens (with longer turf and filled-in sand to hold shots).

"People first think the range is the golf course," Smith says. "The only thing real is the water and rock. There's no mowing or watering the range, and it always looks perfect."

Watson designed the "Himalayan" Putting Green, inspired by the iconic Himalayas Putting Course at Scotland's St. Andrews. Table Rock's version features 20 feet in elevation change and putts up to 200 feet long.

The par-3 course, which features bentgrass greens and fairways and bluegrass rough, includes an island green on the 121-yard sixth hole, a cliffhanger waterfall, nature trails and a 2.5-mile Lost Cave and Nature Trail Tour as part of the green fee.

Meanwhile, the golf shop/Mexican restaurant is an old barn that was originally located near Palmer's Latrobe, Pennsylvania, home. Amish craftsmen carefully disassembled the barn's 46-foot timbers—some of which are more than 250 years old—transported them to Top of the Rock, and rebuilt the barn plank by plank.

Morris' desire to preserve his beloved Ozarks resulted in a place that is as visionary as it is unique. —Steve Donahue

Involving Your COMMUNITY

HOW DO YOU REINVIGORATE A CLUB that has hit hard times and entice the locals to come out and support your facility? Sometimes, it's as simple as asking the question no one has considered.

"I put out a letter to the members at all seven Cliffs properties asking: Does anybody want to jump on a tractor and mow fairways?" recounts Davis Sezna, who served as CEO of The Cliffs Communities in North and South Carolina when the company experienced some of the hardest times in the industry. "I had all kinds of men and women call and say, 'Yeah, I'd love to do that.'"

Sezna's offer was more than a chance for well-heeled members to ride on a large toy. Rather, it was a bonding exercise within a community, a chance for members to build more than a financial interest in their club.

"Why wouldn't you ask members if they'd like to mow the grass or come over and plant flowers around the clubhouse?" asks Sezna, who now serves as CEO and managing partner of Heritage Golf Group. "They do it for their churches. They do it for the local schools. Of course they'll do it for their club."

And in so doing, the club creates a social event that connects people while improving the facilities. —Steve Eubanks