

Why golf entertainment centers are booming

| Advisers of the Year

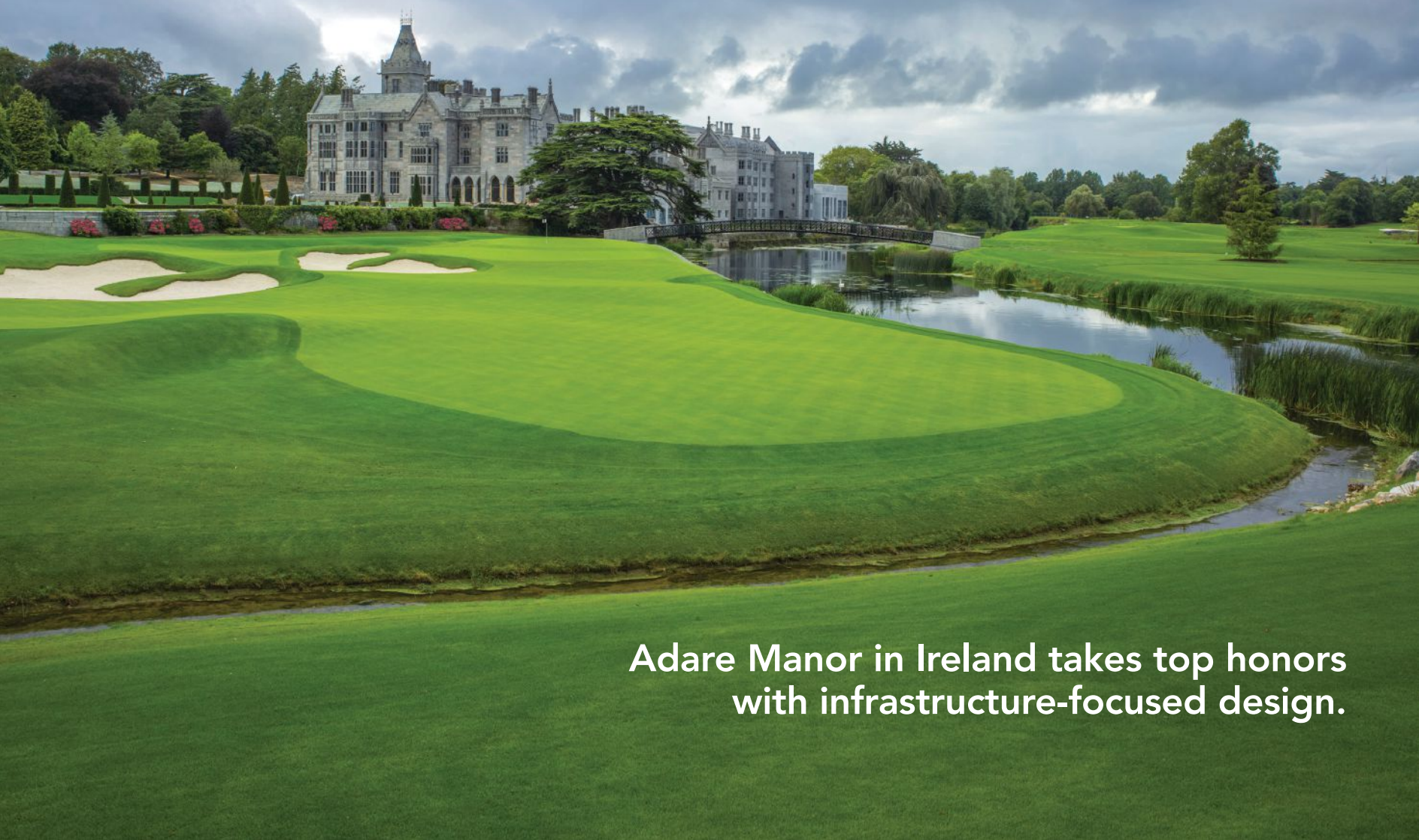
Golf Inc.™

MAY/JUNE 2019



Ryan Doerr
President/Owner
Strategic Club Solutions

Renovation of the Year



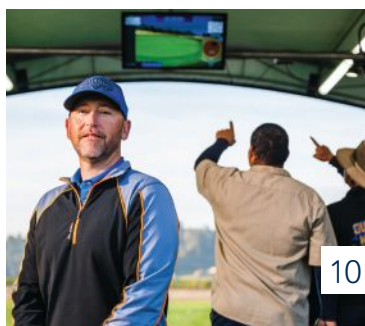
Adare Manor in Ireland takes top honors
with infrastructure-focused design.

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Ryan Doerr
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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.

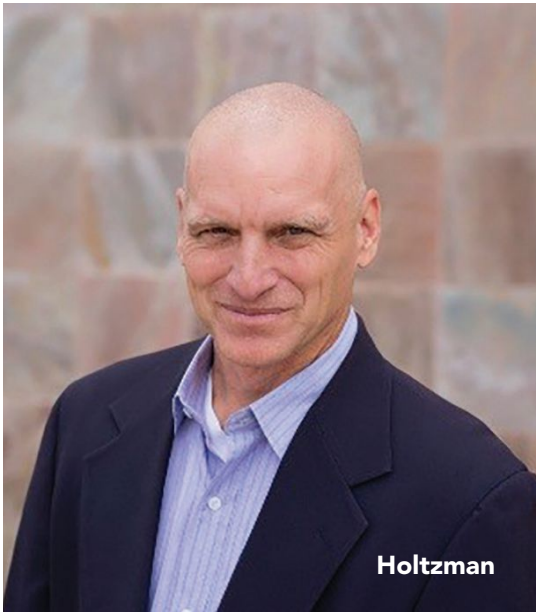
Part of the challenge was that the clubhouse manager, the course superintendent and the head pro all reporting directly to the board.

"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

