Success hinges on detail
Do a market study or roll the dice, experts tell potential developers at conference

BY MARK LESLIE
The keys to success for golf course developers are to have a market study done, plan with care, put together a team of tested professionals and create "an experience" for the golfer, according to a score of experts in the golf industry.

Speaking at a Golf Real Estate Development Conference in Palm Beach, Fla., organized by Crittenden News Service, experts hammered home the importance of detail.

"The salient message all of us would give to you," said conference chairman and golf course architect Michael Hurdzan, "is 'plan with care.'"

A project should be driven by facts, not

England learning new ropes

BY MARK LESLIE
Canadian Brian Turner's new $51-million project could be entitled "The Americanization of England," with a plot of taking championship-quality golf course design and maintenance where it has never gone before.

Turner, transplanted to England in 1984, saw an opportunity in Great Britain to combine business (he's a real-estate developer) with pleasure (he's also an avid golfer). The result: East Sussex National Golf Club in Horsted, Sussex, which introduced an American-style golf course and country club to that country for the first time when it opens eight holes of its West Course at the end of August. The rest of the West Course and the entire East Course are expected to open next May 31.

"What I saw was a business opportunity to bring excellence in golf course design and golf course conditioning to the British Isles. It didn't exist over here," Turner said.

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Sci-fi-like invasion worries supers

BY WILL BARTLETT
South of the Mason-Dixon line an invasion is taking place by a well-organized army: Imported fire ants. Lacking any natural enemies, the ants have spread unchecked across the South and Southeast, damaging everything in their path from golf course rough, fairways, cart paths and irrigation systems to crops, grasslands and animals.

There are two methods of treating the problem of fire ants: Individual mound treatment and broadcast treatment of the entire area with a bait insecticide. Most golf course superintendents spot treat the course meanders around four lakes and over rolling terrain. More information on new courses around the country and a table listing courses on which plans have started in the last month are on pages 12 and 13.

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Environmental movement may hinder plans

BY MARK LESLIE

"Environmental laws that make development tougher and more time-consuming threaten to dampen the golf course boom that many in the industry are predicting," said Michael Hurdzan, president of the environmental engineering firm of Wisdom Associates, Inc., in Stuart, Fla., said, "There are quite a few horror stories associated with the purchase of properties."

"With the environmental movement and Congress being environmentally sensitive, there are a lot of things to look at in buying and using property," Wisdom said.

"You can build a pretty fine golf course for $1.5 million to $2 million over three years."

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dreams, said Ken Creeley, chief executive officer of Club Consultation and Management.

The first step for a prospective golf course developer to take, the experts agreed, is have a market study prepared to first decide if a course in the area would make a profit and so that he can give potential investors a complete description of the project from operating plans to financing required; a summary of projected cash flows; the current market conditions and long-term demands; and his own background.

The developer should make sure he has a market study and economics that he can be very expensive and you don't want to have to have that type of work done over again. Wisdom suggested that the developer hire a consultant at the beginning; get an updated soil survey and topographic survey; use consistent scales with the maps; get a biologist to the site to determine if and where any wetlands is, then get the regulatory agencies to the site to verify those findings in writing; and have an environmental audit done.

"The environmental audit is most important," Wisdom said. "You must know the past history of the site backwards and forwards, then get a pro to do an audit of the site to check out the land, violations, past violations, places used to store toxic substances, and use man's amenities, it's hard to beat a golf course."