Five-holer left behind in Saudi desert

"The Dune Country Club" will go out of business as quickly as it was fashioned. Creators WOI Eric Binger and 1st Sgt. Gary Marquardt had enough of the desert heat.

They built the five-hole, 2,424-yard course "somewhere in the Saudi Arabian desert" a few weeks after arriving in late October with the Fort Carson, Colo., 52nd Engineer Battalion.

Flags were made from scraps from the base camp. The final hole is a 928-yard par 9, dogleg right. Small, sagebrush-like plants cover the first half of the hole, rocks the rest of the "fairway.

Most of Marquardt's irons have chunks missing from contact with rocks, and he may be stateside now in possession of a new set.

A home-made scorecard lists these rules:

• No carts allowed on the course.
• A one-liter bottle of water, or two one-quart canteens per person mandatory for play.
• Raking of sand traps not necessary.

The most important piece of equipment Binger and Marquardt carried was not in their bags, but rather strapped on the outside. An M-16A1 is more valuable than a favorite driver or putter.

Their loads now will be much lighter.

No more rifles and no cumbersome battle dress uniforms with protective gas masks hung from their waists.

And there'll be the cooling prospect of the 19th hole at round's end.

Ancient cooking utensils found, course developers hit with tab

CHIBA, Japan — The snail darter and endangered species counterpointing construction companies and golf course builders headaches aren't confined to the United States.

While Japanese archaeologists rejoice over discovery of 2,000-year-old Jomon-style cooking utensils on the grounds of the Country Club Glenmore in Chiba Prefecture, developers of the Pete Dye-designed course find themselves further frustrated.

They'd previously been plagued by a storm and a fire.

After the utensils were unearthed, construction was halted. Costs of excavation, transport and care of the artifacts will hit several hundred million yen, which the course must pay.

Despite these setbacks, Glenmore is expected to open this spring.

City withholds design payments

COSTA MESA, Calif. — The CostaMesa City Council has balked at paying a Santa Rosa design firm $21,000 to renovate the driving range and irrigation system at a municipal golf course.

The firm, Ronald Fream Design Ltd., has incurred the costs of the redesign and was under the impression that the work was ready to go out to bid, according to design associate David Dale. He added that the company does not do work on speculation, and is expecting payment.

City officials will seek bids from other firms interested in the project, said Mayor Mary Hornbuckle. Council members accused the Santa Rosa firm of designing the Los Lagos driving range as if it existed in a more arid area such as Palm Springs.

The city manager and golf course committee had recommended that officials award the contract to the firm based on the belief that the city had an existing contract with it and that the irrigation and driving range improvements would be added to that contract.

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