Johnston's touch a traditional one at Southerness

ATLANTA, Ga. — Southerness Golf Club, the city's newest daily-fee golf course, designed by Clyde Johnston, opened Nov. 1.

Located 20 minutes from downtown Atlanta, next to the Panola Mountain State Park, Southerness is being developed and operated by The Clubs Group, Ltd. of Hilton Head Island, S.C.

Adjoining South River on the grounds of an antebellum cotton plantation, its builders feel Southerness combines Southern hospitality and resort service with some of the best traits of Scottish golf.

Southern touches include: the original plantation house (circa 1822 and spared by General Sherman, who passed on the other side of the river), which stands at the club entrance; 200-year-old oak trees throughout the course; and historic Flat Bridge, which crosses the South River near the 10th green.

The most visible Scottish touch is the use of a traditional wicker basket to top each flagpole. The rolling hills, grass bunkering and eight different grasses found on the golf course also add a Scottish flavor.

The course's signature hole is the 16th, a 175-yard par-3, playing across Alexander Lake and framed by a waterfall.
big supporters of golf course building. It's usually been private money, and that is tuffer to find right now.

"But, I don't think anything will stop it (golf course growth), though it might slow it down a bit," Carrick said. His clients have found a "variety of financing methods - some limited partnerships, others joint venture partnerships, various lending institutions. Not many are getting money from banks and, when so, they are foreign banks."

His developers have numbered some Canadians, some Asians and some Swiss, he said.

Carrick said construction has tapered off since an active 1990. He attributed part of the reason to a recession that hit in 1990.

"A lot of businesses especially retail have gone under. But it hasn't hurt the golf industry that much," he said. "Some high-end private clubs are hurting a little. It's usually been private money, and that is tougher to find right now."

Carrick said most of the courses he has designed in the last few years are stand-alone courses.

Citing a "huge pent-up demand" for courses in southern Ontario and elsewhere, the Canadian Golf Foundation's Gordon bemoaned: "But we're building the wrong kind of courses. We should be building the easily accessible golf course that you don't have to pay $40,000 or $50,000 to join."

REGIONS VARY GREATLY

Gordon said golf development takes on a "distinct regionalization in Canada. Basically, it is a country 3,000 miles long and 100 wide (in terms of population)," he said.

The Niagara Escarpment Commission has put a moratorium on development on the escarpment, which is from five to 10 miles wide and runs hundreds of miles from Niagara Falls to the tip of the Bruce Peninsula, which separates the bulk of Lake Huron from Georgian Bay. Yet, "There are areas where you can build a golf course carte blanche - especially where the provincial governments are involved. In our Atlantic provinces, the development is very welcome. They need golf courses and courses are going in there with very few environmental problems. The federal and provincial governments are very involved in some places, like Prince Edward Island. Getting a province and feds involved is key to getting a course built," Gordon said.

With the recession, Gordon said, development slowed in Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. And with a strong environmental lobby, construction has slowed in particular in Ontario and British Columbia.

"It is saturated with people but it's a huge pent-up demand for courses, but much is in limbo because of the recession and the political climate."

"Southern Ontario - There's been a slowdown... We got on the equity bandwagon in the past three or four years. There are a number of excellent courses that went to an equity membership plan and they are having problems filling their equity rolls. That pool of equity money shrunk quickly when the recession hit in 1990."

"A lot of people have projects on the drawing board but are waiting to see what happens. There's such a huge pent-up demand for courses, there. But we're building the wrong kind of courses."

"Southern Manitoba - "Two years ago they had quite a few courses under construction relative to the size of the population base. Those are coming to completion now. But I don't think that pace will continue because of the financial and economic situation."

"Southern Saskatchewan - "There is some development."

"Southern Alberta - "Golf course development is booming. It's huge."

"Southern British Columbia - "It is saturated with people but they do want to build the courses. There are a lot of mountains. Plus, it very tightly regulates its agricultural land. There are 100 to 200 proposals, but they can't build because of the ban."

THE FUTURE

So what does the future hold? If moratoriums or bans are held in place, the Niagara Escarpment and British Columbia will have frustrated golfers. In the Atlantic provinces, happy golfers.

Gordon points to three plans he expects will benefit the industry. First, he said the CGF is "trying to plant the seed" for more govern
**Courses newly approved in North America**

**Arizona**
- Location: Eloy
- Course Name: Tohono/Eloy Golf Course
- Type: M
- Class: R
- Work: N
- Contact: Golf Group Ltd.