Briefs

By Peter Blais

MADISON, Wis. -- Last month's opening of University Ridge brought to 40 the number of university-owned and operated golf courses in the United States.

Developed as a top-notch resort course, the Robert Trent Jones Jr.-designed facility is located on 225 acres of rolling hills, meadows and woodlands at the University of Wisconsin. The University of Wisconsin Foundation picked up the entire $5.5-million tab from private donations.

"They had all fallen into disrepair," remembered Whitten.

Still, they are excellent courses, added Whitten, as are Eisenhower Golf Course at the United States Air Force Academy, Seven Oaks Golf Course at Colgate University and Karsten Golf Course at Arizona State University.

Golf ticket taps corporate sports entertainment budget

By Peter Blais

MERRIMACK, N.H. -- A New Hampshire company is marketing a ticket that corporations can distribute to clients who could then exchange them for a round of golf at courses nationwide.

Corporate Sports Incentives is selling the Universal GolfTicket to national corporations in the hope they will give to their best customers just as they distribute baseball, basketball, football and hockey tickets.

CSI contends the golf ticket is more valuable than a sports event pass because the golf ticket can be used anytime at any location -- as opposed to the sports ticket that can be used only at a certain date and place. The golf ticket resembles a credit card and can be embossed with the giver's company logo to help the recipient remember where he got it.

"For the first time, the golf industry can obtain its fair share of corporate funds allocated to entertainment budgets," said company founder, Jonathan Adams.

CSI's goal is to sign up 3,000 courses within the next two years. Fifty, mostly in the Northeast, were on board in early June.

"Our major effort right now is to contact and sign up more courses," Adams said.

It costs courses nothing to join and the tickets are not discounted. A course will be reimbursed within 10 days at 100 percent of its published price when tickets are presented for a round of golf.

The program is patterned after CSI's Universal SkiTicket. Corporations buy the ski ticket for $42, which can be exchanged for a free lift ticket at 240 of the country's 300 major ski resorts. Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Hires, Seagram's, General Foods, Nestle's, Carnation and Campbell Soups are among the companies that have distributed Universal SkiTickets to their favored clients over the past five years.

The Universal GolfTicket works somewhat differently. The price of the $42 ski ticket was determined by the lift ticket rate at the most expensive of CSI's participating ski resorts.

With greens fees varying from $5 to almost $200 in the United States, a different method was needed. Corporations buy the Universal GolfTicket for $32 apiece. Adams anticipates one ticket will be good for a round of golf at 80 percent of the courses joining the program. But some courses require two, three or more tickets, depending on their greens fees.

For example, one ticket is good for 18 holes at Hyannis Golf Club in Massachusetts. Two tickets are needed for 18 holes and a cart at Copper Mountain Resort in Colorado. Three tickets fetch 18 holes and a cart at the Balsams Grand Hotel Resort in New Hampshire.

"If we ever sign on Pebble Beach, it might take something like six tickets," Adams said.

While CSI expects most of the tax-deductible Universal Golf Tickets will be distributed by executives to clients, Adams said they will likely be used as rewards in company sales incentive programs for employees and as gifts for relatives and friends.

"We've sold a lot of ski tickets at Christmas time as stocking stuffers," he said.

CSI has already sold its first load of golf tickets to a corporate customer. Adams expects sales to accelerate, especially as more courses sign up for the program.

More courses will join the program as it gains credibility, he said. Ski areas with golf courses, because of their familiarity with the Universal SkiTicket, have been among the first to enlist for the golf program, Adams added.

"My only question as a golf course manager would be 'How do I know if I'll be paid if I accept this ticket?' We've got a solid, five-year history with the ski areas. In fact, the ski areas have a greater exposure than golf courses. Killington (Vt.) runs through something like 16,000 skiers a day. A golf course, at most, is only going to have some..."
S.C. resorts and educational institutions combine efforts

Continued from page 33

all students who receive a satisfactory grade.

And the response from employees was even greater than anticipated. The Turf Management class, open to 20 students, was filled by employees of Royal Golf & Tennis. So the Career Education Center decided to offer the same class on separate nights to employees of other area resorts. “This pilot program has been a good start,” Vaughan said. “We like being a good neighbor and, from this, many good things have happened. We invited other major resorts to participate in the program and the response has been overwhelming. Sea Pines, for example, has commissioned the same Turf Management course and three other properties are participating with us in the Horticulture course.

“We’ve been pleased with the response of our associates, to know they have an eagerness to learn,” Vaughan said. “We want people to get excited about education.”

According to Koll, a Clemson Agricultural Education graduate who has taught secondary students at the vocational school for 10 years, students are excited about the courses.

“It’s a real pleasure teaching adults,” he said. “They are so willing to learn. Many of the students were apprehensive about being back in the classroom after being in the workplace for 10 or 15 years, so we keep it real informal and low key.”

According to the students themselves, Koll’s approach works.

“It’s definitely been worth the time,” said Jerry Rivers, who has operated turf equipment for the past six years. “We learned about safety and human relations and other things you just don’t pick up on the job.”

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