Fledgling club association wins fight against taxation

By Hal Phillips

HARTFORD, Conn. — Two years ago, representatives of several Connecticut golf clubs kicked around the idea of forming a statewide organization. But for one reason or another, the time wasn't right.

In 1991, the recession-wracked state passed a six-percent sales tax on sports and recreational clubs dues. That encumbrance was levied on top of the existing 10 percent excise tax already paid by such clubs — making the effective state tax a whopping 15 percent.

Suddenly, Connecticut club owners and managers had all the incentive they needed.

The Connecticut Club Association was born early in 1992, having filed a certificate of incorporation in February. Five months later, the six percent tack-on tax was repealed.

"We really didn't get off the ground that first year," recalls CCA President Paul Mersereau, who also serves as president at Hartford Golf Club. "Then the six

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Automatic tee time reservation systems a boon for club managers, not just players

By Hal Phillips

When automated tee-time reservation systems burst on the scene a few years ago, many industry observers viewed the development as a convenience exclusive to players... and why not? The ease of 24-hour reservations by credit card, no more busy signals while phoning the pro shop, and prime tee times for those who plan ahead.

However, automated reservation systems are beginning to prove their worth on the management side, as well. There are drawbacks, but daily fee club managers and golf directors recognize the advantages of arranging their tee schedules by computer, by phone.

"When I first came on in April of 1991 and talked to the owner, we thought it would be a great service to the golfer... and it is," said Peter Dupuis, director of golf at Shaker Hills Golf Club in Harvard, Mass. "But as it turns out, it's been a tremendous convenience for me and my staff."

Shaker Hills, an upscale daily-fee operation, has used an Aurora Reservation Systems Inc. since the course opened in July 1991. The Aurora-based firm currently serves 65 courses in 12 states, and Dupuis is happy with the results.

"Plain and simple, it takes the place of some staff," Dupuis explained. "There's no comparison. It frees up time for personal attention in the pro shop."

In a survey of its 39 clients nationwide, another manufacturer of automated tee-time software — Fairway Systems of Englewood, Colo. — found the computer reservation service decreased calls to the pro shop by 15 percent.

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By Peter Dupuis
Shaker Hills GC

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Windfall... by phone

The par-3 11th hole at Shaker Hills Golf Club in Harvard, Mass.

AGC deals with lease problems in Oceanside

OCEANSIDE, Calif. — Residents and city officials in cash-strapped Oceanside continue to seek changes in their existing lease with American Golf Corp., which operates Oceanside Municipal Golf Course. AGC is looking to change the lease, as well.

The Oceanside City Council, which has been negotiating alterations in the lease for more than a year, is looking for fee increases and a higher percentage of revenue from the golf course.

Under the current agreement, which expires in 2002, the city of 135,000 receives 12 percent of gross revenues from the course. AGC netted $782,000 in 1991, while Oceanside received less than $200,000.

Yet, AGC isn't particularly happy with the lease either. "We are looking for some fee increases," said Gail Goodrich, AGC vice president. "We haven't had any fee increases in four years."