Tournament Players Course at The Woodlands, Texas, 75204; telephone — 214-871-... Luersen joined The Woodlands Conference Center in Williamsburg, Va. Analyses (GPA) has been retained by the conference center and resort here. In his new position, Luersen is responsible for the overall management and operation of the conference center, including the Tournament Players Course at The Woodlands. Luersen joined The Woodlands in 1993 as director of operations. Prior to that, he served as resident manager at the Kingmiller Resort and Conference Center in Williamsburg, Va.

GREAT AMERICAN RELOCATES

DALLAS — Great American Clubs, Inc. has relocated its corporate offices here. The company, which is headquartered in New Garden Township, Chester County, Pa., purchased the Ocean Course on nearby Kiawah Island, which had been developed by the failed Landmark Land Co. Audubon purchased the seaside masterpiece from Resolution Trust Co., the federal agency charged with selling off Landmark’s former holdings. Federal bankruptcy court must still approve the sale.

Audubon was able to rustle up the $27 million through its alliance with two investors: VIT, an arm of Richmond, Va.-based AMF Companies; and Kiawah Resort Associates, the owners of undeveloped residential land on Kiawah Island. VIT had already purchased the Kiawah Island resort complex — save the Ocean Course — from the RTC in July. Because of the course’s environmental sensitivity, the RTC was obligated to allow qualified conservation groups to bid separately on the Ocean Course, as stipulated by the Coastal Barrier Improvement Act.

“It’s our belief at N.Y. Audubon that in order to do long-term good, we have to merge environmental ethic with the business world,” said N.Y. Audubon President Ron Dodson. “We recognize that we can’t run down to the local bank and withdraw $27 million. It’s not unusual for conservation groups to enter the market value appraisal for the Talamore Reserve Golf Course, as stipulated by the Coastal Conservation Association Program for Golf Course Developers, which has created bird sanctuaries at 800 golf courses nationwide. The pro-active program, founded in 1990, has proved to be a significant environmental and public relations success.

Lesnik, whose firm manages 15 courses across the country (see story above), will discuss Audubon’s Cooperative Wildlife Sanctuary Program for Golf Course Developers, which has created bird sanctuaries at 800 golf courses nationwide. The pro-active program, founded in 1990, has proved to be a significant environmental and public relations success. Kemper recently secured the management contract for Desert Lakes, which was purchased from Desert Lakes Development L.P. for $31.5 million. Located a few minutes from Bullhead City, Ariz., Laughlin, Nev., Desert Lakes is one of just four golf courses in the region. Its amenities include an 18-hole, 6,569-yard course that features two lakes. An aquatic driving range features two island, target greens. NRG is a self-administered real estate investment trust based in Santa Monica, Calif. President Craig Price also serves as president and chief operating officer. Kemper recently secured the management contract for Desert Lakes, which was purchased from Desert Lakes Development L.P. for $31.5 million. Located a few minutes from Bullhead City, Ariz., Laughlin, Nev., Desert Lakes is one of just four golf courses in the region. Its amenities include an 18-hole, 6,569-yard course that features two lakes. An aquatic driving range features two island, target greens. Kemper recently secured the management contract for Desert Lakes, which was purchased from Desert Lakes Development L.P. for $31.5 million. Located a few minutes from Bullhead City, Ariz., Laughlin, Nev., Desert Lakes is one of just four golf courses in the region. Its amenities include an 18-hole, 6,569-yard course that features two lakes. An aquatic driving range features two island, target greens.
Kemper Management
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irrigation systems at the other facilities where it makes sense," Schmidt said.

Schmidt said Kemper believes in re-investing in its properties in order to optimize rather than maximize a facility's potential. "You can maximize profits right away by just taking money out of a course and putting nothing back in. That works well for about 2-1/2 years. You don't notice too much the first year. Then the second everything starts falling apart until nothing is left.

"We believe in optimizing. It doesn't maximize your return in the short term. But it makes the product better each year and allows the owner to make more profit for a longer time."

While it prefers ownership and lease arrangements, the company has not forsaken the management-only market. Kemper has management contracts at Vernon Hills (III.) Golf Course as well as Pipestone and Mound Golf Course, both in Miamiusburg, Ohio. "We strongly believe in giving the golfer value for his dollar. Kemper Lakes greens fees are $95 and Vernon Hills $10. Both are full all the time. That's because we provide value for both types of golfer. We take a lot of pride in that."

Kemper's mission, Schmidt said, is one of providing quality, not quantity. The company plans to acquire two to four courses per year. "That's a reasonable number we can absorb in a quality manner," the company president said. "We're excited about the opportunities out there. But we'll only do things that make sense."

Making those judgments will be an experienced management staff. Chairman of the Board James Kemper is former chairman of the board of Kemper Group. He founded Kemper Lakes and oversees major policy decisions.

Chief Executive Officer Steven Lesnisk has 25 years experience in communications, marketing and sports management. Before founding Kemper Sports in 1978, he was vice president of Kemper Group.

Other key personnel include Schmidt, vice presidents Ben Brundred, Tom Lenz and Robert Wallace, Chief Financial Officer Bradley Stake, Marketing Manager Jeff Hunt and Director of Golf Bob Spence.

Landmark re-emerges
Continued from page 1

a 36-hole development planned across the street from the TPC at Scottsdale, an 18-hole public layout under consideration in Indio, Calif., and an 18-hole course along the coast of Chile scheduled to begin construction later this year.

"Development has slowed across the country. But considering how difficult things have been since the late 1980s, we're doing pretty well," said Brian Curley, former director of golf course design for Landmark, Saguaro Courses and a partner in the new firm.

Construction should begin early in 1994 on the first 36 holes at Snow Mountain Resort, located on 3,800 acres of Paiute land 12 miles north of Las Vegas. All four courses should be completed within two years, according to former PGA Tour player Johnny Pott, a Landmark partner and project supervisor.

Pete Dye, Pott and Curley are combining to design the courses, which will cost about $7 million piece. A single clubhouse will serve all 72 holes. The entire golf project is pegged at $40 million. Casinos, hotels and residential areas are also planned.

"There are definite advantages to working with Indian land," Curley said. "There is no land cost. They have very well-established water rights. You only have to deal with federal agencies and there are no taxes. Imagine all those benefits on a site just 12 miles from downtown."

Despite its proximity to Las Vegas, the Paiutes originally planned not to have gambling at the resort. That restricted the type and amount of financing to a bond issue or traditional financing. Curley said the tribal council now plans casinos, which has attracted more financing options, he added.

"The council is meeting soon to decide what to do," Curley said.

Paradise Ridge in Scottsdale is a year away from starting construction, according to head partner Ernie Vossler. The 2,000-acre project will have a large residential area. The Indio, Calif., facility would be adjacent to Del Webb's Sun City project, and the Chile layout will be an hour from Santiago.

Landmark Land Co.'s financial woes have been well-chronicled. The Resolution Trust Corp. recently auctioned off the bankrupt firm's major properties, including PGA West, Carmel Valley Ranch, Mission Hills Country Club, LaQuinta Hotel Golf & Tennis Resort, Palm Beach Polo & Country Club and Kiawah Island Resort (see related story, page 27).

But despite those problems, Landmark Golf's partners didn't hesitate to use the name. "People in the golf business were aware of the financial situation [that brought down Landmark Land Co.]," Curley said. "Landmark's reputation for creating quality facilities has not been tarnished. The problems that hurt Landmark weren't particular to Landmark. Just about anyone dealing with S&Ls had problems during the 1980s."

National Golf Foundation Vice President Rick Norton agreed. "I can't see that the name or association is a positive or a negative," Norton said. "They obviously have good experience in the golf business. They certainly can't be held responsible for Landmark [Land Co.'s] situation."

Landmark Golf's partners include former Landmark Land executives Vossler (ex-senior VP), Pott (helped design/build Carmel Valley and PGA West), Curley, William "Buzz" Gill (ex-president of Landmark Management Co.) and Chuck Fairbanks (ex-president of Landmark Land Co. of Arizona Inc.).