GCSAA shake-up: Schilling, Roberts resign

By PETER BLAIS

LAWRENCE, Kansas—Executive Director John Schilling has resigned and other top Golf Course Superintendent Association of America staff and officials have left in the wake of a GCSAA organizational review.

Schilling offered his resignation in late August to pursue other business interests, he said. Director of Communications Robert Ochs and Director of Operations Diana Green have also left GCSAA. They, Schilling and others have formed St. Andrews Corp., a Lawrence-based firm providing consulting, management and trade services.

Prior to Schilling's resignation, Immediate Past President Bill Roberts resigned from the board of directors as a result of its decision to adopt several major changes suggested in the $24,000 Arthur Andersen Co. organizational review.

Schilling denied his decision was influenced by the Andersen study that recommended, among other things, the hiring of a chief financial officer and deputy chief executive officer, moves some saw as undermining his authority.

"The Arthur Andersen study did not play into my decision to leave," the 41-year-old executive said. "Opening my own business has been a dream since I left college. My experience with the association has put me in a position to do just that."

Schilling's resignation is effective January, according to GCSAA President Randy Nichols of Cherokee Town and Country Golf Club.

Acquisitions the aim of AGC spinoff

By PETER BLAIS

American Golf Corp., founder David Price's new company, National Golf Properties Inc., expects to spend $64 million buying new golf courses over the next 18 months.

The purchase will be financed through NGC's recent stock offering, which is expected to eventually raise more than $186 million. The company's initial portfolio includes 47 golf courses in 17 states — 23 daily-fee, 13 private and 11 resort operations. All have been and will continue to be managed by AGC.

NGP will focus on courses with strong cash flow growth potential and the possibility for long-term investment and capital appreciation, according to the company prospectus. Its founders believe many such facilities are available through Aug. 5. Another 244 are scheduled to open by Dec. 31 — the operative word being "scheduled."

"The historical average is 66 to 68 percent of those scheduled to open in a particular year actually do open that year," NGP Communications Director Bill Burbam explained.

"For various reasons they get string out and delayed. We have our biggest openings in June, July, August." Using a 60-percent calculation, that translates to another 146 courses opening between Aug. 5 and Dec. 31, for the 365 total.

Catherine-Suddarth, who tracks development for the National Golf Foundation, said late-spring snows in the Northeast and heavy rains in the Southeast set back growth-in plans and could lower the number of openings.

'93 openings may reach one per day

By MARK LESLIE

Okay. Sit down. A near-record 350 to 365 golf courses are projected to open in the United States by year's end, according to the National Golf Foundation (NGF).

Disproving predictions that openings would tail off this year after two consecutive high-powered, high-production years, developers opened 219 golf courses through Aug. 5. Another 244 are scheduled to open by Dec. 31 — the operative word being "scheduled."

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