Robert Trent Jones Jr.'s track
Best New Mountain Course
By MARK LESLIE

Robert Trent Jones Jr.'s "environmentally correct" Squaw Creek Golf Course in Olympic Valley, Calif., was named the Best Public Mountain Course to open in the last five years, according to the nation's golf course architects.

Tom Fazio's Champion Hills in Hendersonville, N.C., was voted the Best Private Mountain Course, in the poll, conducted by Golf Course News.

In other results, the poll illustrated the scarcity of large-scale public golf developers despite the high percentage of public facilities among openings the last few years. No single developer received more than a handful of votes — and, so, no winner was chosen. Even Sunbelt Corp., which over the past three years has opened the 18-course Robert Trent Jones Trail in Alabama, did not receive heavy support. Arvida, which last year was named Best Developer of Communities, and First Golf received similar support. Perhaps the most memorable vote for Best Developer came from Maury Miller of Golf Resources, Inc., who caustically cast his ballot for the Resolution Trust Corp., which took over the Landmark Land Co. properties and began auctioning them off.

Meanwhile, Jones' design team won accolades in the Golf Course News' polling. Between Don Knott and Bruce Charlton, the Jones International crew

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Environmentalists, golfers won over by Squaw Creek

By MARK LESLIE

LAFOY EXCITED ABOUT N.C. SITE

PLAYER DESIGN OPENS IN TEXAS
BAY CITY, Texas — Rio Colorado Golf Course, a new Gary Player-designed project here, has opened for play. The 18-hole, 6,824-yard, public golf course is operated by Houston-based Golf Services Group. Rio Colorado Golf Course challenges golfers with two types of golf scenery. The front nine holes of the course play through the native coastal prairies common to the Texas Gulf Coast. The second nine features Rio Colorado's signature holes which are situated on the wooded bluffs of the Colorado River.

GILMORE GRAVES ADDS FEICK
Dan Feick, landscape architect and irrigation specialist, has left the firm S.D.A., Inc. of Fargo, N. Dak., to join Gilmore Graves Golf, Inc. (GGGI) of Spring Green, Wis. GGGI operates offices in Spring Green, Phoenix, Ariz., and Pierre, S.D. Feick has been designing and supervising irrigation projects throughout the Midwest and will be involved in expanding the golf services of GGGI nationwide.

WATER, WATER AT BARDOOM NORTH
LARGO, Fla. — Bardmoor North Golf Club has added 3 1/2 acres of water on four holes of the front nine. A portion of the lake begins between the 6th fairway and 4th tee, wraps around the 3rd green and then extends along the other side of the 3rd and even dips into the fairway, creating a feeling of an island green for the 3rd hole.

SULLIVAN, CORNISH WORK TOGETHER
VALHALLA, N.Y. — Sullivan Architects of Valhalla has been retained by Westchester County as the project architect and Cornish and Silva Inc. as course architects for the expansion and rehabilitation of Mohanes Golf Course. They are hoping to have golfers playing the expanded facility by the spring of 1997.

GAZETTEER

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GOLF COURSE NEWS

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GOLF COURSE NEWS
Jones International’s Squaw Creek a winner on all fronts

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Associate. And, said Jones: “People haven’t seen half our work. [Lead designer] Kyle Phillips has done a lot of work in Europe, and Gary Linn has done a lot of work in Asia.”

For Jones, who said he does “a lot of my work in the mountains,” Squaw Creek follows renowned designs of Keystone Ranch and Sheraton Steamboat Springs in Colorado, Elkhorn and Sun Valley in Idaho, and Sugarloaf in Maine. Even before it opened July 4, 1992, Squaw Creek received notoriety not only for its design but the fact that, after an eight-year-long approval process, it opened as “chemical-free.”

’Squaw Creek is a ’90s golf course in that it is very much designed from an environmental point of view, both protecting and restoring the environment,” Jones said. “It is also avant-garde and very different from a design standpoint. The course has two characters: the pine forest edges at the bottom of the mountain; then a transition into the meadows where you play more target golf. The contrast from a player’s point of view is delightful.”

Eight years of tedious negotiations with government authorities and the public led to 100 routing plans, and, finally, an improved property, Jones said. Part of the property had served as a parking lot for the 1960 Olympics, “built by none other than the Army Corps of Engineers,” Jones said.

Also, Phillips, the project’s lead designer, said environmentalists “wanted to protect this ‘pristine mountain meadow.’ Well, we found that what was feeding this ‘pristine’ field was leachate from old septic tanks from neighbors. You couldn’t give your property away there when this all started probably quadrupled.” Meanwhile, Phillips said: “We have to irrigate a lot of the ‘wetlands’ to keep them wetlands.”

“The process itself,” Jones said, “became a very, very important addition to the environmental pool of golf courses, which started at [Jones-designed] Spanish Bay in California and courses along the Carolinas coast. This is the first time it had been done in a mountain setting.”

Jones praised superintendent Carl Rygg, who left environmentally sensitive Spanish Bay to join Squaw Creek halfway through construction.

“Carl declined to use any herbicides on the grasses, which was extraordinary. And yet he maintains the course very firm but hard and true,” said Jones. “This can only be done in mountains. You can’t abandon herbicides and pesticides where you don’t have a very cold-snap season that controls the insects naturally.”

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

Saying he agrees with much of the “ecotopian philosophy of California,” which calls for cleaner air, fresher water and better golf courses, Jones added: “I have adjusted our design philosophy to accommodate that point of view. I think Squaw Creek is a mountain example of that genre, which we will see more of in the ’90s. It’s an environmentally correct golf course.”

THE JONES INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Jones praised his design team, saying: “I think we have a marvelous atmosphere within our office... We have open discussions on what makes a course better. We do cross-referencing, cross-designing, alternative plans, alternative thinking in the field. There is no ego involved. We have very skilled individuals who want to design better golf courses and to make better architects of each other. They’re always willing to learn and listen, and to teach younger people. Our philosophy is very collegiate.”

John Cook, Hurdzan on Palm Desert project

PALM DESERT, Calif. — Michael Hurdzan and PGA touring pro John Cook are designing two championship 18-hole courses for the city of Palm Desert.

The 54-acre property will include construction of an additional 576 villas for Marriott’s vacation ownership program, 40 acres for a combination of single-family homes and condominiums on the golf courses, two hotel sites, a conference center and a sports park. In addition, a 10-acre office/medical site is proposed. The plan also includes the 26.1/2-acre Desert Springs Marketplace, the first phase of which is under construction.

Course construction is expected to begin this spring.

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