Jones Trail developers accused of property tax avoidance

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — While golfers are poised to follow the trail of seven first-class courses funded by the state’s Retirement Systems, some no-frills tax men are set to tee off on what they feel is property tax avoidance.

Tax assessors have been informed that because the Retirement Systems of Alabama is an “instrumentality” of the state, the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail should be exempt from property taxes. Ever alert to tax escape routes and dodges, assessors in Jefferson, Calhoun and Houston counties suspect possible tax evasion. They believe the RSA is taking advantage of a loophole in state tax law meant to exempt schools, parks, government buildings and such from taxation to save money in what essentially are for-profit businesses.

This will cost the state, counties, cities and school systems a few hundred thousand dollars annually in property tax revenue, they contend.

David Bronner, RSA chief executive, gave this charge his best shot. “Ridiculous!” he said. “Some nitwits think they understand what would have been a grow-in decennia ago. And now the RSA is clearly a state agency entitled to such a property tax break.”

Bronner didn’t stop there in his attack on the state’s attempt to further diversify its investment of the state’s $13 billion pension fund for the state’s teachers, government employees and judges.

He added courses are essentially done in Jefferson, Houston, Lee, Madison and Mobile counties, and that courses in Butler and Calhoun counties are under construction.

While golfers are polishing their clubs, tenacious tax men are sharpening their pencils. Their scorecards are, not over and under par figures, but dollars and cents. The higher the numbers, the keener their interest. They may not be attuned to the sound of birdie, but the click of the cash register gets their attention.

Golfers try to avoid bunkers, but superintendents don’t. Because you know that well groomed bunkers go hand in hand with well cut greens. That’s precisely why we introduced the Toro Sand Pro® two decades ago. And now offer three models, including our new Sand Pro® 3000, which gives Toro a complete line to master every kind of bunker condition.

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The Toro Sand Pro® Another innovation based on our 60 year partnership with golf course superintendents. Working together to create the ultimate in playability.

Not to mention a well groomed appearance.

Sodded Arizona track taking shape

PHOENIX, Ariz. — Foothills Club West, the first totally sodded course in Arizona, has taken swift shape.

Sodding of 90 acres — located six miles west of Interstate 10 — took 100 days. On flat areas, up to two acres were covered in one day.

The sodding cost $500,000, twice as much as seeding, but $150,000 was saved on water and fertilizer. Harder to calculate are the green fees taken in during what would have been a grow-in period.

Brian Whitcomb, managing partner of FWC Golf Group, liked opening day price. The $40 greens fee included cart.

The $4 million course cost will be matched by a 7,000-square foot clubhouse due for February opening.

Nine-hole facility underway in Indiana

MADISON, Ind. — Bill Garrett is building a nine-hole golf course and driving range on his land here. It will be known as Cozy Acres Golf Links.

Garrett describes the course as a unique par-3 with holes ranging from 105 to 200 yards.

Gilbert England, Wheatley, Ky., golf professional and course designer/builder, will supervise the project.