Iron Men, Unite!
Golf course mechanics are organizing to meet their specialized educational needs. 13

A Hole New Outlook
Turf and money can be saved by refusing to cut cups on the practice green. See "Off the Record". 16

Agronomy On-Line
With his new satellite link, Jerry Lemons takes a byte out of maintenance obstacles. 46

Big management firms shying away from RTC
By Peter Blais
DANIA, Fla. — The expensive due diligence process and sometimes inflated bidding involved in recent Resolution Trust Corp. auctions of golf properties may scare away potential bidders in the future, according to some golf industry experts. "ClubCorp wasn’t there. Neither were Cobblestone Golf, Fairways Golf, NSSL Enterprises and Remper Management," said Jeff Woodson, an associate with CB Commercial Golf/Resort Properties, which marketed Palm-Aire Spa Resort & Country Club and adjacent Oaks Golf & Racquet Club here for the RTC. "All the big players you’d normally expect just weren’t there," said Woolson. The only big-name management company to take part in the sealed bid/outbid process was Merion Management, but they were the last to submit their offer to RTC. "We had a lot of interest, but the $7.7 million price was too high," Woodson said. "We wouldn’t have bid it ourselves."

Despite public outcry, Florida DEP backs course conversion
By Mark Leslie
JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — The public is upset. Ditto, most local and county government officials. But the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has spoken and won't budge in a struggle over the 250-acre Fort George Island and its golf course designed by Donald Ross. The 18-hole Ft. George Island Golf Club, nine holes of which were designed by Ross in the 1920s, is a landmark to the golf world. But not to the Florida DEP, which has decided to make public lands available for "resource-based" as opposed to "user-oriented" recreation. Resource-based recreation means passive use, such as parks, nature trails, hiking, bird-watching and picnicking. User...

Audubon Honors Hiers
Ron Dodson (left), Audubon Society of New York State president, presents Tityi Hiers — superintendent at Ron Dodson (left), Audubon Society of New York State president, presents Tityi Hiers — superintendent at Collier's Reserve — the first John James Audubon Environmental Steward Award. See page 13 for details.

Diamond in the Rough?
Boulders occupy the rough bordering the dramatic 16th hole at Diamond Run Golf Club, a private 18-hole course which opened for play in Ohio Township, Pa. — 11 miles northwest of Pittsburgh — in mid-September. For more information on this Gary Player Design and a complete listing of the nation's new course openings, see page 24.

Researchers: Effluent yields better turf, with less water
By Lynn Tilton
C Handler, Ariz. — Wastewater produces better turf growth and can cut annual supplemental water needs on an Arizona golf course by as much as 22 percent, according to turfgrass and wastewater expert Dr. Charles Mancino of the University of Arizona. Mancino unveiled the positive results from his research findings at Turf Talk, an annual event sponsored by Garden Valley Distributors of Phoenix and attended by 150 superintendents and others.

"With effluent water, we get better turf growth on an acre foot less of water," Mancino said. Before being used, effluent should first be settled out, clarified and subjected to aerobic digestion to reduce carbon-dioxide levels, he added.

"Water thus treated is very low in carbon and is..."
CMAA Chicago Chapter hosts seminar

CHICAGO — The Club Managers Association of America (CMAA) and the Greater Chicago Chapter will host the Chicago National Regional Workshop here at The Palmer House, Nov. 6-8. During the three-day workshop, club managers will hear from industry experts and examine a variety of topics that are critical to running a successful club operation.

Issues addressed in this workshop include member service and satisfaction, budgets and current tax regulations, golf course maintenance procedures and membership and marketing strategy.

Operations focus of new CMAA manual

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The Club Managers Association of America has released its new Club Operations Manual, a compilation of the best written material on maintaining proper club operations.

One of the most significant components is the Operational Audit. Envisioned as the first part of a three-phase strategic planning tool, it provides a checklist model for an efficiently run club. Covered items include accounting, payroll/personnel, golf department, fitness and spa, racquet sports, food and beverage, membership marketing, physical plant, maintenance and risk management.

The Club Operations Manual also includes model procedures for such things as club organization, crisis communication plans, Americans with Disabilities Act awareness policies, salary administration and security procedures. The manual is available in WordPerfect 5.1. For more information contact the CMAA at 703-739-9500.

RTC auctions

Continued from page 1

-cry auction, American Golf Corp., went head-to-head with Pennsylvania businessman Benjamin Goldman for several minutes, but AGC soon folded, estimating Goldman with the courses and Woolfon shaking his head.

"The big golf buyers are just tired of jumping through all the RTC hoops," said Woolfon, noting that AGC executive Gail Goodrich spent six months and thousands of dollars researching Palm Air and Oaks Golf & Racquet.

"The cost of the due diligence process and the time involved in researching and putting together a bid are too much for many management companies. They feel there are a lot of other courses out there that are available with a lot less hassle.

Bob Husband, president of San Diego-based Cobblestone, said his company has avoided RTC auctions because of the up-front real estate costs and the emotional nature of a bidding process that often leads to a buyer paying too much for a property.

"There always seem to be people who don't know the golf industry well enough to know what it is they are buying," he said. They agree to terms that a discipline by at least 4 percent.

"If you pay too-high of a price you usually have to adopt cost-cutting measures that hurt the course. I don't blame the RTC for putting courses out at an auction outcry and getting the highest price it can. That's its job. But buyers who pay too much for a course have to stand in their eyes. Golf operations must be driven by credit potential."

Husband said a sealed-bid process rather than an outcry auction not only makes it easier on those interested in buying a golf property, but could also attract more bidders.

But even the sealed-bid prices on RTC-handled properties have gotten out of hand, according to Woolfon. Executive Vice President Randy Williams, whose firm recently made a run at Oak Tree Country Club in Edmond, Okla.

"That was unbelievable," Williams said.

LinksCorp

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GC in Foley, Ala.; Tamarack GC in Chicago; Lakeside GC in Atlanta; Temple Hills GC in Nashville; Rockwood GC in Kansas City, Mo.; Castlewoods Country Club in Jackson, Miss.; and Rickenbacker GC in Columbus, Ohio.

"We're strictly interested in an ownership situation, although we might consider a long-term lease," Blake said.

"Management contracts simply aren't profitable enough."

LinksCorp was founded in late 1991 to purchase and operate what it terms "under-managed properties." Funded by $6 million in venture capital and another $3 million pledged by the original investors, LinksCorp is seeking an additional $4 million to $6 million to bolster its equity position. GATS has also provided debt financing. The company expects to be profitable in 1994.

LinksCorp's executive team has extensive course management experience, Blake was formerly executive vice president of Kemper Sports Management. Chief Financial Officer Howard Flickwir held the same title with American Golf Corp.

Director of Agronomy Bobby Miller was formerly head superintendent at Harbour Town Golf Links on Hilton Head Island, S.C., and director of course maintenance for Stokes-O'Steen, an operator of six Florida courses.

"Robb oversees course maintenance, capital improvements, construction and troubleshooting," Blake explained.

"He's our quality-control person." LinksCorp utilizes the general manager concept at each facility, with the superintendent, head pro and clubhouse manager answering to a general manager.

The company rarely dismisses the existing staff when it takes over a golf course, according to Blake.

"We generally make very few changes the first two or three months," the CEO explained. "Often, the existing staff has done a pretty good job. It's ownership decisions that have caused the course to under-perform. The staff can do quite well with a change of ownership and management."