Giants Ridge proving to be a behemoth of obstacles for developer

By HAL PHILLIPS

BIWABIK, Minn. — Should the Giants Ridge golf course ever receive the go-ahead from Minnesota courts (see GCN August 1994), architect Jeff Brauer will have a unique parcel at his disposal.

The hold-ups have included endangered species, forest fragmentation, water resource squabbles, state government in-fighting and citizen action lawsuits.

The latter has tied up the project in court, though Brauer remains hopeful the matter may finally be settled early this month.

The 18-hole project is situated an hour north of Duluth, here in the state’s iron region, a mountainous area where mining was the primary industry until 20 years ago. The mining of iron ore gave way to tourism in the 1980s, however, when the state built the Giants Ridge ski resort.

By ROY CASE

GRAND CAYMAN, BWI — On an island known more for diving and snorkeling, visitors to the Caymans can now add “teeing off” to their list of vacation activities. Golfers can test their skill at The Links at SafeHaven, Cayman Islands’ first 18-hole championship golf course.

Located five miles north of George Town, the new 6,500-yard, par-72 course cost $8.5 million to develop and complete. Designed by Roy Case, and built by Gregori International SARL of France, The Links at SafeHaven was built according to U.S. Golf Association standards.

Chairman Owen Matalon noted the challenges his intentional team of developers overcame in completing the project. More than 60 acres of the 103-acre course were planted with hybrid Bermudagrass, cultivated under difficult conditions through the spraying technique hydromulching, used successfully for the first time in the Caribbean.

The landscape is planted with more than 4,000 indigenous tropical trees and shrubs, including coconut and thatch palms, mahogany, cordia, oleander and mahoe.

Case who has designed more than 50 courses throughout the Caribbean and southern United States, said that, because of the originally “hostile” environment, the Links at SafeHaven provided critical information about the problems of growing grass in soil less, salt laden material.

“Next to well cut greens, you demand well groomed bunkers.