Hall-of-Famer Mann marks minority market

Golfing great forms female-led turnkey development team

By MARK LESLIE

HOUSTON — Her title was once LPGA Touring Pro. But now Carol Mann is taking aim on a new moniker: Golf Business Entrepreneur.

With one swift step, Hall of Famer Mann has become a pioneer among women, establishing a female-owned, female-operated golf development turnkey business.

Stepping out from its position as a "minority company," Carol Mann Golf Services is on a mission to give ordinary golfers, women, seniors, juniors and the physically disabled "the opportunity to enjoy this game as much as anyone" through design and construction that "addresses the needs of all golfers."

It is offering clients the total development package — from feasibility studies to course and facility design and club management. "I see myself as more than the Tour pro. I am changing my profile," Mann said from her headquarters here. "My goal in forming this company is for it to be for the rest of my life."

The new company is separate from Carol Mann Inc., which has consulting, appearance and publishing divisions. "The appearances and the consulting sometimes are all dependent upon your profile. And it is a natural waning that happens to everyone unless you have the willingness to compete. I haven't competed in about 13 years," said Mann, who won 38 LPGA tournaments during a remarkable 21-year career.

Mann cited two driving forces to starting her new business — creating playable courses for all players, and competition as a minority business in a relatively "open field."

Initial target is to finance six projects with $25M

That $25 million will finance six facilities like the Illinois Golf Center. The Chicago facility, which opened to the public Aug. 21 — and is bounded by Randolph Street and Lake Shore, Columbus and Wacker drives — features a nine-hole, par-3 track consisting of famous holes by Pete and/or Perry Dye. The McGetrick Hurter Learning Center, a 62-tee practice area, a putting and chipping green, and fully equipped clubhouse at 221 North Columbus Drive fill out the center. It is open until late evening or midnight every day and provides nearby practice opportunities to tens of thousands of golfers who work in the city.

Vintage Group has property in San Diego under contract and is considering sites in New York City, Seattle and San Francisco's East Bay area, Tourtellotte said.

He expects ground to be broken on the San Diego property before the end of the year and the first six facilities to be underway within 24 months.

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Vintage Group takes 'downtown' idea on the road

By MARK LESLIE

CHICAGO — With one downtown golf course and practice center barely under its belt, Vintage Group, USA Ltd. has unveiled plans to take the concept to a half dozen other cities.

"Our game plan," said Vintage Group President Charles Tourtellotte from Illinois Golf Center. "We'd like to do public or institutional financing for $25 million, initially. Because we've had such good visibility and success with this project, we will take this concept on the road, so to speak."

Robinson's career a fountain of success

A University of Southern California graduate and a land planner by training, Ted Robinson, 71, has evolved into one of the best-known golf course architects in the country. He began designing nine-hole courses as part of master-planned communities in the 1960s. Vandenberg Country Club (CC) in Lompoc, Calif., was his first 18-hole, regulation-length layout. Over the past 30 years, the California native has designed 140 golf facilities throughout the Western United States and Pacific Basin. He is particularly known for the waterscapes that grace many of his layouts. Robinson is a past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects and a member of the American Institute of Planners. Hisson, Ted Jr., joined the Dana Point, Calif.-based firm 2-1/2 years ago.

Golf Course News: Who most influenced your professional development?

Ted Robinson: Two people. My father [Franklin Robinson] was a scratch golfer. It was a good appearance and publishing divisions. The other was Johnny Dawson. He was a once LPGA Touring Pro. But he won 38 LPGA tournaments during a remarkable 21-year career.

He won the national seniors championship in 1990. Prior to joining TFC, he worked in golf and real estate development in the New England area.

Utah development underway

DRAPER, Utah — David Graham and Gary Parks are designing an 18-hole course for the new South Mountain Project here, 18 miles southeast of Salt Lake City. South Mountain has 1,517 acres situated in the foothills of the Wasatch Range. The project is zoned for 7,700 residential units, and construction on the infrastructure began in July. EDAW-HRV, based in Denver, is overseeing the land plan and landscape architecture. The developers are Dee Christiansen and Terry Diehl of South Mountain.

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Foster grows, moves

ST. LOUIS — Since opening an office here in the spring, architect Keith Foster has secured four design projects in Colorado, Texas and Kentucky. So the firm is moving into a larger office at 10411 Clayton Road, Suite A-14, St. Louis, Missouri 63131; phone 314-967-7773. Art Schaupkeet, associate, Midwest projects, and Lee Hetrick, associate public relations and marketing, will be moving from Phoenix to St. Louis.

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GOLF COURSE NEWS

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**Johnson on his own, eyes int'l canvass**

By MARK LESLIE

MT. VERNON, Wash. Despite what he calls a “glut of golf course architects” around the world, Tom Johnson is testing the waters by opening his own design firm here.

The 30-year-old North Carolinian, who has worked for the past seven years with Denis Griffiths and Associates in Braselton, Ga., is concerned about the future of his profession.

“Weekly, there’s somebody putting up their shingle,” he said. “There is a glut of architects, not only in the U.S. but around the world. Is it going to take a golf recession to slow that down? I question whether the business can support all these people. How long is it going to last?”

Johnson already has three projects in planning — one in the Seattle suburb of Conway and two in Japan, where he has worked for most of the past 13 years, first with Gary Player and Ron Kirby from 1981-83. The North Carolina State graduate, with degrees in turfgrass management and landscape architecture, also labored as a job superintendent with Wadsworth Golf Construction from 1983-87 in the Midwest and Texas before joining Griffiths and Associates in Japan.

**Q&A: Robinson’s design cup overfloweth**

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GCN: How did waterscapes become such an important part of your work?

TR: It started in the Coachella Valley [near Palm Springs, Calif.]. I’m doing my 23rd course there now [Tahquitz Creek] for the city of Palm Springs. The developers of Sunrise CC [in Rancho Mirage] 15 years ago sent out questionnaires to 13,000 golfers. They asked them to pick their nine favorite holes in the area. Eight of them had water. We learned from that. We try to incorporate the sight and sound of water. It’s the one hazard that does not slow us up. It’s the key to give golfers a reason to select your course.

JOHN: I would love to have a course everybody can play. I dispute that. The flat statement that everybody is going to enjoy [a certain] course, or that you’re going to make it playable for everybody, is a misnomer.

The difference in capabilities of golfers is so vast,” he added. “You play with people who shoot 118 and then you play with one-handed golfers the next day. The same golf course just does not work. You’ve got to decide not only what the site dictates, but what the client wants. Then you have to go after the best golf course. It’s not going to work for the entire golfing population."

Johnson, whose favorite architects are Charles Blair MacDonald and Alister Mackenzie, said: “I don’t like to cubbyhole myself into the minimal look, or traditional, or Scottish. The terrain dictates more than the type of player.”

He said he uses bunkers “not only as strategy to tell people where to hit the ball, but to hide things. Golf needs to be part mystery. You just can’t lay it out on a piece of paper and expect it to work.”

The golf courses Johnson doesn’t like are what he calls “sod farms.”

“The client’s trying to save money and the superintendent wants to mow the entire course with a seven-gang mower. You end up with a sod farm. For the 70-year-old, retired crowd in South Florida, that might be the right golf course. But those are very boring to play, very un-enjoyable, appealing,” he said.

In contrast, he said his favorite American courses are Shinnecock Hills in Southampton, N.Y., from the old school, and Harbour Town Golf Links in Hilton Head Island, S.C., from the new.

“Have you a big gap in the U.S. between the old and the new,” he said. “Harbour Town [designed by Pete and Alice Dye] is like the headlight of new American golf course architecture from the ‘60s to the ‘80s. They’ve been playing there since ‘69, and it’s a wonderful setting, wonderful golf course and wonderful strategy.”

The lead designer for many of Denis Griffiths’ Asian courses, Johnson expects to continue to work extensively there, and is now just an eight-hour flight away from Japan.

“I enjoy working in Japan,” he said. "The biggest difference [from the United States] is golf course architects are more designers in Japan. We’re not belabored too much with environmental engineering problems. The client takes care of those parts of the job. Architects wear more hats inside the U.S. We’re the liaison. We’re in charge of the budget, in charge of growth in sometimes..."

“But in Asia, and especially Japan, we’re basically designers, the creative thinkers of the job. I really like that.”

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**Vintage Group plans half dozen ‘downtown’ projects**

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“We want to replicate, for the most part, what we’ve done here, with our successful practice area,” Tourtellotte said. “We want to focus on being a learning center and to promote teaching. We have two nationally recognized instructors—Mike McGreetic and Don Hurter. We’ve got some very high-tech teaching facilities, with indoor and outdoor video cameras. We will have five rooms, heated tee stalls this fall. You can practice your long game on the driving range, your short game on the par-3 course, and your chipping and putting on a 7,000-square-foot green and sand-saving bunkers.

Dye Designs International of Denver designed the par-3 course here and will be given first consideration for design of the future projects, Tourtellotte said.

“Perry has done a great job here and one of the things he does very well is par-3s, especially on tight sites,” he said.