Mississippi’s coast eyed by developers

By PETER BLAIS

GULFPORT, Miss. — Local Army officials expect a developer to announce plans this month to build one or two golf courses along the Mississippi coast, a move that will help diversify the area’s casino gaming-dominated economy.

“We’ve had three groups looking at the marketplace so far and expect three more this month,” consultant Donald Wizeman said in early December.

“One group wanted to buy an existing facility and a second was still looking for financing. The third group proposed taking two of the six primary sites we want to develop and would like right of first refusal on the other four. We’re negotiating right now and I expect something to be signed by the end of January.”

Harrison County Development Commission Executive Director Michael Olivier said: “We’re looking at $4 million to $5 million signature courses. We need some good tracks for the area to emerge as a major golf destination. We hope to have five or six projects get underway this year and be on line sometime in 1996.”

As reported in the August issue of Golf Course News, the Harrison

Florida Cabinet nixes Ross course in favor of park

By MARK LESLIE

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Jacksonville citizens, city councilors, state legislators and golfers lost a major vote by a “famed” state Cabinet, which unanimously voted to retain Ft. George Island exclusively as a state park.

Jacksonville area citizens, who overwhelmingly support reclaiming Ft. George Island Golf Course, now must hope the new Cabinet will listen to them.

Gov. Lawton Chiles and the Cabinet voted unanimously on Dec. 13 to keep the golf course closed, retaining the entire 500-acre island as a state park. The Jacksonville City Council had set aside $2 million to refurbish the Donald Ross-designed golf course, and support was strong from citizens who pointed out that merely 67 acres would be maintained.

But after 20 minutes of speeches from both sides, including opponents Friends of Fort George Island and the Florida Audubon Society, the governor and Cabinet voted without debate. “I’m still in shock,” said proponent John

Jack Kidwell: ‘Retire’ not in his vocabulary

Scratch golfer, Class A golf professional, golf course superintendent and award-winning designer, Jack Kidwell has been one of the most prominent, knowledgeable and respected men in Ohio golf for the past six decades. Kidwell, now in his mid-70s and living in Columbus, is a former member of the PGA, a past president and lifetime fellow of both the American Society of Golf Course Architects and Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. He started caddying at age 7, worked on a grounds crew at 16, bought the nine-hole Beacon Light Golf Course with his father and ran it at 19, and, in 1958, designed his first 18-hole course at 39. Since then he’s designed or renovated more than 100 courses. His design practice has since been bought out by protege Dr. Michael Hurdzan, but he remains active.

Golf Course News: Did your early experiences with golf, i.e. as a caddie in the 1920s) shape your ideas about golf and golf course design?

Jack Kidwell: I’m from a different age than golf today.... The changes in golf have been so dramatic I think sometimes I’ve

Q&A

A Jack Kidwell creation — Hickory Hills in Columbus, Ohio. The course was never signed by the end of January.

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