**AGC plans to expand upscale daily-tee golf course holdings**

**By PETER BLAIS**

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — American Golf Corp. hopes to shed its image as an operator of only municipal and low-end daily-fee courses by adding more upscale properties to its portfolio over the next few years, according to the company's head of acquisitions.

"It's important for us to establish credibility by acquiring high-quality properties," said Executive Vice President Joe Guerra. "We've been viewed as an operator of affordable golf courses. The reality is that we operate in every segment — municipal, affordable daily-fee, high-end daily-fee, private entry-level and trade-up courses. We're similar to Marriott hotels in a way. They have several product lines among their hotels, everything from Fairfield Inns to their JW facilities. We have several product lines of golf courses."

Numerically, AGC is the largest operator of U.S. golf courses with more than 200 properties and 9,000 employees. Still, management companies in general operate less than 5 percent of all U.S. courses. Guerra sees that percentage growing.

At the same time, he foresees the number of management companies declining, with bigger operators getting bigger and smaller operators selling off their holdings as they realize the enormous returns they'd anticipated simply aren't available.

"The golf industry needs professional management services," the AGC executive said. "Between 1992-94 we saw many developers building courses. They liked the idea of building, but not necessarily the everyday operation of the course."

"AGC is not an owner of courses. We're a lease and operator. We want to make a reasonable and fair profit. Our ratio of employees to customers is fairly high. You throw in uncertain weather and chemical costs, operational problems and a ton of other potential setbacks, and it indicates the philosophy behind one of the up-and-coming course management companies in the United States."

"My goal is to hire someone who knows more than me in each area of course operations and then get out of his or her way," said AGC President Henry DeLozier.

**RMA finds niche in university management**

**By PETER BLAIS**

Resort Management of America operates three courses. The pro shops at all three were recently listed among Golf Shop Operations "America's 100 Best Golf Shops."

Now why, you might ask, would a superintendent's newspaper be concerned about that? Primarily because it indicates the philosophy behind one of the up-and-coming course management companies in the United States.

"My goal is to hire someone who knows more than me in each area of course operations and then get out of his or her way," said RMA President Henry DeLozier.

In the case of course maintenance at the three layouts, that person is Director of Agronomy Tom Regan. Prior to joining RMA, the Pennsylvania State University turf school graduate was head superintendent at Bethesda (Md.) Country Club.

**MARKETING IDEA OF THE MONTH**

**Partnering with hotels can increase course profits**

**By PETER BLAIS**

ORLANDO, Fla. — By working with local hotels, a public course can add dozens of people and thousands of dollars to its marketing efforts at very little cost, according to Elaine Fitzgerald, president of a South Florida marketing firm and one of the featured speakers at Golf Course Expo held here.

"The golf industry as a whole is behind in marketing and public relations," the president of Fitzgerald Productions Inc. told a group of course owners and operators attending the Golf Course News-sponsored event. "That's largely because a stand-alone golf course has so few employees. A course usually has one person in a marketing position or the owner does it himself."

To overcome that situation, Fitzgerald developed a partnership between 25 area hotels and two upscale Broadworld County courses, Deer Creek Golf Club in Deerfield Beach and the Carolina Club in nearby Margate.

The hotels have large sales teams with combined marketing budgets totaling millions of dollars. They promote the golf program in corporate mailings, at national and international trade shows for travel agents, and on sales missions to associations and other groups.

They advertise the course in magazines and newspapers. The result for the courses is increased play by vacationers.
PAR tee time service enters Ariz.

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — PAR Golf Systems has entered the Arizona golf market with a tee time network linking a well-respected area hotel with four widely known courses. Resort Suites can now provide computerized access to instant tee time reservations at Stonecreek The Golf Club; the Karsten Course at Arizona State University; Grayhawk Golf Club; and Tonto Verde Golf Club.

The Hyatt Regency Scottsdale was scheduled to join the so-called PARNET system in February and discussions are underway with a number of other resorts and courses. PARNET allows the golf concierge at the resort to book starting times through the hotel’s computer without making a phone call.

PAR has provided the technology for five other regional tee time networks, the largest of which links 55 golf courses and 20 hotels in Myrtle Beach, S.C. Other regional networks are located in Orlando, Fla., Ocean City, Md., Traverse City, Mich., and York County, Pa.

GMs must view greenkeepers in new light, GCSAA official says

By MARK LESLIE

FALMOUTH, Maine — Declaring superintendents are “without doubt responsible for the greatest asset that any club or golf course has,” R. Scott Woodhead urged general managers, green chairmen and others gathered here to adjust their views of greenkeepers.

A certified golf course superintendent and Golf Course Superintendents Association of America board member, Woodhead said: “We can no longer be viewed as the dude out in the barn who grows grass while he chews on a blade of grass on the mower... It is through our management practices that we have a direct effect on the bottom line of any golf club.”

Speaking at a meeting hosted by the Maine GCSA, he said superintendents should not be viewed “as just the largest expense item on the budget, because the success of attracting players is based on a superintendent’s ability to meet the aesthetic, agronomic and playing standards of his or her club. There is no question that the more players you have on your golf course, the more green fees you will rack up, the more business there will be in the pro shop and restaurant, the more revenue from your driving range and practice facilities, and, in the case of private facilities, the more members you have the more dues they will give.”

The superintendent at Valley View Golf Club in Bozeman, Mont., Woodhead added his colleagues are also critical to the cost savings in the business. “The superintendent’s skill in controlling labor, equipment and supply costs has a direct effect on the financial statement of any club,” he said. “And by being up-to-date on environmental regulations that occur daily on any golf course, your superintendent is saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines and penalties.”

The new breed of superintendent, he said, is “highly educated, highly skilled and highly professional. Agronomy consumes merely 10 percent of today’s superintendent’s schedule. I spend 90 percent of my time managing the golf course,” he said.

In a remark aimed at club officials, Woodhead said: “Standards set on any course should not be so high they cannot be met with the resources provided to the superintendent. Make sure customers don’t expect more than they are willing to pay for. If they want to see Pebble Beach on Sunday morning, they should be prepared to pay $200 greens fees.”