**Champions the first public-access Audubon Signature course**

While the Audubon Sanctuary Program is directed and focused on existing golf courses, the Signature Program is designed for courses, or any development in the planning and development stages, prior to construction. The 550-acre property belongs to Martin County and is being leased to Riverside Golf, Upland and wetland preserves encompass 275 acres of the land, filled with palmettos, scrub and slash pine, marsh and swamps. The golf course meanders over 100 acres cleared out in a lakes style.

For Rob Kloska, the Champions is its first head superintendent job, first grow-in — first everything.

Getting the course into Signature status, Kloska said, "was an incredible opportunity for a young superintendent like myself. It was an arduous task, but has worked very well."

SSP, Kloska said, were "the leaders spearheading the effort of the Audubon."

"It begins with the site," said SSP President Joseph B. Fraser, nephew of famed Hilton Head developer Charles Fraser. "It's in Martin County, historically on the cutting edge of protecting the environment in the state of Florida. Second, we had a site that was very environmentally sensitive, with numerous good-quality wetlands. There were already a number of things we were required to do by country and regulatory agencies. It made sense for us to sell lots and rounds of golf to people who were interested in preserving that environment."

Indeed, the entire community — the housing component as well as golf — won Signature status. About 500 houses are projected.

An outgrowth of the project is that in this case, at least, it was shown that a majority of homeowners "will pay the same premium for a good view across protected wetlands — maybe with a freeway in the background — that they would look at a lake at a freeway," Fraser said.

Kloska said The Champions is deeply dedicated to waste management and recycling at the clubhouse and maintenance building and on the course — things from cans and bottle to trees and grass clippings.

"In our habitat enhancement the developer instituted a bird box program and we leave the dead trees that are not on the course for birds and other wild-life," said the former assistant superintendent at St. Andrews Country Club in Boca Raton, who was just 23 when ground was broken here in February 1993.

"Anything that doesn't need to be cleared for the course was left native for habitat." The design was not allowed to let water flow from the course to the wetland areas. Retention 'swells,'400 yards wide, were built so that runoff sits and percolates into the ground."

Even the turfgrasses — Bermudagrass tees, greens and fairways and zoysia grass on bunker faces — were chosen for their low-care characteristics, according to the Ohio State graduate.

"Everything else was essentially put on order," Kloska said. "The most important thing was the way Fazio routed the course. Although it is a public golf course, the hazards are wide and everything presents itself [to the golfer] very well."

The Champions Club at Kapalua, for example, "is a customer, you would know it is waste-sensitive, etc. We want to make sure life-sensitive, etc. We want to make sure the course to the wetland areas."

At this point, Dodson pointed out, "It's a long process, it would take five people and turn them into 100."

**Kapalua/Heritage**

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ence in the world of golf, administering Cooperative Wildlife Sanctuary and Signature programs to help preserve and enhance wildlife on golf courses. The Audubon Sanctuary Program is directed and focused on existing golf courses, while the Signature Program is designed for projects in the planning and development stages, prior to construction. More than 1,200 golf courses are involved in Sanctuary Program, and 24 have registered for the Signature Program, which has granted two Signature status.

Resorts are a new horizon and offer a canvas for a broader brush.

"I envision it as a destination resort equivalent to Mobil's Mobilgas station for hotels," Dodson said. "Going there as a customer, you would know it is waste- and energy-efficient, habitat- and wildlife-friendly, etc. We want to make sure that even in Kentucky or Hawaii, there are opportunities to make customers and visitors understand the natural, cultural and human history of the area."

In the case of a lot of golf courses at resort facilities, Dodson said. "But it seemed if you have people spending days and weeks, it would be great to take a whole resort development like our projects and develop a program that would essentially use our sustainability principles — the approach we use for Signature facilities — but also develop a cultural and environmental education program that would link together the hotels, the golf course if there is one, bike paths, beaches, hotel rooms, even restaurant menus. When you went to these facilities you would have subtle environmental and educational experiences the whole time you were there — not jammed down your throat. You would see in your room that decisions were made for energy-efficient lighting, for water conservation. Interpretive signage along walkways would identify plants. And this would encourage people to do the same things of types around their homes."

At this point, Dodson pointed out, "It's a program concept but not a program yet. He anticipates it will take a year, with the Kapalua Land Co.'s commitment in finances and labor, to develop a full program for other facilities to join.

Kapalua has three golf courses that are fully certified in the Audubon Cooperative Wildlife Program. The Village Course was first in the country.

Led by President and CEO Gary Gifford, Kapalua officials approached New York Audubon, offering "to donate money and property and to help develop the Heritage Program — the materials, approach and guidelines," Dodson said. "If all goes well, at the end of the year Kapalua will be our flagship resort site just as Collier's Reserve [In Naples, Fla.] is our flagship Signature site."

Kapalua's Don Young is overseeing an effort to draft a resource inventory of the resort's 1,500-acre property, which includes a pineapple plantation, several miles of beach front, two hotels, seven residential enclaves of more than 700 condominiums, single-family residences and homesteads, two tennis complexes, and an array of restaurants and shops.

"Kapalua presents some of the most diverse habitats and resources in the world with the area's high mountain rain forest, cultural and archeological sites, pristine bays preserving abundant marine life, agriculture... and sweeping vistas of the Pacific," Dodson said.

While Kapalua will have its own Audubon Heritage Steering Committee, New York Audubon has worked together a National Audubon Heritage Steering Committee, Dodson said.

"I think we're at the beginning of putting together something meaningful, using the existing staff [of volunteers]," he said. "We don't want to get bureaucratic and top-heavy with a bunch of employees. We have this group of people I'll call cooperative staff members — they are very popular with the resort, business people, golf course superintendents — all top people in their field. We're giving them the opportunity to use their own expertise and energy to work with other people who want to do good things for the environment."

"Instead of hiring people we can take best advantage of the exist-

**THE PUBLIC ARENA**

**March 1995**

GOLF COURSE NEWS