Resort membership? CMAA mulls options

BY PETER BLAIS

Expanding its educational program to include more offerings of interest to managers of upscale public resorts is one of the items that could be considered as the Club Managers Association of America (CMAA) reviews its strategic plan in the coming months.

CMAA's main goal is to broaden employment prospects for its 5,000 members, explained James Singlering, executive director of the Arlington, Va., based organization for private club managers. Increasingly, private clubs are competing financially against public facilities, such as upscale resorts.

Resorts sometimes have far superior amenities and accommodations than nearby private clubs. With hotel rooms running at $350 a night and green fees of $150 per round not uncommon, upscale resorts are

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COURSE MAINTENANCE

Columbus supers: Competitors, comrades

Efficient structures, from the ground up

Making fairway/directional pins wind-resistant

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Dormant Tillinghast track to stay that way

Q&A: Desert duo, Greg Nash & Billy Casper

Planned and approved course charts

COURSE MANAGEMENT

Ocean Course sale finalized, finally

Off-color ad reaps marketing benefits

Virginia daily-fee course going private

SUPPLIER BUSINESS

DowElanco reorganizes T&O attack

Turf Producers to meet in Austin

What's new in the marketplace?

Cactus forest preserved via transplantation

BY JERRY ROSE

TUCSON, Ariz. — Startling vistas, colorful sunsets, giants cacti, splashes of green in the midst of desert. This is golf in the Southwest. Now, a Scottsdale developer, Raven Golf, has created what may be a golf course construction prototype for preserving desert vegetation and animals.

"We really wanted to show ourselves as good citizens of the community and good stewards of the land," said spokesman Steve Adelson, speaking of the extraordinary lengths Raven Golf went to in proving the integrity of the Sonoran Desert surrounding the club at Sabino Springs. "It's our sincere belief that great golf can and should co-exist with its environment.

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Super survey reveals concern and confusion

BY MARY MEDONIS

An overwhelming majority of superintendents call themselves "very concerned" about the environment and nearly one-third feel government agencies provide inadequate disposal methods and other pertinent information, according to a survey.

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Golf Course Expo

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THROUGH PROFIT...

Learning centers in vogue

BY PETER BLAIS

They can make money, lots of money. And they don't cost much, relatively speaking. For those reasons, practice centers are becoming increasingly popular among public and private developers.

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CMAA mulls changes

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often more exclusive than private clubs. It is not surprising, therefore, that private club managers often look at these facilities as another potential employer: "If our members tell us they want more offerings related to the resort industry, then that could happen," Singerling said. CMAA members will make their feelings known regarding these and other issues during focus groups the association is holding at its Business Management Institute training sessions and at chapter meetings throughout the country. The eight- to 15-person focus groups are part of the strategic planning process begun in September. Many suggestions should emerge from the brainstorming sessions. These will be whittled down six to eight initiatives members want the association to address over the next few years. Just what those initiatives might be are anybody's guess. A similar process undertaken in 1992 resulted in a national network through which private club managers can communicate by computer.

Recommendations from the current strategic planning process will be placed before the CMAA board of directors next July and the full membership at the 1997 national conference in Orlando. Whatever happens it will affect the golf industry. Of the association's 5,000 members, 3,500 work at private clubs. Three-fourths of those clubs have golf courses.

CourseCo active in Far West

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former high-level California bureaucrat. CourseCo was formed in 1990 as an offshoot of EBTGolf Inc., which was formed two years earlier to lease and manage municipally owned Riverside Golf Course in Fresno. CourseCo is developing a master plan for the city for the accelerated reconstruction of Riverside. In 1990, the National Golf Foundation awarded the course its Public Golf Achievement Award in two categories — promotion of public golf and golf course maintenance. CourseCo also manages the golf operations at Deep Cliff Golf Course in Cupertino and Mallard Lake Golf Course in Yuba City. CourseCo employs approximately 100 people at its four courses. The company also has provided specialized agronomic services at facilities it doesn't manage, such as Bodega Harbor Golf Links, Bakersfield Country Club, Sherwood Country Club in Thousand Oaks and Petaluma Golf and Country Club.

"We have a regional concentration in Northern California and the Northwest," Isaak said. "We're actively looking at Oregon and Washington."

"Maintaining quality as you grow is the challenge. We think our niche is somewhere between a Mom-and-Pop operation with its obvious limitations and the larger management companies with their long lines of distribution. Our growth will be constrained by our emphasis on maintaining quality.

"We're not looking at buying 15 or 20 courses and then taking ourselves public. We're looking at places where we can make a difference by improving a project." That was the case at Riverside. CourseCo committed to spending at least $300,000 annually on course maintenance when it took over the operation in 1988. The course was in dire need of upgrading and CourseCo exceeded that amount by an average of $60,000 annually over the next three years, Isaak said. CourseCo rebuilt many bunkers, added a 1/2-acre bentgrass nursery, installed an 8,000-square-foot practice green and completely rebuilt three other greens.

"Greens fees had been real cheap at Riverside and golfers were concerned about fee increases when we took over," the CourseCo executive said. "But they saw how much we were investing in the course and began to support us."

That support allowed CourseCo to raise green fees 60 percent between 1989 and 1992 without any golfer opposition and with the unanimous support of the Fresno City Council. Altogether, CourseCo has managed $2.5 million in improvements to its facilities since 1992, including a complete clubhouse reconstruction, parking lot addition and tee reconstruction at Deep Cliff; a driving range and rebuilt miniature golf course at Mallard Lake; and a proposed state-of-the-art irrigation system at Mather. Isaak was general manager from 1977 to 1980 of the Bodega Harbour Homeowners Association, where he completed and opened the golf course. While that experience opened his eyes to the golf industry, he spent most of the next decade in government and politics.

Among the posts Isaak held while in the employ of the state of California was director of the Office of Majority Consultants and Chief Administrative Officer. Isaak's partners include fellow Stanford University graduates Mark Fredkin, a San Jose lawyer, and John Telischak, a real estate developer residing in Marin County as well as Director of Golf Course Maintenance and Construction Gary Rogers and Director of Club Operations Steven Schwartz.

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<p>This sign touting the opening of Stevinson Ranch has stirred some controversy in Central California.</p>
<p>Stevinson Ranch</p>
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<p>versial. But it got us a lot of attention and some additional play. I don't have any regrets about using it."

The challenge and the beauty of this environmentally friendly 18-hole layout attracted a number of golfers during its first two weeks of operation. The John Harbottle design opened Sept. 30. The course averaged 170 rounds weekdays and more than 200 weekends at green fees ranging from $35 weekdays to $45 weekends.

"It's been very well received so far," Kelley said. "And people have lost a few balls. I'd say the average is three to four balls."

Kelley said. "And people have lost a few balls. I'd say the average is three to four balls."

Part of the reason for that is the care Harbottle and Kelley took in designing the course.

"It was important to us that we preserve the natural environment of the wetlands," said Kelley, whose family has owned the surrounding property for more than 100 years. The wetlands actually resulted from a man-made earthen irrigation canal constructed in 1965. Kelley, whose partners include his brothers and former San Francisco Giants owner Bob Lurie, said the project was built along the lines suggested by the New York Audubon Society's Cooperative Sanctuary Program.

"Our first priority in developing this golf course was to respect the community and the history of Merced County and its environment," said Harbottle.

The 18 holes were laid out over 450 acres, 150 of which are wetlands, Kelley said. While the course borders wetlands, it never enters the environmentally sensitive areas. "We agreed to a mitigation plan to create another 120 acres of wetlands to compensate for the areas where the course borders existing wetlands," Kelley said.

To further demonstrate its environmental sensitivity, Stevinson Ranch is instituting a caddie program to encourage golfers to walk rather than ride.

"We're losing a lot of cart revenue, but it's worth it environmentally. Plus, I'm a traditionalist and like the idea of caddies," Kelley said.