By Mark Leslie

GADOT, Israel — From the Golan Heights to the Gulf of Aqaba, there has been only one golf course in Israel. Until now.

With expertise from the likes of South African pro-designer Gary Player and American designer-builder Perry Dye, Israelis and tourists to this country now have the world of golf opened up to them.

And it appears that with approval for five new golf courses from the government and support from the Jewish financial community in New York, Israeli kibbutzim looking for more profit centers may also join the picture. Already:

• In Elat, on the shores of the Gulf of Aqaba and the Jordan River — several courses are being planned as part of a destination resort area located partly in Israel and partly in Jordan. A popular tourist spot, Elat is a free-trade zone with no taxes.

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The first tee at Israel’s only golf course, The Casarea Golf Club, a privately owned 18-hole facility that opened in 1961.

The course is set for property for an inland course east of the Gaza Strip.

• Kibbutz Gadot, located just above the Sea of Galilee on the Jordan River — barely 200 to 300 yards from the original Syrian border before Israel won the Golan Heights — has hired Dye and American golf course consultant Jim McLaughlin to work on a course as part of “a large-scale tourist project,” including two vacation

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HILLS BREAKS GROUND IN MICH.

SOUTH HAVEN, Mich. — HawksHead Golf Club, an 18-hole Arthur Hills design here, has broken ground. The upscale daily-reservation course will play through a sandy, treeless landscape replete with scrub and undulant dunes. HawksHead is scheduled to open next summer.

JOZELLER, JOHNSTON COLLABORATE

FORT WAYNE, Ind. — Chestnut Hills, an upscale daily-fee golf course here, has opened as the fourth design collaboration between course architect Clyde Johnston and design consultant Fuzzy Zoeller. The par-72 course plays 6,996 yards from the back tees and tracks across creeks and through an expanse of rolling Indiana farmland. Johnston and Zoeller used native grasses to frame the golf course and integrate it with the surrounding natural landscape.

GOLFERS UNITE TO BUILD IN MAIN.

BELGRADE LAKES, Maine — A group of golfers has formed a partnership and pooled $4.5 million to build a top-level semi-private golf course here. General partner Pat Donahue, a real-estate developer from Portland, said the 18-hole track will meander over a 237-acre site in this village. Many holes on the undulating, sometimes steep, wooded site will have views of the Belgrade Lakes, he said. Plans are to get necessary permitting completed in time to begin construction in the late summer of 1996 and open the facility in 1998.

WALTER WOODS JOINS ELS

PALM DESERT, Calif. — Ernie Els and Clive Clark have appointed Walter Woods to Els Clark Design, as their specialist consultant on links-style golf courses. Woods is recognized for his expertise in this area, having looked after The Old Course at St. Andrews — as well as The New, The Jubilee and The Eden courses — for 21 years. Clark said: “Both Ernie and I have played a good deal of golf in tournaments in Scotland and we like many of the qualities offered to golfers by Scottish links. We feel that Walter Woods’ expertise will be a great asset to Els Clark Design.”

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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Golfers unite to build in Maine

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Golf Course News
Land of Bible targets golf

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villages, golf school, water sports, hiking and horse-riding trails, and study centers on nature, archaeology and history.

• And another kibbutz, gifted with a beautiful piece of property west of Jerusalem, may also be interested, McLoughlin said from his McLoughlin Group offices in Plainville, N.Y.

These all join the only existing facility, Caesarea Golf Club, a private club built on the Mediterranean between Haifa and Tel Aviv in 1961. Clearly, there is a need," McLoughlin said. "But the five [planned] courses in Elat don't address the need for golf in Israel. Elat is to Tel Aviv, for instance, as the Florida Keys are to Boston. The Elat courses won't serve the everyday needs of the country of Israel."

A Kibbutz Gadot leader, Haim Milrad, said: "The demand for new golf courses in Israel is larger than what the government can allocate. At this time, there is no final decision as to whom the government will support."

The one course at Gadot is not enough to convince the general tourism community to add golf to its attractions, Milrad said. "But all the tour operators could just add on golf [to their portfolios] and start attracting a wider group."

"You should be talking about three to five courses north of the line from Tel Aviv and Jerusalem," McLoughlin said. "We've buffered the lakes and play areas with multiple shapes and forms of bunkers — long, undulating and with more use of sand and more visual impact."

"It will look a lot harder, stronger and difficult than the North Course, but in actuality it probably won't be more than one shot per side more difficult."

What pressure is there from having, in effect, 14,000 golf professionals as a client? "Knowing it's the PGA of America and the club pros will be coming there, obviously strength and quality is something you consider for that level of player," Fazio said. "But we always start with designing a course for the best players in the world as well as taking into account that lots of different golfers will play it."

"I feel comfortable it will fit in with any golf course we've done." He added that the biggest challenge was "to match the quality of what the PGA of America is all about. It's a big, quality organization, and each member is proud of it. They themselves are coming from great golf courses. We will be judged by them."