Suncor, MCO strike gold with Foster in Arizona

By MARK LESLIE

OUTAIN HILLS, Ariz. — The Quarry in San Antonio, Texas, opened the door, and Keith Foster says he has walked on in, grabbing the opportunity fostered by great new sites to design some eye-openers.

"We're gaining momentum and getting good opportunities to create great projects for good people," Foster said from his St. Louis headquarters. "The Quarry enabled people to see what we could do. Now we have to follow up to get to the top, to create wonderful courses."

Five Foster designs stand on the brink of opening, beginning in mid-November with new SunRidge Canyon Golf Club in this community neighboring Scottsdale and the Foster-remodeled Paradise Valley Country Club, an exclusive club in Phoenix.

Next summer will come Buffalo Run, a high-end municipal course in the City of Commerce City, Colo., and Washington National, a low-fee daily-fee club in Seattle. Steamboat Springs, Colo., will add a high-end municipal course, Haymaker, which will be finished this year but won't be graced until next spring for a 1997 opening.

Words like stunning, incredible, wonderful, dramatic, striking, refreshing flow from Foster's lips as he describes his new creations.

SunRidge Canyon, he said, will be "incredible. The front nine does not return to the clubhouse. You go out, have an uninterrupted experience and then come back to the clubhouse. It is reminiscent of classic golf courses of years ago and abroad."

SunCor Development Co. and MCO Properties, two of Arizona's largest developers, formed a joint venture to build this project. SunCor Vice President Thomas Patrick asked, "How can we top this?"

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Forbes forging fairways in China

By MARK LESLIE

FOSHAN, China — Wing Shan International Country Club Ltd. is building a major housing and golf project here, about 15 miles west of Guangzhou, a city of approximately 5 million, and 60 miles north of Hong Kong.

A joint venture of Wing Shan Enterprises (Holdings) Ltd., New World Development Country Clubs and the Foshan Economic Development Group Corp., the plan includes a resort hotel, a 36-hole country club, and a variety of housing from apartments to row homes, large villas and condominiums.

American Ross Forbes of Uniontown, Pa., former project manager for Asian development for Ron Fream-Golfplan, is designing the two courses — his first solo project.

The practice range opened in mid-June and developers hope to get the first nine holes by the end of the year, said Forbes, who has also worked in Asia-Pacific with J. Michael Poellot and Brad Bena. The second nine holes should open by late 1996 and the date for the second 18-hole track is unsure, he said. The owners are undecided whether the courses will be private, semi-private or public.

The property is primarily former "dead-flat agricultural lands and some rolling terrain that runs abruptly into 50-foot-high hills," Forbes said, "so we smoothed out the transition areas."

The resulting first 18 is a par-72 layout with five sets of tees measuring 505 On The Park 299-6147.

High... Higher... Highest!

By MARK LESLIE

BURNSVILLE, N.C. — Having reached high in golf when working with Hilton Head Co. in South Carolina and Winter Green in Virginia, Randy Banks must have had altitude in mind when he returned to his roots here. Working on family-owned Slickrock Mountain, he is opening the third-highest golf course east of the Mississippi River and boasting both the highest nine holes and the highest airport runway east of the Mississippi.

Banks' sights are indeed lofty for Mountain Air Development Co. "Holes 10 and 11 drop 600 feet. There's a vertical drop of 1,190 feet in 11 holes."

The lowest point on the front nine is 4,300 feet above sea level. The lowest on the back nine is 3,500 feet, affording 25- to 100-mile views on nearly every hole. And three greens are perched on the edges of cliffs.

The powers behind Mountain Air — Banks' father Bill and uncle Earl Young — are longtime residents of Burnsville. Bill Banks, who owned most of the mountain, owns Banco Lumber Co. and supplies hardwood timber to the furniture industry. Young co-owns Young and McQueen Grading, Inc. That combination of resources made the project financially feasible and physically possible — even though it was six years in the making (the first nine opened three years ago and the second nine on June 24).
Rees Jones adds 9 at Otter Creek

COLUMBUS, Ind. — Otter Creek Golf Course, one of the top public golf courses in the United States, has opened a new nine holes. The addition was designed by Rees Jones, son of original Otter Creek architect, Robert Trent Jones Sr.

Since opening for play in 1964, Otter Creek has been host to the Indiana State Amateur for 25 years in a row; 1991 USGA Amateur Public Links Championship; several U.S. Open and U.S. Senior Open Qualifiers; four American Junior Golf Association Championships, and two Independent Insurance Youth Golf Classics.

While the new nine holes reflect some of the character of the original course, Jones has created a track with its own identity as well. It spans 3,730 yards from the back tees, with at least four tee placements on every hole.

The $3 million addition will help Otter Creek better meet demand and provide flexibility when making improvements to the original course.

Ault, Clark designing across several states

KENSINGTON, Md. — Ault, Clark & Associates, Ltd., the golf course architecture firm based here, is busy in several states.

Tom Clark is designing the firm’s seventh course at Hot Springs Village, Ark., for Cooper Communities, Inc. Construction started in March. Clark recently completed the new Diamante Course, which is a private club built by CCI and Club Corp of America.

The new Magellan Course will be built by the Property Owners’ Association at the site of the Parformance Golf School. With wide, generous fairways, just over 40 sand bunkers, and hundreds of grassy depressions, this course will be most playable for the senior and high handicap players. This will be the 18th course that Ault, Clark has completed for Cooper Communities, Inc.

Brian Ault is returning to the Beach Club Golf Links in Ocean City, Md., to add a second 18 holes to his original layout. Construction starts this spring, with the course targeted for opening in the summer of 1996.

Meanwhile, Bill Love and Dan Schlegel are overseeing completion of the second 18-hole course at Penn National Estates, Fayetteville, Pa.

The original 18 was designed by Edmund Ault, and opened in the late 1960s.

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SunRidge

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we create the most wonderful experience in terms of golf and the land plan?” Foster recalled.

“The clubhouse setting is stunning and overlooks the canyon,” said the architect.

“We wanted to create an experience in terms of the land we had to work with. The course starts with a high position and plays down through a wonderful canyon and deep ravines to dramatic green sites, then turns up toward the clubhouse at the 11th. We were very fortunate our client allowed us to do something like this.”

The 16th and 17th holes, in particular, provide “a striking and refreshing combination,” he said. Anyone who sees the 16th hole, he added, “is mesmerized by this gem of a green. It’s a par-5 that moves slightly to the right, with a wide and generous fairway, then a significant canyon down the left-hand side. The green extends within a huge bowl that gives a real sense of intrigue from the landing area.

The par-3 17th plays from two angles on a ridge to two contiguous greens. From one tee it plays 220 yards, over a deep canyon with a dramatic rock outcropping. From another tee it plays 140 yards to the smaller of the two greens.

“The combination of 16 going to 17 is exciting,” Foster said. “Both are beautiful, dramatic, stunning and very unique.”

Paradise Valley — whose members include Lyle Anderson, Rusty Lyon, Joe Black and Birdie Dickey — required restoring classic elements to a track built in the 1960s.

The membership has allowed the course to be closed to reinstall classic box tees, Alister Mackenzie-like bunkers, native putting surfaces, better drainage and a new irrigation system, and to sod the entire course, Foster said.

Foster credited Walden Golf Construction Co. and new superintendent Rob Collins for their work on the renovation.

“Two projects of this stature in Phoenix at the same time was a godsend,” Foster said.