Just what are Legends made of? The Youngs

Myrtle Beach company moves on Williamsburg and perhaps other Southeastern points

By Peter Blais

Myrtle Beach, S.C. — A "visionary" is how Danny Young describes his dad, Larry, president of The Legends Group, one of the major course operators in the Myrtle Beach and Williamsburg, Va., markets.

"There were no upscale courses in Myrtle Beach in the late 1970s," said Danny, vice president of operations. "The Surf Club and Arcadian Shores were nice. But they weren't as good as those in Pinehurst and Hilton Head. Myrtle Beach had a strong hotel base and Dad saw an opportunity. Golfers were coming to Myrtle Beach and he figured they'd drive a little farther to play a great course. He was right."

Added Chief Operating Officer Brad Blair: "We feel there are some additional options for us in Virginia [where Young recently opened two new courses near Williamsburg]. The golf package business hasn't been exploited in that market near as well as it could. And we're looking at other options up and down the coast."

Young first tested his theory in 1980 that Myrtle Beach golfers would travel a little farther to play a better course when he opened Dan Maples-designed Marsh Harbour in Calabash, N.C., just over the South Carolina border. The course won numerous accolades from golfers and golf magazines. Young followed that in 1985 with Maples-designed Oyster Bay in Sunset Beach, N.C., and three years later added the Heritage Club, also a Maples design, near Pawley's Island, S.C. All received positive reviews.

Young wasn't done. Between 1980 and 1993 as vice president of operations in 1994 and president, chief operating officer last August. Since Affeldt joined KSLF, the company has grown from 11 to 26 courses, with a similar percentage growth in revenues and profits. Affeldt succeeds Charles Staples, who is leaving the Virginia-based company to pursue other interests. "Eric has proven his leadership skills in a variety of capacities since joining," said KSL Recreation President Michael Shannon.

"We are extremely grateful for Charlie's many contributions and wish him all the best in his new endeavors." KSL Fairways' 26 courses are scattered throughout Florida, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

The Moorland course is part of The Legends complex near Myrtle Beach, the Youngs' stronghold.

KSL Fairways names Affeldt to lead public golf management firm

By J. Barry Mothes

MANASSAS, Va. — KSL Fairways has promoted Eric Affeldt to president and chief executive officer.

Affeldt, 41, of northern Virginia, a former lawyer, joined KSL Fairways in 1993 as vice president of acquisitions. He was then promoted to Norther region director of operations in 1994 and president, chief operating officer last August. Since Affeldt joined KSLF, the company has grown from 11 to 26 courses, with a similar percentage growth in revenues and profits.

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Buying programs growing in popularity

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The group buying craze is sweeping the golf industry — and the newest target is superintendents.

Earlier this summer, a group called the National Turf Cooperative, Inc. (NTC) near Baltimore announced plans to sign up at least 250 members for discounts on seeds, fertilizers and other golf course maintenance goods from manufacturers and suppliers.

Now, VGM Golf, an Iowa-based buying group that has been operating mostly in golf equipment and pro shop supplies for golf pros and owners the past two years, is looking seriously into expanding its services to seeds, fertilizer and possibly even golf course maintenance equipment like mowers and aerators.

"We want to be able to help the whole golf course, said Kent Dirks, vice president of marketing for VGM Golf, "not just the pro shop."

The people behind VGM Golf are hardly strangers to group buying. Its parent company, VGM Associates, is the largest player of its kind in the home medical equipment field. VGM — the name derives from the initials of founder Van G. Miller — has more than 2,000 clients in the home medical equipment field and 11 years of experience.

The 2-year-old VGM Golf was started about 800 members in the U.S. and works with 60 participating manufacturers and vendors, from Active Gloves and Cross Creek clothing to H&B Powerbilt, Maxfli, Munsingwear, Spalding, Imperial Headwear and Wilson. The members range from course owners and individual equipment sales drop significantly in recent years due to off-course discount shops. It's been estimated that 75 percent of golf merchandise is currently sold off-course.

Dirks said VGM Golf currently has about 800 members in the U.S. and works with 60 participating manufacturers and vendors, from Active Gloves and Cross Creek clothing to H&B Powerbilt, Maxfli, Munsingwear, Spalding, Imperial Headwear and Wilson. The members range from course owners and individual pro shop owners to offer them discounts on hard and soft golf equipment so they could compete with off-course discount retail golf shops. Golf professionals and golf course owners have seen their share of pro shop.