BRIEFS

BUENA VISTA FOCUSING ON TOTAL HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY
Florida firm acquires Sun Valley golf resort

By Peter Blais

AMPA, Fla. — "We're not just a golf company" might be the slogan for Buena Vista Golf Holdings (BVGH). The founders of the Tampa-based firm, which recently acquired Elkhorn Golf Club in Sun Valley, Idaho, made their reputation in the resort industry before expanding into the golf market. BVGH's principals have developed and managed such widely known facilities as the 1,038-room Buena Vista Palace Resort & Spa near Walt Disney World in Florida and Seaforth Island Resort in South Carolina.

"We have no qualms about getting involved in a residential/resort golf community, whereas the firms we compete with for golf projects generally want to concentrate on just golf," said Chief Executive Officer Michael Frost. "We are as comfortable with the food and beverage aspects of the business as we are with operating the golf course."

That isn't to say Buena Vista doesn't know beans about golf. University of Florida graduate Larry Webber, a superintendent for 14 years and independent agronomist, has been named director of member/sponsorship for VGM Golf Inc.

Former Marriott exec Maxwell starts own management firm

Scottsdale, Ariz. — Scottsdale golf executives Richard West, Roger Maxwell and Bill Corn have created in Celebration of Golf Management (ICGM), a new golf course management company.

"The golf industry today is extremely fragmented," said West, ICGM's Chairman and president of Carefree Partners, a Phoenix-based master-planned community developer. "Very few management companies hold more than one golf course in their portfolios and they operate with large staffs and on-site management at each course. This is very inefficient. Our goal is to re-engineer this process to create significant competitive advantages for the golf courses and better quality at a more affordable price for our guests."

Coyote Lakes Golf Club and Arizona Traditions, both located in northwest Phoenix, have signed management contracts with ICGM.

The close proximity fits perfectly with ICGM's plans to "cluster" its courses within specific geographic districts, according to Maxwell, ICGM's president and owner of the In Celebration of Golf retail operation in Scottsdale.

Maxwell said clustering will enable

FREE LIGHTNING EXPOSURE ANALYSIS FOR GOLF COURSE FACILITIES

Golf courses can contact Global Atmospherics Inc., owner and operator of the National Lightning Detection Network, for a free lightning exposure analysis which pinpoints and maps all cloud-to-ground lightning strikes detected within a 10-mile radius of their facility for a great time period. Global markets the Electrical Storm Identification Device (ESID), which is an integral part of a formalized lightning policy at over 240 golf courses internationally. Most recently, Bob O'Link Golf Club (Highland Park, Ill.), Castle Pines Golf Club (Castle Rock, Colo.), The Country Club (Cleveland), and Saint Charles (Ill.). Golf Club have purchased an ESID to protect staff, patrons, and electrical equipment from the damaging effects of lightning.

MANAGEMENT Firms mixed bag for superintendents

Should superintendents see the growing influence of management companies as a good or bad thing in terms of career development, professional responsibility, salaries, benefits, etc.? • Josh Lesnik, Marketing Manager, Kemper Sports — In our case it's a good thing. We stress the importance of maintenance, which means a talented superintendent would mean as much or more to us than at a single-course operation. Superintendents are very appreciated (well paid).

Our superintendents are in charge of their individual courses. They may answer to someone in the home office. But they make up their own budgets and submit them to people here [corporate office] who understand what they are talking about. You could compare it to the relationship to a managed health care setting.

• Marc Bergschneider, Chairman, National Fairways Inc. — It's definitely a plus. There are more opportunities for career development by enhancing the services provided at a single course, grow a particular operation, manage multiple courses or go back to school.

Entry-level positions may not be as lucrative [as salaries at non-management company courses]. But that's...