

BRIEFS



CASPER TO MANAGE PRICE LAYOUT

BEALSVILLE, Md. — Developer Joseph Meyerhoff and the design team of golfer Nick Price and architect Steve Smyers are teaming up to build Four Streams National Golf Club, 20 minutes northeast of Washington. Billy Casper Golf Management will manage the facility once it opens. Meyerhoff's company, Magna Holdings, also developed The Links at Challedon in nearby Mount Airy, Md. Four Streams National is scheduled to open in spring 1998.

TRAFTON JOINS VGM

WATERLOO, Iowa — Mark Trafton has been named director of membership/sponsorship for VGM Golf Inc., a national buying alliance for golf establishments.



Mark Trafton

Trafton comes to VGM from the National Golf Course Owners Association, where he held the same position for two years. Trafton, 46, will continue to be

based in Pine Bluff, N.C. Prior to NGCOA, he was employed at The Landings in Skidaway Island, Ga.

ARYA BUYS NJ COURSE

FREEHOLD, N.J. — Arya Golf Properties has purchased Holly Hills Golf Club, an 18-hole layout in Alloway Township. AZ Golf Management Corp. will manage the facility. AZ Golf and Arya Golf Properties are partnerships between Ram Arya and former PGA Tour professional Mike Zack. Arya is president of a home-building and land-development company in Freehold. Zack played the PGA Tour from 1977-82 and has 20 years experience in course design, construction and management. Arya Golf Properties is seeking to buy additional courses.

MARRIOTT SIGNS COUPLES/BATES

CHANTILLY, Va. — Westfields International Conference Center, a Marriott-managed facility, has signed Fred Couples and Gene Bates to design an 18-hole daily-fee course. Nine holes have been cleared and the new facility is scheduled to open in early summer 1998. Niebur Golf of Colorado Springs is the builder. The 233-acre site is located six miles from Westfields, one of the country's leading meeting facilities.

Buena Vista focusing on total hospitality industry

Florida firm acquires Sun Valley golf resort

By PETER BLAIS

TAMPA, 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 1,028-room Buena Vista Palace Resort & Spa near Walt Disney World in Florida and Seabrook 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

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The 18th hole at Elkhorn Resort, a recent Buena Vista acquisition.

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 cre-

ate 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

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Richard West (left) and Roger Maxwell



FREE LIGHTNING EXPOSURE ANALYSIS FOR GOLF COURSE FACILITIES

Golf courses can contact Global Atmospheric 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 given time period. Global markets the Electrical Storm Identification Device (ESID), which is an integral part to 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.

MAN(AGER) ON THE STREET

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].



Josh Lesnik

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

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Buena Vista Golf

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based in Sarasota since 1983, serves as Buena Vista's director of agronomy.

In addition to Elkhorn, he oversees the work of on-site superintendents at Buena Vista-managed Spanish Hills Golf & Country Club (G&CC) in Camarillo, Calif.; Steele Canyon G&CC in San Diego, Calif.; LPGA International in Daytona Beach, Fla.; PGA National Resort & Spa in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.; and Westwinds G&CC in Newmarket, Md. He is also overseeing construction of a Jack Nicklaus-designed course scheduled to open in spring 1998 at Rocky Gap State Park in Cumberland, Md., and a Ron Garl-designed layout scheduled to start construction next spring as part of a 252-room luxury resort called Cayo Largo located in Fajardo on Puerto Rico's east coast.

While Buena Vista will develop courses like Rocky Gap and Cayo Largo, it prefers to acquire existing properties because of the financial and environmental obstacles to building new courses, Frost said. The company concentrates on the resort and daily-fee market, although it will look at private facilities, like Spanish Hills, when the situation is right.

"Spanish Hills was a unique opportunity," Frost explained. "The area was just spectacular and we were able to negotiate a considerable discount. It's not something we could have easily duplicated for anywhere near the price we paid."

Buena Vista Golf Holdings is a general partnership consisting of two corporate general partners — Hanover Properties Inc. and Buena Vista Golf Properties. Formed earlier this year, the company plans to acquire high-end, daily-fee golf properties in which the original developers have overinvested or have undermarketed and then build cash flow and property values through the company's "proven marketing techniques, a strong service focus, ongoing course and facility enhancements, and cost-control efforts."

Buena Vista has no firm numerical goals in terms of course acquisitions, Frost said, although it plans to acquire 10 to 15 projects within the first year, according to company literature. "You work on a lot of things that never happen," Frost said. "And then a bunch of things come together all at once... We could set numerical objectives, but they aren't very meaningful. Our objective is to acquire courses that are good deals for us, whether that be one or 10 a year. If we had to meet a certain number, we could start chasing things that we shouldn't."

Frost's background leads one to think he knows what he's talking about. The company's CEO has headed Buena Vista Hospitality Group since its inception in 1986. He has overseen the development pre-opening, marketing, management and consulting services for nearly 50 projects during that time. Prior to forming BVHG, he was one of the principals in Shimberg, Kennedy and Frost, where he headed the company's hotel group.

Buena Vista is bullish on the golf market, pointing to the 25 million "Baby Boomers" who will turn 50 within the next eight years (golfers aged 50-69 on average play nearly twice as many rounds per year as the 30-49 age group); relatively slow consolidation pace (100 holdings per year, less than 1 percent of the total U.S. golf inventory) within the golf

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Golf Course Marketplace

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The Hayter Cup

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summer had made for poor growing conditions on the close cropped fairways. All of these factors suggested the superb West Lincs course would provide a stern enough test, gales or no. View the description "pussycat" in a purely relative sense. . .

The range of playing ability was wide, from plus-1 handicap to more than 12. This in mind, the opportunity for some one-sided matches was very real. As this would have been contrary to the spirit of the contest, organizers and team captains agreed to avoid such a scenario by the implementation of two devices: First, the matches would be played full handicap; second, the captains would, as near as possible, order their players in roughly ascending handicaps.

As the results show, this was a successful move with only five matches out of 18 being reasonably described as "comfortable victories/uncomfortable defeats."

The morning four-balls were extremely closely contested, four of six went to the 18th, one to the 17th, with only Dean Morrison and George Renault of the Americas cruising to a 6 and 5 victory (see complete scoring results on page 30).

Opening salvos were jocular and generous with 3-foot "gimmies" fairly commonplace. By about hole seven the *bonhomie* was a good deal thinner on the ground. "That's good, take it away," had been replaced with a calculating silence. Tension was mounting.

By hole 14, the sole Canadian, Thom Charters, had his shoe off decrying a mystery toe injury. Was this building an early excuse? If the ailment affected his putting, it might have explained his three-jack on the 18th — when two putts would have won the game. By his own admission, "The Canadian choked it!"

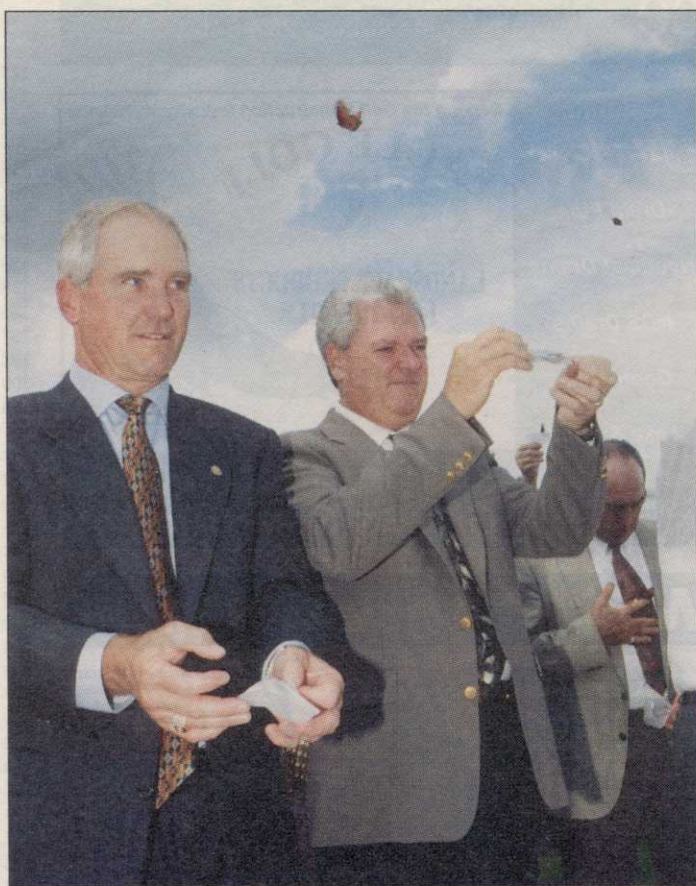
Charters was not alone in a nervous display on the last. Alex Reid of Scotland missed from 2 feet and thus achieved a half, instead of what might have been a vital win.

The Cup went down almost to the wire. If Ian Buckley had not been 3 off the tee at the 18th, the result may have been different.

However, in truth, the result was perhaps not as important as one might imagine. Surely the excitement was felt as both team captains were waiting on the 18th with information and encouragement for the final few matches. But the real buzz was felt by everyone by dint of being involved in such a brilliant event.

Hayter's Macfie was delighted with the way things panned out, declaring that even the weather was great: "This is everything I hoped it would be," he said.

This correspondent would go one better: The event surpassed all expectations.



PGA of America Secretary Will Mann (left) and PGA Chief Executive Officer Jim Awtrey let loose with their butterflies during the Audubon ceremony.

PGA's Reserve augments Fla. butterfly population

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. — Audubon International has presented its top award to the PGA Golf Club at The Reserve — only the fifth in the nation to receive Audubon's Signature Status for environmental excellence.

The award ceremony — complete with a live butterfly release — took place during The Reserve's opening dedication celebration attended by hundreds of PGA delegates from across the country, special guests and the news media.

•••

PARAMUS, N.J. — Ridgewood Country Club has become the second course in the state to achieve designation as a "Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary" by the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System.

"Our efforts and accomplishments are part of an overall plan to not only maintain The Ridgewood Country Club as one of the top

golfing facilities in the U.S. but also to make our club environmentally sound," said Ridgewood President Fred Nydegger.

"The club is extremely committed to preserving the natural habitat on its 275-acre complex," explained Ridgewood superintendent John J. Gasper, "and our long-range environmental plan was created so that RCC can improve and sustain our desired level of environmental quality for years to come."

•••

RYE, N.Y. — Westchester Country Club has been designated a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary by the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System. Westchester is the third course in New York to receive the honor. "We are proud to have reached this status and look forward to maintaining and further enhancing our Audubon program," said superintendent Joe Alonzi.

Emergency plan

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along with worst-case scenario of a golfer — heart failure with a lack of oxygen — how much time is required to start immediate first aid, summon trained emergency personnel with equipment, and deliver the golfer to a hospital? Not hours, but minutes.

This scenario required a plan to coordinate all potential participants. Pat Vanderstine is general manager of the golf course. It was appropriate to discuss my concerns with her. She readily agreed from a humanitarian standpoint that I should proceed.

The beginning of the plan required traveling the golf course with paper and pencil viewing the course with an entirely new perspective. Example: The Hagen first hole has water crossing the fairway at 90 degrees

halfway between tee and green. The water is crossed by a bridge whose integrity is adequate for golf carts, but surely not for a heavy emergency vehicle. An emergency situation would require the exact location of a golfer needing assistance. Is the golfer between the tee box and the water or is the golfer between the water and the green?

This exercise started the creation of many pages of notes. It was now quite apparent a layout of the golf course, along with the adjacent city streets, would be needed. A trip to the fire department and the tax office located the needed street layout. The Fire Chief Darryl Platt was very enthusiastic about the development of this plan; he offered any needed cooperation by his department.

On one of the layouts the water, macadam paths tee boxes and greens were established and

colored. Water was blue, paths were black while tee boxes and greens were green. With the notes gathered prior, access points were established in red on the layout. This was accomplished after many meetings with the fire chief and deputy fire chief. The layout had a total of 12 access points.

The next order of business was to set forth a simple set of instructions for course personnel (see related story). Copies of these instructions and the course layout with the access point were reviewed with Chief Platt for his final approval. A copy was turned over to the police department. The fire department conducted training sessions with their personnel to familiarize them with it. At no cost to the golf course, Chief Platt offered to run training sessions on CPR and artificial respiration for all golf course personnel — paid and volunteer.

All golf courses should have an emergency evacuation plan. Just because a course has a number of holes that aren't close to public roads is no excuse. There should be a plan in place and personnel familiar with its operation.

Here, this issue has been discussed from the humanitarian standpoint. There is, I believe, a legal side to the question. A player goes down with a heart attack and dies on the course 15 minutes later. The only people in attendance were his fellow players who were untrained. A negligence suit is waiting to happen. An attorney for the deceased's heirs can and would raise many critical questions of the golf course and possibly the local emergency department. With my training in risk management I saw a potential problem, but I also saw a practical way to reduce and minimize the problem.

Buena Vista Golf Holdings

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course management industry; and favorable indicators that the game will enjoy increased participation in nearly all market segments.

"Because of the demographics of the U.S. population, we view golf as a growth business from the demand side," Frost said. "With the increasing financial and environmental roadblocks to building new golf courses, it will be difficult for the supply side to keep up."

Along with its management arrangement for the 36-hole LPGA world headquarters, the company has been named the exclusive development and management company for the LPGA. "We're working on plans to expand the LPGA's golf course identity in other parts of the world," Frost said. "It won't be too dissimilar to the way the PGA Tour has developed the TPC (Tournament Players Club) concept."

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