

BRIEFS

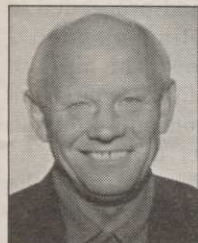


CASPER TO MANAGE PRICE LAYOUT

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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Mich. super ascending corporate ladder at TimberStone Golf Club

By PETER BLAIS

IRON MOUNTAIN, Mich. — Superintendent David Van Auken's rise to general manager at TimberStone — a new golf resort scheduled to open next spring on Michigan's Upper Peninsula — was a "matter of taking the bull by the horns."

"I was always pro-active," said the 39-year-old executive, who was named TimberStone's chief executive in September. "I always offered my input and made myself available to my employer, and it's paid off."

Van Auken was named superintendent at TimberStone in April 1995 after stints in similar positions at Kohler Inc.-owned Blackwolf Run in Kohler, Wis., and Gaylord Inc.-owned Broadmoor Golf Club in Colorado Springs. An accountant by training and superintendent by choice, Van Auken learned as much as he could about the corporate environment of those two firms and applied those lessons at TimberStone.

"I came to appreciate how different departments intertwine," he said, "and the importance of being able to collect and disseminate information. For instance, I started to realize where the marketing guy is coming from when he says this might not be a good time to aerify, even if [agronomically] now might be the perfect time to do it...My job depends on golfers coming here."

"Management never asked me for information when I started at TimberStone. So one of the first things I did was ask for a computer and put a budget together. I went to them with a list of what I needed to run my part of the operation and asked

how that would fit into their expectations for the course. That floored them."

Van Auken took a non-traditional route to the superintendent's profession. He graduated with an accounting degree from the University of Wisconsin and was employed as an accountant in Colorado Springs, Colo., when the golf bug bit him.

"There I was working in a second-floor office with no windows in one of the most beautiful places in the world," Van Auken remembered. "I told my wife I couldn't stand it anymore, that I had to get a job outside. We didn't have any kids at the time, and she told me if I needed a change, this was the time to go for it."

Through a friend of his wife's, Van Auken met the head superintendent at Broadmoor and got a job on the grounds crew. "My first day I was out on the course with a rotary mower and a string trimmer," he recalled.

Over the next seven years, he took agronomy classes at Colorado State University and volunteered for various tasks to broaden his experience. He eventually became Broadmoor's irrigation foreman and advanced to construction superintendent during a greens reconstruction project.

In 1989, Van Auken moved to Blackwolf Run in his native Wisconsin, where he oversaw the grow in of the River Course's final nine holes. He was named assistant superintendent when the River course opened in 1990 and eventually head superintendent.

TimberStone's developers hired Van Auken in April 1995 shortly after the start of construction. Van Auken said he has enjoyed significant input into the course design and construction process with Matthews' on-site design associate Paul Albanese and builder Ryan Inc. That input, coupled with his own initiative, led TimberStone to give him additional responsibility for the entire course operation.

"I realized there was an opportunity to move up to the next level when I came here," he said. "I thought it would take five to eight years, which would have been just about right. I'd be around 45 and probably tired of chasing teenagers around the course. I'm not sure I'm ready to give up being a superintendent...My goal in five years is to just be happy doing what I'm doing here."

for the company to make a profit," said West. "However, studies have shown the biggest growth potential lies in the development and operation of affordable golf facilities (those with green fees of \$50 or less) because they are less expensive to build, require smaller management staffs and are less susceptible to economic fluctuations. The only trick is to run them efficiently enough to be profitable. We're confident our system will accomplish that."

During the next five years, ICGM plans to own, operate or manage up to 50 courses in selected markets across the country. Initial growth will be focused in and around Phoenix with expansion to other markets including California, the Northwest and the Midwest. ICGM's offices are within the In Celebration of Golf retail operation at the Scottsdale Seville, 7001 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale, AZ 85250. For information, call 602-951-4444.



David Van Auken (center) discusses clubhouse design with Duane Santi (left) and Jim Blomquist.

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CIRCLE #131

This is the first of what we envision as a regular feature highlighting individuals who have made the jump from superintendent to a higher management positions. With the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's growing emphasis on career development, we feel the efforts of such people deserve recognition. If you have suggestions for potential subjects for this space, please contact us at 207-846-0600.

Maxwell

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ICGM to eliminate redundancy and eliminate other inefficiencies at its courses without compromising management's effectiveness or the quality of the golf experience.

For example, instead of having a separate management team at each golf course, ICGM plans to have two managers supervise the operations in each geographic district. Each district will consist of four to eight courses. One of these managers will be in charge of merchandise sales, golf rounds, advertising and operational issues. The other will oversee the maintenance of the golf course facilities.

Additionally, ICGM will seek to further streamline its management functions by outsourcing. "Managed the traditional way, golf courses are very expensive to operate, and green fees have to be high