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DEVELOPMENT

Rees Jones restoring Ross' River Oaks

HOUSTON — River Oaks Country Club here has hired Rees Jones to master-plan a restoration of its Ross track. Built in the mid-1920s, River Oaks has since been extensively re-routed, its greens and tees totally redone and other changes made, so that only about 50 percent of the holes are similar to their original layout, according to Jones design associate Steve Weisser. So Jones intends to restore the course to the Ross style.

Club members are expected to vote on the proposal at the end of this year, with work expected to get underway in the winter of 1997-1998.

"There are no photos of what was there," Weisser said, "But they do have some working plans that will help. More than anything, we want to restore the Ross character. It's a wonderful site on a bayou ... and with land movement — topography not expected in Houston."

"WHITEMARSH Valley Country Club.

We've been around a long time — over 75 years.

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Love goes solo

Continued from page 29

lean times and, in the 1990s, in a boom period, which he expects will continue with public facilities being the driving force.

"There are so many golfers who need a place to play, and they need an interesting and exciting place," he said. "The high-end public course will be developed more and more frequently. But 'high-end' to me doesn't equate to a lot of money to build or a lot to play.

"I think there is a middle ground that will allow courses to be built and maintained for a reasonable cost that means lower greens fees... You don't need to spend \$7 million or \$9 million."

A key for this type of project, he said, "is making it efficient for maintenance. Then the good conditions will draw the people. It goes hand in hand with good design."

His design style, Love said, is to make a course compatible with the existing site, "to make it appear and feel as natural as possible and at the same time create drama, keep you awake and pique your interest.

"One of the things I think is so important in design and which sometimes gets overshadowed by other things like the environment and playability, is aesthetics," he added. "That is absolutely mandatory."

Chairman of the American Society of Golf Course Architects' Environmental Committee, Love said the industry is "a long way out there [in protecting the environment], but there is always more to be done.

"Certainly our goal is to make sure we dispel the viewpoint that golf courses somehow harm the environment or wildlife. The golf industry has been aware of environmental issues for a number of years and putting into practice good design and management for quite some time. That is not to say there isn't room for improvement."

For his part, Love intends to remain active in the ongoing discussions between the golf and environmental communities. And he is already active in his new design firm. He has hired a draftsman and an office manager and is in the development stages of two projects in Maryland and one each in Virginia, Pennsylvania and Nebraska.

GOLF COURSE NEWS