

BRIEFS



IGM STRIKES NEW DEAL

LAKE PLACID, Fla. — International Golf Management, Inc. (IGM) has taken over professional golf course maintenance services for Leisure Lakes Golf Course here. IGM will provide course maintenance and landscape management. Leisure Lakes is located in the Leisure Lakes Resort along the shoreline of Lake June. The resort is owned by Avatar Properties.

HUEBER TO BUILD COURSE

LOS ANGELES — David Hueber, a widely known golf industry executive and president of Foothills Golf Development Group LLC, will develop and operate an 18-hole public course 15 miles from downtown Los Angeles.



David Hueber

Red Tail Golf & Equestrian Center will feature an 18-hole course and 8,000-square-foot clubhouse on land leased from L.A. International Golf Club Inc., which unsuccessfully

tried to develop a private club on the 352-acre site. Hueber has served as an executive with the PGA Tour, president and chief executive officer (CEO) of the National Golf Foundation, and CEO of the Ben Hogan Co.

BRASSIE REPORTS IMPROVED FINANCIALS

TAMPA, Fla. — Brassie Golf Corp. reported a 4-percent jump in total operating revenues to \$2.32 million and an increase in net income to \$0.01 per share during the second quarter of this year, up from \$2.23 million and a \$0.29 loss per share, respectively, for the same quarter a year earlier. For the first six months of the year, the management and course design company reported a \$697,435 decrease in total operating revenues, which it traced to the sale of three courses.

CLUBCORP ACQUIRES TIMARRON

SOUTHLAKE, Texas — Club Corporation of America has acquired Timarron Country Club from Mobil Land Development Corp. The 18-hole, Byron Nelson-designed semi-private course will eventually go private with the completed sale of available full golf memberships. "Timarron will provide an opportunity for CCA to pioneer the concept of turning a high-end public golf facility into a private country club," said CCA executive Randy Williams.

Fore Star's style works well in U.S. Southwest

By PETER BLAIS

LUBBOCK, Texas — Visit 36-hole Meadowbrook Golf Course here and you're likely to see Fore Star Golf President Steve Yonke parking golf cars, busing tables, serving drinks or working behind the pro shop cash register.

"This is a people business," said Yonke, who doubles as Meadowbrook's general manager and head of the six-course management firm that stresses a hands-on management style. "I'm always talking to our customers. Some of their suggestions may be off the wall, but people generally give you good ideas about your operation."

"When we first took over here, we asked the customers what we could do to improve. They wanted us to do a better job handling the golf carts, put starters at both courses, and start a marshaling program. We did those things and the course



The third hole at Picacho Hills Country Club, a Fore Star Golf property in Las Cruces, N.M.

runs much more smoothly than it did."

Yonke gained this insight into the need to quiz customers while working at the course level. He joined Jim Colbert Golf in 1984 and managed several different operations before becoming Colbert's

quality manager. Prior to founding Fore Star in 1992, Yonke received the National Golf Foundation Public Golf Award for his efforts to promote and enhance the game.

Brothers Jeff and Gary Miller soon joined

Continued on page 43

Minimum wage hike to have little impact

By PETER BLAIS

The 90-cent increase in the minimum wage to \$4.75 per hour scheduled to take effect this month will have little impact on course maintenance operations, according to superintendents.

While some courses likely pay close to the minimum wage, those contacted by *Golf Course News* said they already pay laborers more than the new lower limit.

"Most courses in our area are well above the minimum," said Lee McLemore, head superintendent at Birmingham (Ala.) Country Club. "Our wages have gone up significantly the past few years to compete in a small labor pool where unemployment is running around 3.5 percent.

We're competing with other businesses, like McDonald's, for workers and they're already above \$5 per hour."

McLemore said he starts laborers at his private club, the oldest club in Birmingham, at \$6 to \$6.50 per hour. That's 25 percent more than the \$4.75 limit scheduled to take effect in October and the \$5.15 that becomes law Sept. 1, 1997.

"The best part of the [minimum wage] bill from our perspective was the change that now allows private clubs to start 401k retirement plans for employees," McLemore said. "I called our senators to encourage them to support the bill because of that. A 401k plan allows us to do

Continued on page 41



PLAYER REMODELS KIAWAH COURSE

The second hole at Cougar Point Golf Course is part of a \$4 million renovation recently completed by Gary Player for Kiawah Island Resort owner Virginia Investment Trust (VIT). Cougar Point opened Sept. 8 on the site of the former Marsh Point course, also a Player design. VIT acquired Kiawah in a Resolution Trust Corp. auction of Landmark Land Co. properties in October, 1993. Since then, VIT has also purchased the Pete Dye-designed Ocean Course for \$27 million, started construction of a \$5 million clubhouse at Tom Fazio-designed Osprey Point, made improvements to the golf facilities and opened the new Business Center and Food Court. VIT has so far invested a total of nearly \$50 million in the resort.

PERSONNEL PERSPECTIVES

Trash talking your way to a cleaner course

By VINCE ALFONSO

Bobby had worked for me since he was a sophomore in high school. The soon-to-be graduated college senior was in his last season at our golf course. He was doing his usual good job.

I walked out the south door of our clubhouse and looked toward the range to see if I could spot a customer who had a phone call. As my eyes panned the range tee, I noticed the range garbage container was overflowing. I immediately called out to Bobby, who was moving some golf cars nearby.

I said "Bobby, would you please go out to the range and empty the trash container, and while you are there, would you run over to the outing tent and pick up the debris overlooked by last night's closing crew?" I explained in more detail about the debris and sent him on his way.

I watched Bobby drive his Yamaha past the range trash

Continued on page 40

Vince Alfonso Jr. is a former course owner, general manager, past president of the National Golf Course Owners Association and founder of Alfonso Creative Golf Enterprises, Inc., a course management consulting firm.

Fore Star

Continued from page 39

Yonke. Like Yonke, Jeff was reared in daily operations. He received Colbert's Golf Manager of the Year in 1990 and has managed 10 courses. He is in charge of marketing all Fore Star properties and manages Picacho Hills Country Club in Las Cruces, N.M. Gary oversees Fore Star's financial and administrative functions. A certified public accountant, he served 16 years as chief financial officer of AGF Industries, a \$500 million company.

Fore Star has grown steadily, adding one or two courses annually. In addition to Meadowbrook and Picacho Hills, the company operates Hollywood Park Golf Center in Los Angeles, Hound Hollow Golf Center in Portland, Ore., The Links at Sierra Blanca in Ruidoso, N.M., and Scott Park Municipal Golf Course in Silver City, N.M.

"I've seen other companies have growth spurts where they've added a bunch of courses all at once and then played catch-up until they could manage them efficiently," Yonke said. We want to have a more planned growth and stay within our means to be a daily part of each operation.

TV and radio

Continued from previous page

time if possible — for critique purposes," Alfonso said. "We want what they think are their best and worst commercials. They might have loved one but it was a bomb, or vice versa. We'll discuss them."

The idea of Star Search sessions, he said, is "to find that latent personality and bring it out that day. We will videotape it and show them just what they look like doing their own commercials. Some people may not like how they look on TV or sound on radio, but it may be just the ticket. This may have tremendous value."

Learning how to most effectively use all media for promotions can exponentially multiply profits, Alfonso said.

"Everything I've done in the last 10 years," he said, "has three components: direct mail, radio and television. Research shows that if you were able to communicate your message in one medium, you have made one impression.

"If a person hears the same message on the radio that they see in the newspaper, you have made more than two impressions... When they then see a billboard saying the same thing, you don't have three messages but maybe 9. And when they watch the news that night and see it on television, it's not four impressions, it's 16."

To register for the Forum and/or the post-conference workshop contact the *Golf Course News* Conference Group at 207-846-0600.

"We've added one or two properties a year. I see that continuing, especially since it takes three years to get a course operating the way you want. The first year you fix what's broken. The second you institute a marketing plan. The third year, hopefully, all your work begins to pay off."

Fore Star's primary focus is on acquiring long-term leases coupled with purchase options, if possible. It also provides man-

agement and consulting services and co-owns another facility. But the firm prefers leases.

"Our last two courses have been leases from municipalities," Yonke said. "They fit well into our niche. Municipalities have usually overlooked certain things for many years. We try to focus on those first. It's often the lack of an on-site manager. The golf pro and superintendent usually answer to different people

within the city government and it makes it difficult to get things done. We put one person, the general manager, in charge of both positions and things run more smoothly."

Fore Star found some major capital improvements were needed at Meadowbrook. The company sunk more than \$1 million into the complex, including a total clubhouse renovation that "gave us the opportunity to run the opera-

tion smoothly," Yonke said.

Though small compared to some major management companies, Yonke prefers to see Fore Star's size as an advantage.

"Large companies have to prioritize their problems," he said. "An individual course that is part of a six-course group has a better chance of someone noticing its problems and getting them taken care of than one in a 200- to 300-course portfolio."

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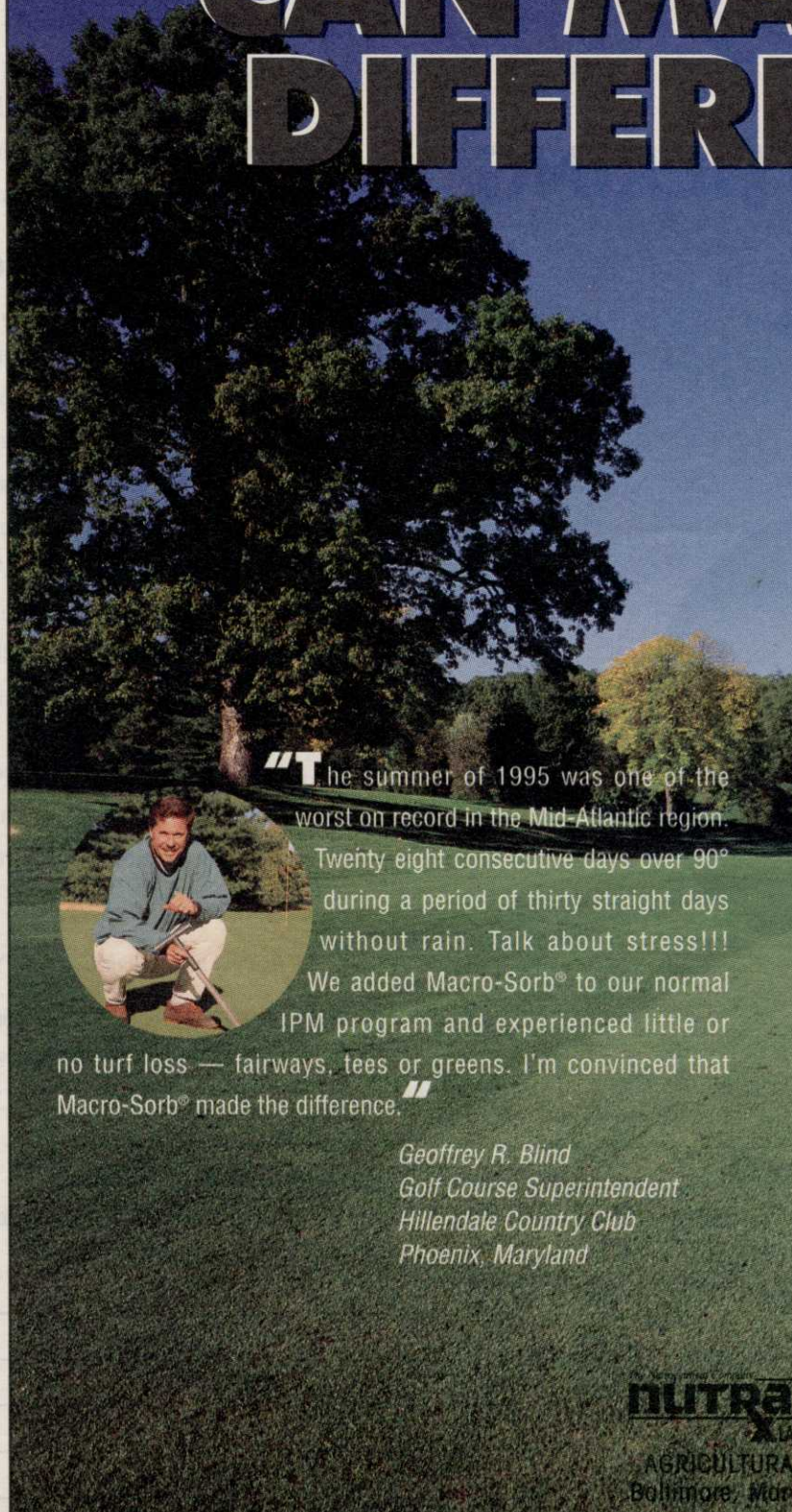
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Golf Course Superintendent
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