

BRIEFS

PERSONNEL CORNER

# Teaching an old dog new service tricks

By VINCE ALFONSO

How many of you remember the early TV game show, "Name That Tune"? I realize I am dating myself but I remember: I loved that show. I was amazed at how those people could hear only one or two notes of a song and then — BINGO — they "Named That Tune".

And I'm sure that, as amazing as it was to me, it was no big deal to them. If asked how they did it, I'm sure they would have said, "It just comes natural to me. I hear a tune and I never forget it."

When it comes to customer service, a lot of people are like that. It just comes naturally to them. They see a customer step one foot inside the door of their shop and their instincts take over. They seem to know just what to say, how to say it and when to say it. They really know how to make a customer feel acknowledged, valued, appreciated and welcome. And, of course, that translates into a happy customer, which almost always turns into more sales.

As owners and managers of golf courses, charged with the responsibility of hiring and training our staff, we often try to hire sales people whose credentials meet all of our criteria, including having

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*Vince Alfonso Jr. is a 40-year golf industry veteran, president of Alfonso Creative Enterprises Inc., and owner of Kimberling Golf Course near Branson, Mo. You can reach him at 417-739-4370.*



**POLO TRACE PURCHASED**

DELRAY BEACH, Fla. — Polo Trace Management, Inc., a Florida corporation comprised of five local business people, has acquired Polo Trace Country Club here for \$7 million. The transaction was financed through Stonehill Commercial Capital of East Providence, R.I., a golf course finance company. Built in 1990, the course suffered through a bankruptcy and Resolution Trust Corp. management before being purchased by a speculator in 1993. The current principals of Polo Trace Management took over management in 1994.

**NGP SNAPS UP TWO MORE**

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — National Golf Properties, Inc. has acquired Stonecreek Golf Course, a premium resort course located in Phoenix, from a commercial property developer for approximately \$9.3 million. NGP (NGP) also sold Kendale Lakes Golf



ACQUISITIONS

Course, a daily-fee course located in Miami, to a local investor group for approximately \$3.5 million and reinvested the

proceeds in Stonecreek. Stonecreek will be leased to American Golf Corp. NGP has also acquired San Geronimo Golf Course, an 18-hole daily-fee course in Marin County north of San Francisco. San Geronimo will be leased to Evergreen Alliance Golf Limited.

**NATIONSCREDIT ADDS PAIR**

LEESBURG, Fla. — ISS has been retained to oversee the grow-in of nine additional holes of play here at Pennbrooke Fairways. The Gordon Lewis-designed Pennbrooke Fairways course plans to open its 9-hole addition this month. ISS currently oversees the golf course and landscape maintenance of the course.

**NEW SUPPLIERS FOR NGCOA**

CHARLESTON, S.C. — With the recent addition of three new suppliers, the National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) Smart Buy Program now offers savings on several new products and services. The three new suppliers are: NGCOA Food Services, administered by the Anthony Owen Co.; Hertz Technologies, Inc.; and NGCOA Travel Advantage. For more information, contact the NGCOA at 803-881-9956.



**MANAGEMENT COMPANY FACILITIES LISTED**

*Hillcrest Golf Club in Scottsdale, Ariz., is the latest acquisition by the John Jacobs Group, one of the management firms and properties listed in the course management chart on pages 76-77.*

## Casper to manage Hawaii's toughest

VIENNA, Va. — Billy Casper Golf Management, Inc. (BCGM) has been selected to manage Koolau Golf Course on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. The 18-hole course's slope rating of 164 is the highest ever recorded by the U.S. Golf Association, hence Koolau's moniker, "toughest in the nation." The course is under foreclosure and is anticipated to be sold via sealed bid in 1997, although a date has yet to be set.

BCGM will perform turnkey management services in the areas of clubhouse operations, sales and marketing, agronomy, staffing and training, accounting, food and beverage, merchandising, and financial management.

Koolau is a daily-fee golf facility, hosting more than 30,000 18-hole rounds of golf. Greens fees are \$85 for non-resi-

dents and \$45 for Hawaiian residents.

The 7,310-yard, par-72 course was designed by Dick Nugent, carved out of the heavily forested Windward Side foothills of Oahu, with the Koolau Mountains rising several thousand feet above the course and waterfalls cascading from imposing peaks.

"We are fortunate to engage an experienced Billy Casper group to direct the day-to-day operations of Koolau Golf Course," said Joseph Toy, director of Hospitality Industry Consulting Services for Coopers and Lybrand (Hawaii) and the court-appointed commissioner. "The firm's role is to improve all facets of the facility and operation in preparation for marketing the property to potential buyers."

## Carefree's Miller credits fellow superintendents for successful career

By PETER BLAIS

CAREFREE, Ariz. — Ed Miller likens his job to the director of player personnel for an NFL football team, an apt analogy in light of the just-completed Super Bowl.

"I look for the best talent when

recruiting superintendents and then give them the authority to do their job," said the director of golf operations for Carefree Resorts, operators of The Boulders in Carefree, Ariz., The Lodge at Ventana Canyon in Tucson, Ariz., and Carmel (Calif.) Valley Ranch.

"One of the greatest challenges in this industry is recruiting the right person for that position. The superintendent's job is demanding, challenging, but not very well understood."

Miller knows whereof he speaks, having spent many years as a course superintendent before becoming the man responsible for Carefree's multi-million-dollar golf operations.

Miller was a junior at the University of Wisconsin when he began his golf career at nine-hole Walnut Grove Golf Course in Cochrane, Wis. He did a little bit of everything, working on the construction crew, serving as equipment manager, acting as grow-in superintendent and occasionally tending bar. He spent two years at Walnut Grove while earning his bachelor's degree in business administration.

"It was fascinating and stimulating work," he recalled. "But I knew if I wanted a career in this business, I had to accelerate the process. That's a choice I had to make."



Ed Miller (right) and The Boulders superintendent Scott Nair.

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## Miller

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Miller enrolled in Pennsylvania State University's two-year turfgrass management program, interned at Medinah Country Club outside Chicago and got his first job as assistant superintendent under Armen Suny at Cherry Hills Country Club near Denver, where he helped prepare the course for the 1985 PGA Championship.

Suny left Cherry Hills for nearby Castle Pines shortly after the PGA Championship and the club offered Miller the vacant head post. At the same time, the 250-member Desert Forest Golf Club in Phoenix recruited Miller for its superintendent position. The Wisconsin native was faced with another career decision.

"I helped Armen get Cherry Hills ready for the PGA, but it was really his course," Miller remembered. "I was flattered by Cherry Hills' offer. But I needed to take a course of my own and make it the best that I could. That's why I chose Desert Forest."

Miller spent five fruitful years at Desert Forest before taking over his first multi-course facility in 1990 as director of golf course operations of Pebble Beach Co.'s four courses — Pebble Beach Golf Links, Spyglass Hill Golf Links, Spanish Bay and Old Del Monte Golf & Country Club. Now it was Miller's turn to prep a course for a major golf event, the 1992 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach Golf Links.

"That required an incredible focus," Miller said. "We had kikuyugras and drought problems to overcome. But that's what I love. To identify what a course needs, develop plans and implement them. That ability has helped me advance in my career."

Thoroughly understanding the superintendent's job was a key to Miller's success. But equally important to prosper in Pebble Beach's corporate environment was the ability to communicate and sell his ideas.

"The corporate resort golf business might be the most demanding," Miller said. "Shareholders are looking for a positive return on their investment. Showing them how spending money or starting programs to make the company more efficient, maximize rounds and provide a superior guest experience are very important."

Miller found he missed the desert and moved back to Phoenix in 1993. He worked as head superintendent at Desert

Highlands for a year before joining Carefree in 1994. With the help of his on-site superintendents, Miller upgraded the company's golf facilities with new irrigation and fertility-management programs.

"I'm always looking for the opportunity to fix things," explained Miller of his success. "The greater the challenge, the greater the reward."

According to Miller, Carefree is prospering and plans to begin construction this summer on two new golf resorts, one on Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula and the other in California's Napa Valley.

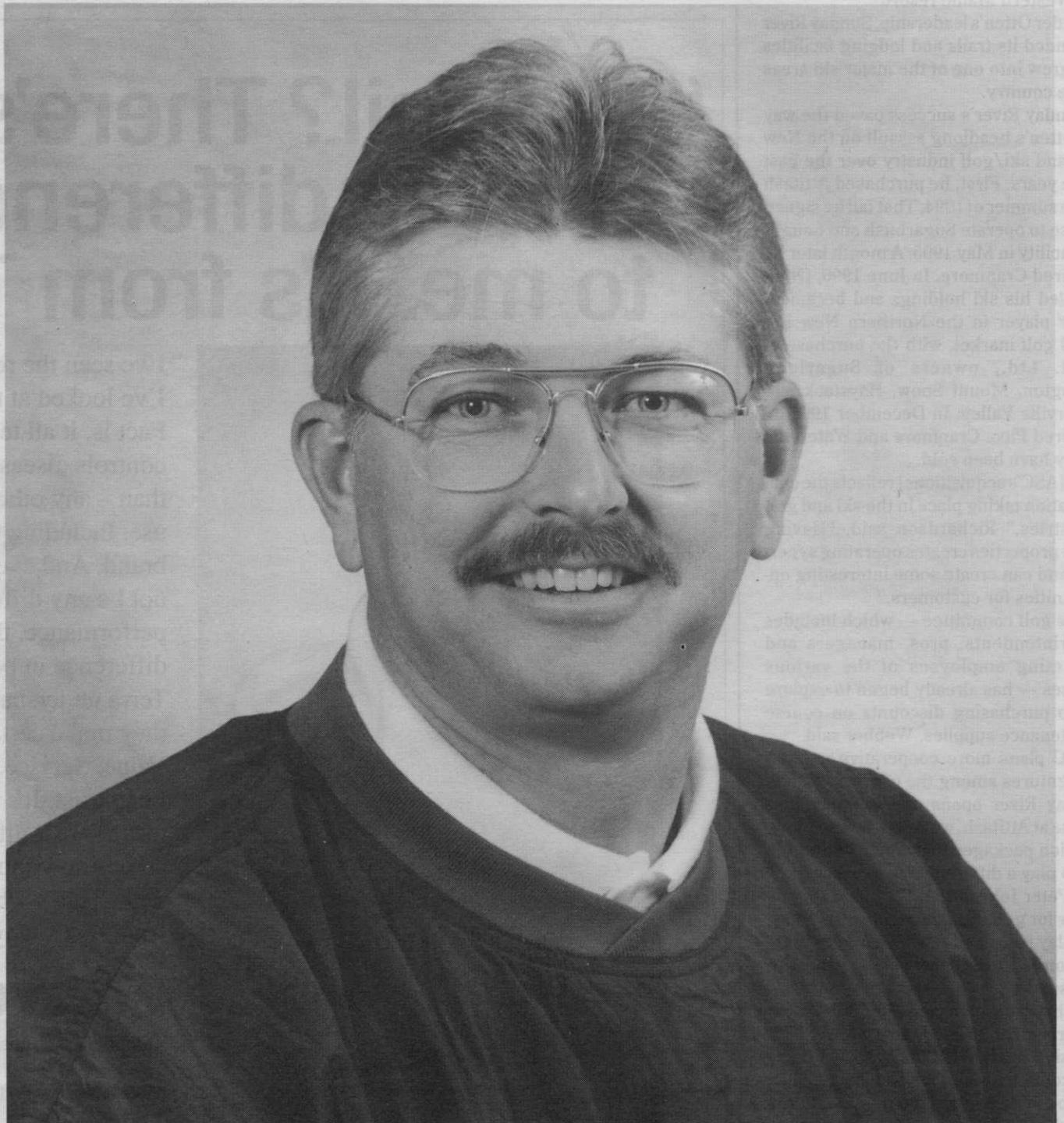
"That will change my job, but it's exciting to think about," he said.

## IGM adds three courses to portfolio

LAKELAND, Fla. — International Golf Management has begun providing total facility management through its new facility leasing division at Bella Vista Golf Resort & Yacht Club in Howey-In-The-Hills.

IGM is leasing and operating Bella Vista's golf facility

in return for all revenues IGM has also signed traditional maintenance service contracts with Viera East Golf Club in Viera; Mirror Lakes Golf Course at Admiral Lehigh Golf Resort in Lehigh; and Golfview Golf & Racquet Club in Ft. Myers.



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