Audubon jumps into course development

By MARK LESLIE

SELKIRK, N.Y. — When Audubon International (AI) entered the world of golf, no one would have dreamed of the heights it is about to reach — no one except, perhaps, President Ron Dodson.

AI has created the Audubon International Golf and the Environment Land Trust to accept "real property interest" that will be used to facilitate development of Audubon golf courses as environmental research and demonstration centers.

"We asked, 'Who better to implement our beliefs than us?,' said Dodson. "One of the criticisms we've had about our Cooperative Sanctuary System is that we have no assurance that our

One-stop equipment deals on rise

By M. LEVANS

BLOOMINGTON, Minn./LINCOLN, Neb. — As the industry seeks more courses gathering under management umbrellas, the number of exclusive provider deals between management companies and manufacturers — including equipment, equipment maintenance and ancillary services — appears to be following suit.

In the past month, both the Toro Co. and Ransomes America Corp. have added substantial new agreements to their growing list of exclusive arrangements.

Toro cut a five-year deal with Whitbread/Marriott

Public Golf Forum sessions take shape

Maintenance Track: Technology steps into the spotlight

By MARK LESLIE

OAK BROOK HILLS, Ill. — Pioneering technology for quickly "mapping" a golf course to optimize irrigation and chemical and fertilizer applications is one of several topics in a full package of maintenance sessions planned for the 1997 Public Golf Forum here, Oct. 27-28.

Golf course superintendents around the country, taking advantage of special registration offers, are expected to attend the forum at Oak Brook Hills Resort for public-access golf course superintendents, owners, operators and developers.

Along with a half-day session on "Biological Controls: Current Status and Future Prospects," led by Dr. Eric Nelson of Cornell University, they

Development Track: Player development can't be overlooked

By M. LEVANS

OAK BROOK HILLS, Ill. — Public-access golf courses are being developed in record numbers while player participation numbers remain stagnant.

Now, how are you going to develop a public course that will allow you to establish a solid customer base — and keep those customers coming back for more, giving you a faster return on your investment?
Public Golf Forum: Development

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A riddle for the ages? Smart, economical development, topped off with a "learning center" to convert occasional players and juniors into core players, may sound like a simple, logical business plan. But if the current National Golf Foundation (NGF) figures tell us anything, it's that new players are not being converted and are not sticking with the game.

According to the NGF, since 1990, golf participation rates have remained within a consistent range from 11.3 to 11.9 percent. During that time, the number of golfers has hovered around 24.5 million.

To help break out of this rut, Public Golf Forum, Oct. 27-28, has aimed this year's Development track at bringing an economical, but fun experience to the existing players and "wanna-be" players.

The goal, of course, is to keep them players.

Denis Griffiths, president of Denis Griffiths & Associates and immediate past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, is a firm believer that developers don't have to sink $10 million into a project to make it a great golf experience, thus making it unaffordable to the average player.

Griffiths will lead the session "Building the Affordable Golf Course," Monday, October 27 at 3 p.m. "Someone may say that a $2 million golf course is playing second-hand golf," said Griffiths. "That's just not the case." The building of an affordable golf course—one that is, and can remain accessible to a veteran or beginner—starts with the proper site selection.

"Property is absolutely the most important ingredient," said Griffiths. "because I feel so strongly about the importance of keeping golf affordable. If we want the game to grow, we have to keep it within reach. I'm concerned that if we keep building expensive golf courses we're going to see participation in the sport dwindle."

Tom Kendricks has devoted his work as Golf Manager for the Hamilton County Parks District in Greater Cincinnati to developing participants.

Kendricks will conduct the session "Developing a Learning Center Environment," Tuesday, Oct. 28 at 4p.m.

Prior to 1990, Hamilton County had conventional 18-hole golf courses, but lacked a facility that would accommodate the entry-level golfer. "Traditional 18-hole courses aren’t the best places to get golfers started,” said Kendrick. "There’s a lot of frustration and intimidation there that has to be overcome.”

To accommodate the entry-level player, Hamilton County built Meadow Links Golf Course, a mid-length track (all par-4s and par-3s) with short-distance front tees, making it more approachable for beginners.

"The program center, where we do the instruction, is completely separate from the practice areas," said Kendrick. "That was done to remove some of the intimidation of taking lessons.

According to the Kendrick, course owners need to eliminate any intimidating factors and make teaching areas accessible.

With that philosophy, Kendrick is seeing results in his bottom line. "Our driving range usage at Meadow Links is up 35 percent over projection over last year," said Kendrick. At Hamilton's two other range sites, usage is up 15 percent and 5 percent, respectively. Rounds played at Meadow Links is up 13.8 percent over projection.