AG-UK takes St. Mellion, updates to follow shortly

By TREVOR LEDGER

CORNWALL, England — American Golf (UK) Ltd. (AG-UK) has bought the prestigious St. Mellion Golf & Country Club from Martin and Herman Bond. This is the 12th acquisition for AG-UK and marks the trend of its continued expansion into the United Kingdom golf market.

With AG-UK tripling in size over the last four years and up to seven further purchases planned in the next 10 months, the Santa Monica, Calif.,-based parent outfit is feeling bullish.

St. Mellion boasts 36 holes and has hosted a number of Volvo European Tour events. The original 18-hole layout was designed by J. Hamilton-Stutt in 1976 with the additional Jack Nicklaus course opening in 1988.

Initial indications of AG-UK's intentions are promising. Course Manager Robert Brewer confirmed: "It's very positive. Our biggest problem has been the inability of the Nicklaus course to drain adequately. In August we are planning to install improved drainage. Also, we are going to install a new irrigation system for the tees of the Old Course in October."

Also planned is the construction of a new workshop and creation of a new post, that of in-house mechanic.

The mechanic will be responsible, among other things, for the upkeep of a substantial amount of new turf-care machinery, which will be brought in within the next few months.

Clubhaus expands into fitness arena

LONDON — London-based Clubhaus PLC is expanding its interests following a busy year, spending £36.3 million (roughly $60 million) on acquisitions during 1997.

Nine of 16 golf clubs (all situated in Europe) will have fitness centers attached to them, increasing the facilities available to the 15,000-plus Clubhaus members.

Clubhaus Chairman Robert Bourne was upbeat about the group's activities. "The group is now in a position to consolidate the asset base and to develop other facilities that will complement the golf clubs," he said.

Clubhaus' profits tripled to more than £5 million ($8 million) in 1997. During the same period, £6 million ($10 million) was spent on improvements and upgrades throughout the group.

Significant U.K. developments include another 18 holes at Three Rivers Golf Club in Essex, designed by European Golf Design, which opened June 23. Castle Royle Golf Club in Berkshire has been treated to a new clubhouse to replace the converted barn, which has served up until now. The new building will be officially opened Saturday, June 27. The Nizels Golf Club in Kent has undergone significant changes.

Continued on page 42

PERSONNEL CORNER

Hiring necessitates different strokes for different golf folks

By VINC Alfonso JR.

Vince Sr.'s philosophy of being a manager is simple: Never ask an employee to do anything you would not do yourself.

He carried that philosophy through his days as owner of his grocery store, Weona #88, to his head professional days at Bella Vista Country Club in Memphis, Tenn. Besides managing his employees, Dad cleaned clubs, fixed golf cars, sold clubs, vacuumed the shop, changed grips, etc., etc., etc.

Uncle Mario shared Dad's philosophy. So, when he left his grocery store, Weona #88, to become the builder and superintendent of Bella Vista, this philosophy and style of management came with him, also. Besides managing his employees, Uncle Mario fixed mowing and irrigation equipment, mowed greens and fairways, planted trees, etc., etc., etc.

Just in case you haven't figured it out on your own, I'm a lot (a whole lot) like Dad and Uncle Mario. I, too, have adopted their philosophy and style of management. I would never ask an employee to do anything I would not do myself.

Now, let's talk about how this particular philosophy and management style affects the hiring practices we use in hiring some of our key people.

You and I know that if you are from the old school, you hire golf professionals and superintendents expecting them to work as you do, hands on. We know they are going

Continued on page 44
NGP ACQUIRES GOLF COURSES IN MINNEAPOLIS
SANTA MONICA, Calif. — National Golf Properties Inc. has acquired Majestic Oaks Golf Club and Woodland Creek Golf Course in Minneapolis for approximately $12.5 million from a local businessman. National Golf will lease Majestic Oaks and Woodland Creek to American Golf Corp. Majestic Oaks Golf Club consists of two championship, 18-hole courses, a 9-hole executive length course, a driving range and clubhouse capable of accommodating more than 500 guests. Woodland Creek Golf Course offers a 9-hole executive-length course, driving range and clubhouse.

Alfonso
Continued from page 41

One Reliable Brand

That brand is Terra® With 14 different blends, we've got you covered on golf course fairways, roughs, non-play areas, lawns, landscapes, sports fields, parks, right-of-ways and commercial areas. The best of hearty, attractive bluegrass, perennial ryegrass and fescue varieties—specially blended to provide top performance. Plus, they’re backed by in-depth research, agronomic expertise and timely delivery. Terra’s high-quality seed and excellent selection of turf care products make Terra the one-stop shopping place for your turf needs. Talk to your Terra Professional Products representative today.

Terra
Terra Industries Inc.
P.O. Box 6000
Sioux City, Iowa 51102-6000
1-800-288-7353
www.terraindustries.com

Working with you.

Vince Alfonso Jr. is a 40-year golf-industry veteran, president of Alfonso Creative Enterprises Inc., and owner/PGA professional at Kimberling Golf Course near Branson, Mo. He can be reached at 417-739-4370.

chewed the super out for taking it easy while his employees were out there working away.

After Mr. X had finished, the superintendent, very calmly, asked the owner to point out any deficiencies on the course or in the budget. The owner could think of none. At this point, the superintendent said, ‘You see Mr. X, you are not paying me to hit with the hammer; you are paying me to know where to hit.’

He continued to point out that if Mr. X expected him to actually do the work, he had chosen the wrong man. He was a seasoned veteran and had truly done it all, but he had taken this job to manage the upkeep of the course, not to keep up the course himself.

I encountered an owner once who was upset with his golf professional because he said the professional was never at his shop. After getting all the details, it seems the shop was meeting the owner’s financial goals, the staff seemed happy and the customers seemed happy, too. It was the owner who was unhappy.

You see, being a hands-on guy, he felt the professional should be spending more time at the shop. However, the professional’s presence at the shop was not spelled out in his employment arrangement and, therefore, I had no choice but to comment that the guy must be a great manager of people because, he was definitely doing the job he was hired to do, whether or not he was there as much as the owner thought he should be.

All of us old-school, hands-on management types have got to realize that there are these wonderful people out there who literally have the ability to motivate, train and manage people in such a way that their presence is not required (nearly as much as we think it should be) to keep things running smoothly. The truth is, if the ink is the right color, and folks are happy, and we didn’t spell out how much time they had to be present, then there really is no problem.

You can pay people to hit with the hammer, or to know where to hit, or to know where to hit and to actually hit. The choice is yours. You simply have to be sure you know the kind of individual you are looking for and spell out your desires clearly before you hire.

I know this very simple truth has helped me be a better employer, and I believe, with all my heart, it will help you, too.