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 on 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, £5 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 improvements.

PERSONNEL CORNER

Hiring necessitates different strokes for different golf folks

By VINCE 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, this philosophy and style of management came with him, also. 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 was in place. But 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.

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
OB Sports realigns top managers

SEATTLE, Wash.—OB Sports has realigned its top management staff, appointing Bob Marshall president of OB Sports/Northwest and Ed Francese president of OB Sports/Southwest.

Francese and Marshall, both long-time employees of the Seattle-based golf course development and management firm, will be responsible for facilitating the company’s growth and coordinating new golf course developments and management contracts within their respective regions.

Since 1972, Francese has excelled in all facets of the golf business. He was instrumental in the design, construction and openings of three new golf facilities in Arizona and has operated daily-fee courses, private, and hotel/resort properties. Before assuming his current role, Francese worked for OB Sports as head golf professional at Angel Park Golf Club and director of golf at The Legacy Golf Club, both in Las Vegas. Currently he is coordinating the development of The Gallery in Tucson, Ariz., as well as other new OB properties in Palm Springs, Calif., and Nevada.

Throughout his career, OB Sports co-founder Bob Marshall has worked in almost every aspect of golf course management. His diversified abilities were fully exhibited by his performance as director of golf, club manager and superintendent at Teton Pines Golf Club in Jackson Hole, Wyo. Marshall acted as project manager and construction supervisor from inception and contributed significantly to the design of this highly regarded facility.

With OB Sports, he was directly responsible for the "turnkey" development of The Reserve Vineyards and Golf Club, a 36-hole facility in Portland, Ore.

OB Sports operates, or is in the process of constructing, courses in Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Arizona and Texas.

In related personnel announcements:

Jeff Fought has been named project manager at Langdon Farms in Portland. Fought previously held head golf professional positions for OB Sports at Angel Park and at Langdon Farms.

Sean Cracraft has been named project manager for The Reserve, a 36-hole facility designed, built and managed by OB Sports in Aurora, Ore. He previously served as head professional for OB Sports at Angel Park and Teton Pines and as head superintendent at Langdon Farms.

Wade Dunagan was appointed project manager for The Gallery at Dove Mountain, a new 18-hole course and residential community opening in Tucson this November.

Clubhaus

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cant upgrading.

Elsewhere in Europe, the Forêt de Montpensier club in Vichy, France had a new clubhouse open in May, making the club fully operational.

March 1998 saw the launch of Clubhaus’ own brand of golf merchandise ranging from clothing to clubs under the brand name “Ikarus.”

Jonathan Talbot-Weiss of Clubhaus’ group marketing and sales confirmed chairman Bourne’s plans for the immediate future. “We have no plans for further expansion at the moment. We shall continue to focus on the UK and Germany. We believe that the long-term trend for these areas is positive. The German golf market is robust and growing. With three courses already in place there, eventual further expansion is a natural progression for us as we will need very little further infrastructure.”