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The First Tee takes a giant step forward
By Micael Levans
ST. AUGUSTINE, Fla. — The First Tee, launched in November in a national publicity wave headlined by George Bush and Earl Woods, has managed to pull together the golf industry's heaviest hitters in what is being called the most significant concerted initiative to create accessible golf facilities for minority and junior golfers.

According to The World Golf Foundation, The First Tee's founding organization, the initial focus will be on developing financial support to acquire locations for the facilities. To supplement

April: California golf courses take a huge hit
By David Wilber
The winter's intense El Niño-driven storms have hammered California golf courses, highlighted in early February when a series of weather-related records were broken. Several areas of the state recorded the lowest barom-

April: Rains, tornadoes wreak havoc in Florida.
By Joel Jackson
Florida's golf courses escaped El Niño's big wind, but the rains are causing serious problems. A winter storm attributed to El Niño raced across central Florida in the early morning of Feb. 22, unleashing a cluster of tornadoes that

President Bill Clinton (left) receives some tips from Maroon Creek Club (MCC) Director of Golf Todd Williams during a presidential visit in August to the exclusive Aspen, Colo., golf facility. Photo by Dick Durrance II.

The dust settles, new structure emerges
By Trevor Ledger
Ipswich, Suffolk, England — Now that the dust has settled on Textron Inc.'s takeover of Ransomes PLC, a clear picture of the group's strategy and structure is emerging.

The new company is called Textron Turf Care and Specialty Products and is headed up by the former president of Ransomes, Peter Wilson. As president of the new worldwide organization, Wilson is based in the company headquarters here in Ipswich. The

KollStar plans to double size by 2000
By Peter Blais
Newport Beach, Calif. — KollStar, a major operator and developer of golf courses, has acquired seven courses on the southwest coast of Florida, giving the Newport Beach-based firm a dozen courses nationwide.

KollStar purchased six of the courses from National Fairways Ltd. The acquisition includes Sunrise Golf Club (GC), Rolling Green GC and Sarasota GC, all in Sarasota; Hibiscus GC in Naples; Port Charlotte GC; The Tides GC in Seminole; and Eagle Ridge GC in Fort Myers. Each is an 18-hole,
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have 100 courses in the program in the next two years.
Service and expertise commitments have been made by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA), National Golf Foundation, American Junior Golf Association, Tiger Woods Foundation and National Minority Golf Foundation.

El Niño: California
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barometer readings ever in February.
California courses found that no amount of installed drainage could handle the rains since they began on already wet ground. El Niño was not choosy about the golf courses it attacked as rivers, streams, drainage and retaining walls statewide reached their limits.
The Monterey Peninsula received no mercy. "We had the highest tide and the biggest swell ever recorded in Stillwater Cove," said Mark Michaud, superintendent at Pebble Beach Golf Links. "If we hadn't put in the new seawall on the 18th hole, I'm sure we would have had some major damage.
"I cannot imagine how bad it would have been. Some comments during the TV coverage of the AT&T said the wall was making the waves break more violently. But the reality was that the old seawall might have been gone." Some erosion has also taken place off the cliffs on Nos. 9 and 10. "It's not the big concern right now," Michaud said, "but all the sand is gone from Carmel Beach."
The damage at Pebble Beach was not only right next to the ocean. "We lost cart-path access from the 5th tee to the 5th green and access from the 15th tee to the 15th green."

El Niño: Florida
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that touched down in Kissimmee, Winter Garden and Sanford near the middle of the state and in Ormond Beach on the East Coast. Forty people were killed and hundreds of families left homeless as the twisters targeted several residential areas.
"We were very lucky," said Kissimmee Bay Country Club Superintendent Jim Moulton. "The tornado that did all that damage to the Ponderosa Park mobile homes touched down only three-tenths of a mile from here. The irony is that we were going to be sweeping and vacuuming the course for all the fallen oak leaves, and the next day after the tornado, they were gone — sucked up by the tornado."
Kissimmee Bay was without power for six days and managed to stay open by renting eight portable generators to operate the clubhouse facilities and charge the carts. As a result, the club will be installing a large emergency generator for future back-up.
Duane Petersen at nearby Meadow Woods Golf Course also dodged the bullet on that fateful morning. "We were in the path, but it skipped over us," he said. "Our problem has been like everyone else's in the state: lousy growing conditions."

The First Tee plans to provide, through the help of participating organizations and individuals, expertise and consulting advice, land-planning services, course design and other assistance that will help reduce the cost of the project.
Fifteen developments have been identified as meeting The First Tee criteria thus far, including renovation of Detroit's Belle Isle course made possible by a $2 million donation by Ford Motor Co. The First Tee plans to reduce the cost of the project.