Asian Downturn Foreshadowed
Golf course architect Ron Fream chronicles Asian economic woes' effect on golf market

Browner Steps to the Tee
Federal EPA administrator says government & the golf industry making great cooperative strides....

Troon inks first international deal
By PETER BLAIS and wire service reports
SCOTTSDALE, Arizona, USA — Troon Golf, a major U.S. course development and management firm, has expanded into the international market with the addition of two of Scotland's most famous layouts, the Ailsa and Arran courses at Turnberry.

The Scottsdale, Arizona-based company will manage the two courses and hold a minority subordinated ownership interest.

The resort was acquired for approximately $51.5 million by Starwood Lodging Corporation, based in Phoenix, Ariz., from Nitto Kogyo Co. Ltd., a golf course ownership firm based in Tokyo. Nitto Kogyo had owned the 800-acre development since 1987 and invested $35 million in the property.

"Today [Dec. 23, 1997], is a momentous day for our company," said Troon President Dana Garmany.

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Philippines puts golf development on hold
By M. LEVANS
MANILA, Philippines—The Philippine government has ordered a halt to the building of new golf courses due to water shortages caused by the El Nino weather pattern.

The Philippine Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) stopped processing land conversion applications by golf course developers until the drought situation ends, which may not be until mid-1998.

"This is an initiative...to conserve water in the light of the El Nino phenomenon and the growing criticism of golf course development exacerbating the water problem," DAR Undersecretary Gerardo C. Cabacar said.

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DEVELOPMENT

Courses cornerstone of communities

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payroll of approximately $1.9
million. And, 95 percent of its
annual expenditures are spent
with local companies.

According to Phoenix City
Councilman Cody Williams, who
represents Raven’s district, not a
single new housing development
was built in the area after the early
1970s. This dearth of activity
wreaked havoc upon the district’s
economy and its quality of life.

"It used to be that this was a
thriving area with an economi-
cally diverse population that sup-
ported all kinds of businesses
and amenities for its residents," Williams said. "However, during
the 1970s many of the more af-
fuent families began moving to
other, newer areas of town, and
most of the businesses went with
them. Thunderbird Country Club
was the exception. Those homes
held their values and remained a
strong part of the community."

Today, Raven Golf Club at
South Mountain is a cornerstone
of redevelopment for the entire
area. The course has gained state-
wide and national attention and
has attracted scores of people to
south Phoenix who otherwise
would have no reason to visit the
area. Likewise, a variety of new
businesses and real-estate devel-
opsments are in the works.

So far, two new residential
communities are under develop-
ment as a result of Raven’s pres-
ence with six additional
homebuilders and two commer-
cial entities considering projects
in the area. Among the first to
ante up was The Pines at The
Raven, a community of 80 new
single-family homes built adja-
cent to Raven Golf Club at South
Mountain, where prices range
from the $140s to the $160s.

"This community wouldn’t be
here if it were not for Raven Golf
Club. And, I think the same holds
true for the majority of new activ-
ity in this part of town," said Barney
Feldman, designated broker for
The Pines at The Raven.

One of the beneficiaries is
John Augustine, owner of Phoe-
nix-based Desert Tree Farms, a
company that manufactures
plants from seed, cuttings and
tissue cultures for landscape
projects. The explosive growth
of golf developments across the
area has created an incredible
demand for the types of high-
quality, drought-tolerant trees
and plants Augustine specializes
in manufacturing. His business
averages about $3 million in sales
each year, and Augustine esti-
nates that 15 percent of that re-
venue is either directly or indirectly
attributable to the golf industry.

Elsewhere, the $20 million
Desert Pines Golf Club in Las
Vegas opened in late December
1996. The Walters Group built
the Perry Dye-designed course
in 96-acre Nature Park, a nice-
sounding name for a neglected
piece of city-owned property
bounded on four sides by free-
ways and public streets in an
economically depressed area.

"The golf course is located in a
section of town that needs an in-
fusion of new business," said City
Councilman Gary Reese, who rep-
resents Las Vegas’ Ward 3 where
Desert Pines was built. "We ex-
pect other developments to look
at investing in the neighborhood."

Walters Group subsidiary
Southwest Golf bought the land
and operates the course. Chief
Operating Officer Allen Jones
noted that a 2,000-employee fam-
ily court building, a couple mu-
icipal buildings and several res-
aurants have dressed up the area
in recent years. Many vacant lots
have been cleaned up, Jones said,and local residents make up a good
part of the course work force.

In a city where $100-plus greens
fees are the norm, Desert Pines
lets city and Clark County resi-
dents play for less than a third the
charge for out-of-town players.
The course has also initiated golf
learning programs for underprivi-
leged youth with requirements for
school attendance, good grades
and proper course etiquette.

"Another thing I like about it
is that when we started there
was virtually no wildlife here," said Bill Walters, principal of The
Walters Group. "Now hundreds
of birds, especially roadrunners,
sandpipers, doves and waterfowl,
have returned. Their presence
really adds to the experience."