Accessible, sustainable golf gets its due

The newly renovated 6th hole at East Lake Golf Club will play host to one of Atlanta's most ambitious junior golf initiatives to date.

• The First Tee takes giant step forward

By M. 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 these acquisitions, The First Tee plans

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• East Lake: Atlanta's inner-city gem

By Peter Blais
ATLANTA — It's too early to say exactly what the effects will be of the $100 million East Lake Meadows project. But the private/public partnership that resulted in the renovation of the historic East Lake Golf Club, construction of a new executive length golf course and building of a 500-unit residential community looks like a boon for the Georgia capital's inner city.

The initial focus was the famous East Lake Golf Course where golfing legend Bobby Jones learned to play the game. The club had deteriorated badly since the late 1960s when

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Reaction to ADA gauged

By Bob Spiwak

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) appears to have consequences in the world of golf which go well beyond disabled golfers. Courses may be forced to change facilities as well as policies, such as the "Cart Path Rule." To get a superintendent's take on ADA, Golf Course News spoke with Jerry Coldiron, superintendent of Lassing Pointe Golf Club in Boone County, Ky.

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Genetic engineering could drive seed costs up

By Mark Leslie

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Remarkable advances in genetic engineering of turfgrass will bring new cultivars to the marketplace more quickly. But seed costs could go up markedly, particularly because different companies own patents on the various techniques and genes that drive the discoveries.

Future release of new turfgrass varieties will be punctuated by negotiations "to see who gets what out in the marketplace," said Dr. Virgil Meier, a plant breeder responsible for turfgrass development at O.M. Scott. Meier explained that to

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First Tee gains massive backing

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Casino Beach: 'We can make it work'

Times are hard for many of us, said Champion, but I am a businessman. I'm going into this project and I expect to make a living doing it. I believe it's possible to do a good thing and make a profit.

It's a sort of project accessible yet profitable that Hurdzan, principal at Columbus, Ohio-based Hurdzan Fry Golf Course Design Inc. "They're saying you have to do something to get people into this game, and I believe they're putting their money where their mouth is and investing in the future of the game."

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.

"The neatest thing about The First Tee is that all of us are in it together," said Judy Bell, president of the USGA. The USGA has provided The First Tee with a grant of $1 million for 1998 and plans an additional $2 million over the next two years, pending a USGA review of the program.

"We see this as a supplement to our current grant-making," said Bell. "The goal is to start with the local champion who is getting the job done but needs some help."

The initiative appears to be gaining momentum, and supporters by the day. On December 9, the ASGCA inked its formal commitment to The First Tee, offering "...our services in any way we can," according to Alice Dye, ASGCA president.

First Tee participants will be able to obtain ASGCA design assistance during the development of any one of the designated course models—which could be a 3-hole course, pitch-and-putt course, nine-hole course or 18-hole course.

Course architects Hurdzan and Denis Griffiths believe accessible facilities can also be profitable and sustainable. They both see The First Tee as a project that has been too long in coming.

"For years I've said that golf has to build this base," said Hurdzan. "I got my start in this business building very inexpensive golf courses. Those courses became profitable, but more importantly, they allowed people to come in and play at a very low fee.

Hurdzan currently has three low-cost courses on the boards, one with Fort Worth, Texas-based Steve Champion, owner of Casino Beach Golf Inc. "I've been on the soapbox for many years," said Griffiths, principal of Braselton, Ga.-based Denis Griffiths & Associates Inc. and most immediate past president of the ASGCA.

"Finally we're seeing the golf community saying there are many different methods to making golf accessible and also profitable for those who are running the facilities."

While the ASGCA has made its commitment, formal word from the GCSA is next to come.

"Our involvement hasn't been determined specifically," said Jeff Bollig, senior manager of media/public relations for GCSAA. "It will probably be a chapter-based program where The First Tee courses exist. We may provide funds to maintain them or provide a member to work on the courses. We may even provide a publication to assist the managers of the courses."