ARIZ RESORT NAMES KRAUSE DIRECTOR

LAVEEN, Ariz.—Mountain View Golf Club has named Kurt Krause its new Director of Golf Operations for the 36-hole golf facility located west of downtown Phoenix in Laveen, Ariz. As director of golf operations, Krause will oversee all activities at the course including golf, food and beverage, retail and course maintenance.

MOZER JOINS FMAC

LOS ANGELES—FMAC has fired Peter Mozzer as executive vice president and chief credit officer. Mozzer plans to reorganize the FMAC credit department by integrating the credit, compliance and workout disciplines. Mozzer will be responsible for overseeing the credit function for all FMAC product areas including the restaurant, energy, golf, funeral and equipment finance groups.

DUNEDIN SELECTS IGM

LAKELAND, Fla.—International Golf Maintenance (IGM) has been selected by Dunedin Country Club to oversee its golf course maintenance operations. Under the three-year agreement, IGM provides all aspects of golf course maintenance for this Donald Ross-designed, 18-hole layout. The 6900-yard course has been in operation since 1927. The city of Dunedin took ownership in 1962.

WILSON ADDS MINN. PROPERTY

The Wilson Golf Group, a White Bear Lake, Minn.-based golf course ownership and operations company, has named Greg Gagliardi chief operating officer and Greg Stand director of golf operations, taking ownership in 1962.

BRIEFS

DPC definitely Major League

Mgt. firm uses pro athletes to market facilities

BY PETER BLAIS

ORLANDO, Fla. — Diamond Players Club (DPC), a new golf management company headed by former Los Angeles Angels pitcher Todd Stottlemyre with the assistance of numerous professional athletes, will build a course at the Levitt Corp.'s Skytop Development at Clermont, Fla.

Construction of the course, Diamond Players Club at Orlando, will begin this summer. The facility is expected to open in the fall of 1999. The club will be semi-private, with about 180 members, and be open to public play.

DPC will own the new Orlando course, which will be designed by golf architect Terril LaGree, modifying an original plan of Lloyd Clifton. LaGree is vice president of Barbaron Inc., which will perform the construction.

The 175-acre course has elevation changes of as much as 200 feet. A practice complex, three-acre putting course and golf academy are also planned. The entire 500-acre Skytop site will also contain an 800-home development.

The project brings together some of the leading names in home building and one of the newest companies in golf management. Levitt Corp. was founded in 1929 by the late Abraham Levitt. Diamond Players Club — which also manages Donald Ross-designed Bellsview Biltmore Golf Club in Belleair, and has other construction, lease and management projects under development — was founded in 1997 by Stottlemyre and Gagliardi, twice voted the West Central Florida Chapter PGA Professional of the Year and longtime general manager of Lansbrook Golf Club in Palm Harbor. Stottlemyre is chief executive officer and Gagliardi is chief operating officer.

Golf property tax assessments: Your firm’s plan of action

BY LARRY HIRSCH

With local governments increasingly squeezed for operating revenues, real-estate owners are asked to bear a larger burden. Why not? Only 12 percent of the population plays golf and golfers are perceived by non-golfers as "rich people in bright clothes chasing a little white ball." Moreover, when schools, police and fire protection are at risk, golf courses are politically acceptable targets.

Recently, many jurisdictions’ tax reassessments have been particularly hard on golf course properties. For example, Montgomery County, Pa. (an area with a number of upscale, daily-fee and private clubs) experienced double-digit reassessment and in Beaumont County, S.C. (the Hilton Head Island resort area) a reassessment resulted in a

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Larry Hirsh is president of Golf Property Analysts, a Harrisburg, Pa.-based golf course appraisal firm.

Meditrust, Cobblestone complete merger

NEEDHAM HEIGHTS, Mass.—The Meditrust Companies announced that it has completed its acquisition of Cobblestone Holdings, Inc., the parent of Cobblestone Golf Group, Inc. and will exchange all of the outstanding preferred and common stock of Cobblestone for Meditrust shares.

The acquisition also assumed and refinanced approximately $154 million of Cobblestone debt. After the previously announced golf course acquisitions are closed, Cobblestone will have a portfolio of 45 facilities with 49 courses in major golf markets and will be one of the leading owners and operators of golf courses in the United States.

"The acquisition of Cobblestone establishes Meditrust as a leader in the growing golf industry. Golf has attracted over 26 million participants in 1997, an increase of 13 percent from 1996. With [Cobblestone President] Bob Husband and his organization, Meditrust gains an excellent management team to speed the rapid consolidation of this sector," Husband said. "Working together, we believe that Meditrust will continue to increase its presence in the golf industry and maintain a dominant position."

In other news, Cobblestone announced that John Williams will add responsibilities as regional Director, for the company’s California and Florida facilities. Williams will continue to oversee Cobblestone’s operations in Arizona.

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Bob Husband

United Golf acquires Sarasota, Fla. layout

NEW YORK—United Golf, a private golf course owner, has acquired the Sereniss Golf Club, an 18-hole semi-private course in Sarasota, Fla., for $7.1 million. The course, designed by David Aiken and completed in 1990, is located in a residential development.

United Golf CEO Mark Mashburn said: "This acquisition fits in well with our long-term goal of acquiring a portfolio of quality courses throughout the country. The course is located in the strong Sarasota market and enjoys the support of visitors as well as year-round residents. We plan to continue operating the course as an upscale facility that will be an asset to the area."

United Golf is based in New York. Founded in 1998, United Golf is actively acquiring and developing courses throughout the country. United Golf's management includes personnel with a combined 50 years of experience with course acquisition and management as well as individuals with extensive experience in the capital markets. United Golf plans to use this platform to make further acquisitions this year. For more information on the company, please contact the company at 212-317-0300.

Greg Gagliardi (right), Todd Stottlemyre (center) and Rob Ducey

DPC won the management contract for Bellevue Biltmore in mid-1997. Stottlemyre solicited a number of professional athletes who were "easy to get along with, very people-oriented." The players agreed to make themselves available for corporate outings and allow the use of their name for marketing purposes. Among them are Seattle Mariners pitcher Bob Ducey, Tampa Bay Buccaneers running back Mike Alstott, Arizona Diamondbacks pitcher Andy Benes, Boston Red Sox pitcher

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Diamond
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Dennis Eckersley, Mariners pitcher Mike Timlin, San Diego Padres outfielder Mark Sweeney, Padres pitching coach and former Cy Young Award winner Dave Stewart, Yankees pitching coach Mel Stottlemyre, San Diego Padres outfielder Mark McGwire, former Cleveland Indians pitching coach Mel Stottlemyre Jr. (Todd’s brother), Cardinals catcher Tom Pagnozzi, retired major league pitcher Rick Honeycutt, Pittsburgh Pirates outfielder Turner Ward, former Cleveland Indians pitcher Sam McDowell and Cardinals utility player John Mabry.

“All are committed to supporting the Diamond Players Club concept,” Gagliardi said. “If a company like GTE wants to do a corporate outing we can say ‘Hey we have Dennis Eckersley available to help with that.’ The players give us their jerseys and photos, which we incorporate into our clubhouse scheme. We’ve created a sports bar atmosphere here [Belleview Biltmore] with six satellite hookups and 17 televisions around the clubhouse. We’ll take that theme to our other courses in the future.”

Stottlemyre and Gagliardi first met when Stottlemyre, Ducey and New York Yankees pitcher David Wells started playing Lansbrook in 1989, the year Gagliardi joined the course staff. Gagliardi said: “Todd recalls when he first drove up always saying, ‘I don’t want to play this goat ranch again.’ It wasn’t maintained that well before I started. I told him to keep coming by and watch what we’d do to the place. He liked what we did, we hit it off and began hanging around together.”

Stottlemyre has a “very savvy” business mind, Gagliardi said. He was intrigued by the course’s improvement and impressed by the financial potential.

As their relationship grew, Stottlemyre started helping Gagliardi market Lansbrook, using his notoriety as a professional ballplayer in promotional radio spots. He also donated jerseys belonging to him and several other players which were placed on the clubhouse wall, an effort that stirred conversation, increased business and gave rise to the Diamond Players Club concept.

For his part, Gagliardi helped Stottlemyre promote his annual celebrity charity golf tournament to raise funds to battle leukemia, a disease that claimed the life of Stottlemyre’s younger brother. Tournament revenues grew from $35,000 to $175,000 within five years. That further solidified their relationship.

Diamond Players Club plans to grow through management deals, lease arrangements and ownership. In addition to the DPC of Orlando and Bellevue Biltmore projects, the firm in August will begin leasing a Mike Young-designed course in Destin from Capital First Holdings of Tallahassee. The DPC of Destin is scheduled to open next June.

“We’d like to eventually be in every major market in the country,” Gagliardi said. “Right now, we’re concentrating on the Florida/Georgia markets.”

What differentiates DPC from other firms?

“From customer service to the nth degree,” Gagliardi replied.

“Our focus is on developing customer loyalty, repeat business... We want people who play golf here to feel like they are on vacation for a day. We want to come up with innovative service concepts for the golf business and pepper in the celebrity aspect. You never know what celebrity you might see at one of our courses. [Seattle Mariners pitcher] Randy Johnson was here last Saturday after he’d pitched the night before against the Devil Rays.

“Our sports bar inside the clubhouse is going to be called ‘Box Seats Sports Bar & Grill.’ We’ve trade-marked that. We’ll take that everywhere, with seating for 160 to 180 people.”

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