

## BRIEFS



## SUBURBAN CLUB GETS FACELIFT

PIKESVILLE, Md. — The A.W. Tillinghast-designed Suburban Club of Baltimore County is undergoing a \$1 million improvement plan supervised by golf course architect Brian Ault of Ault, Clark and Associates. Improvements include new drainage with a holding pond on the 11th hole, recontouring fairways and converting them from ryegrass to bentgrass, rebuilding or enlarging tees, tree planting, bunker improvements, and a supplemental golf car storage building. Projects will be carried out over the next five years.

## SNEVA BUILDS SECOND COURSE

LAVONDALE, Ariz. — Former Indianapolis 500 winner Tom Sneva has announced his newest golf course project, Coldwater Springs Golf Club here. "The site presents a terrific opportunity," said golf course architect Forrest Richardson. "We are basically taking a flat canvas and transforming it into a golfing roller coaster." Sneva's first project, The 500 Club, is located in north Phoenix and opened in 1990. Richardson has routed the 18-hole, par-72 course as part of a master drainage and floodwater system for the community. The course is expected to open for play in the fall.

## DIABLO CREEK GETTING REDO

CONCORD, Calif. — The city of Concord has selected Golf Dimensions to provide development management and construction management services for the \$2 million renovation of the city-owned Diablo Creek Golf Course. Robert Muir Graves & Damian Pascuzzo Limited will design the renovation of the daily-fee course, originally built in 1963 as the Concord Municipal Golf Course. The design phase is scheduled for completion in May, and the completion of the renovation work is anticipated by October.

## TOLL BROTHERS BUSY BUILDING

HUNTINGDON VALLEY, Pa. — Toll Brothers, Inc. has formed a joint venture with Aera Energy LLC, California's largest oil producer, to initiate development of an 840-acre community in northern Orange County, which will include more than 2,100 lots and a 200-acre public golf course. Toll Brothers spokesman is in various stages of design, planning or construction for master-planned communities in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina, Florida and Michigan.

## Flat pipe a money-saver in greens construction

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Operating on the philosophy that it is more profitable to reduce expenses through innovation than by cheapening the product, a growing number of golf course projects are installing or remodeling putting greens with a new drainage technique.

The key ingredient is a flat, perforated corrugated plastic pipe called AdvanEDGE, made by Advanced Drainage Systems, Inc. (ADS) here. Developed in 1988 as an edge drain to be installed vertically alongside highways, AdvanEDGE reportedly has about twice the soil contact area of 4-inch round pipe, and will collect and drain water almost twice as quickly.

In the early 1990s, football stadiums began laying the pipe horizontally under the playing turf and found that this accelerated water collection from heavy rainfalls. The concept has since spread to other recreational areas, and now golf courses.

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One of the earlier Hurdzan-Fry greens showing ADS AdvanEDGE pipe installed horizontally on the sub-base.

## Atlantic City takes aggressive golf tack



Stephen Kay-designed Blue Heron Pines is part of Atlantic City's package.

By JOHN TORSIELLO

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Atlantic City is known for its casinos, the Miss America Beauty Pageant and saltwater taffy. If the Greater Atlantic City Golf Association (GACGA) gets its way, the city and surrounding area will be known also for its golf courses.

The association is in the midst of an effort to attract golfers and grab a higher profile for its eight members: Sand Barrens, Harbor Pines, Blue Heron, Cape May National and Mays Landing golf clubs, Brigantine Golf Links, Great Bay Resort and Country Club, and Seaview Resort. The group is aggressively marketing stay-and-play packages, some in consort with casinos and hotels in the area. While a few casinos have bought into golf as a selling point, the owners of most of the city's gambling establishments have yet to embrace the game as a means to lengthen the time visitors stick around the city.

The reason? An old fear that anything which takes gamblers out of the gaming rooms is bad for business.

Despite the reluctance of some casino owners, GACGA

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## QA Ross Watson to keep foot in Asian door

INDOOROPILLY, Queensland, Australia — Ross Watson is a past president of the Society of Australian Golf Course Architects and one of GCN's first sources for background on Australia and Asian course development. GCN recently spent a few minutes with Watson to discuss the recent downsizing of his Malaysian office and how he sees his architecture business riding out the waves of the current economic storm. The smart money, said Watson, will be poised and ready when the inevitable recovery comes around.

**Golf Course News:** As an architect who has used Asia as a primary target, can you give us a snapshot of the Asian market from where you sit today?

**Ross Watson:** We've had an office in Malaysia for about 4 years or so. In fact, I lived there three years up until a year ago. Just a few weeks ago we downsized that operation significantly, obviously due to our read of the economic situation. Projects were, virtually, overnight, being put on hold or canceled. We made a major effort there building our niche in the market, and frankly we were looking forward to finally reaping some rewards. And then this happens. So, from where I sit, I see four years of hard work and not much to show for it at this point of time.

**GCN:** What did you have to do to achieve this downsizing?

**RW:** We went from six people, like a year ago to, say, one and a half now. We've got one local person that's full time just keeping the thing going — paying the bills, trying to collect money.

My partner or I may go up as necessary, probably a couple of weeks per month, just to finish off some projects we've been working on that have now virtually finished, so in that way we're fairly fortunate because even in this bad market and this bad economy, we'd probably be the only golf designers that are bringing on new projects in the Johor Bahru region right now. So what that means to us is that there will be no other golf courses coming on there in the next year or two so they'll only be able to talk about that one. And if things turn around, well, maybe that'll be good for us.

**GCN:** A lot of people in the industry are telling us to sit tight and wait for another two years and we're going to see things slowly get back on its feet. Is this your read?

**RW:** Whether it's two years or five years, I couldn't

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Ross Watson

# Atlantic City

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President Teddy O'Keefe says the marketing effort is working. Golf package bookings for the association's courses tripled in 1997 over the previous year, she said. While visitors' length of stay was two days involving three rounds of golf before the marketing push, that has increased from

three days and four rounds a stay.

"We've been doing this for three years and we said it wouldn't be until this year before we saw results," said O'Keefe. "We have a great opportunity ahead of us. Five years ago we couldn't have done this. But there have been three new courses built (Sand Barrens, Blue Heron and Harbor Pines) in the last couple of years and upgrades at the other courses."

She continued, "We've had help from some of the casinos and the non-casino hotels, and the convention center people are all for promoting golf. They see it as a carrot to hold in front of people to get them to book rooms. With most of the casinos, it's been a difficult job getting the message across.... They've been slow to get on board."

The nation's major gambling destination, Las Vegas, has seen

golf becoming part of its recreational image the past couple of years. Some 10 new courses have been built in the desert in recent years, bringing the total to 30, and more are under construction or on the drawing board. While Vegas casino owners weren't initially eager to have gamblers trade tokens for 7-irons, they have come to realize that golf, along with shopping, dining, tennis and water sports,

is a way to keep customers around for a week or more, said Rob Powers, public relations director for the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

"The mindset of the casino operators has changed 180 degrees in the past 10 years," he said. "Where once it was heresy to encourage anything that would take customers out of the casino, now we see ourselves as a full-service resort destination. And golf is an integral part of the equation."

Powers said golfers are just the type of free-spending customers casinos are looking for.

"Golf, of course, provides good demographics," he said. "Golfers fit right in. They usually like to gamble and spend money and that's the type of person the casinos want."

While the colder climate may prevent Atlantic City from ever rivaling Las Vegas as a golf destination, the area nonetheless has a sound group of courses to attract players. Blue Heron Pines and Harbor Pines were designed by Stephen Kay. A second course is planned for Blue Heron. Sand Barrens was opened last year and architect Dana Fry attempted to create what he termed "a public Pine Valley," with tree-lined fairways, vast scrub bunkers and huge undulating greens.

Seaview Resort has two courses tucked into its 670 wooded acres bordering Reeds Bay. The Donald Ross Bay Course hugs the shoreline and offers superb views of the Atlantic City skyline. It will host the Ladies Professional Golf Association's ShopRite Classic this year.

Brigantine Golf Links was patterned after the great Scottish courses, Mays Landing is nestled in the pinelands outside of the city, and Greate Bay Resort, designed by Willie Parks in the 1920s and redesigned by George Fazio in 1978, is located on 160 acres overlooking Egg Harbor.

Cape May National has received plaudits for its blend of golf and nature. It is built around a 50-acre nature preserve where egrets lounge in ponds and breezes blow across tall grasses.

"We've been working hard to get the word out that we have quality golf here," said O'Keefe. "We have been advertising and circulating an eight-page newsletter. We have an agreement with Spirit Airlines to place our mailings in the seat pockets of their planes. With Hilton recently buying Atlantic City Country Club and [Mirage Hotel and Shadow Creek Golf Course owner] Steve Winn looking around, there's no doubt that golf will become even a bigger part of the Atlantic City experience."

"It takes time and we don't have a magic wand. But we will be a part of the city's future," O'Keefe promised.

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