

BRIEFS



CASPER APPOINTS MAURAGAS

VIENNA, Va. — Billy Casper Golf Management, Inc. appointed Robert Mauragas to the position of Regional Golf Operations Manager, a capacity in which he will direct the implementation of myriad programs for several Mid-Atlantic region golf properties under the company's operation. Mauragas will work with on-site, golf course personnel in managing projects related to golf operations, customer service, capital improvements, turf management, equipment/supplies, MIS, financial and activities reporting, training food and beverage, and merchandising. Since 1988, Mauragas, a PGA member, was head golf professional at Fiddler's Elbow Country Club, an exclusive 54-hole private facility in Far Hills, N.J. He also participated in Fiddler's Elbow's development and construction of 18 new holes designed by Rees Jones.



Robert Mauragas

KEMPER NAMES LESNIK GM AT BANDON

CHICAGO — Kemper Sports Management has named Josh Lesnik general manager of Bandon Dunes, a 54-hole, 2,000-acre oceanfront development under construction on Oregon's South Coast. Lesnik has served as Kemper's marketing director for the past several years. The first course at Bandon Dunes, designed by Scottish architect David McLay Kidd, is scheduled to open in June 1999.



Josh Lesnik

MYRTLE BEACH RESORT RENAMED

DALLAS — Patriot American Hospitality, Inc. and Wyndham International, Inc. announced that the Myrtle Beach Hilton Oceanfront Golf Resort converted to a Wyndham resort on February 1. The property will be renamed the Wyndham Myrtle Beach Resort and undergo an \$8.5 million renovation. Patriot American acquired the resort last August and owns the proprietary Wyndham brand. The 385-room property includes Arcadian Shores Golf Club, a Rees Jones championship design.

GOLF COURSE NEWS

Cobblestone acquires two new properties

DEL MAR, Calif.— Cobblestone Golf Group, Inc., the Del Mar-based golf course ownership and operating company recently acquired by Meditrust, has purchased Sabal Point Country Club in Longwood, Fla., near Orlando and The Champion's Club of Apalachee Farms near Atlanta.

Sabal Point is an 18-hole semi-private club. The purchase from American Skiing Company, which operates numerous ski resorts and affiliated golf courses throughout the country, represents Cobblestone's third acquisition in Florida.

The Champion's Club of Apalachee Farms is also an 18-hole semi-private club. It was purchased from Fairway Properties, L.P. and is Cobblestone's second holding in the Atlanta area.

The two acquisitions expand Cobblestone's portfolio to 27 golf properties in six states.

"We are very excited about the purchase of both Sabal Point Country Club and The Champion's Club of Apalachee Farms and expanding our portfolio of golf courses in the Southeast Region," said Cobblestone President Bob Husband.

In January, Cobblestone Holdings, Inc., parent of Cobblestone Golf Group, Inc., reached an agreement to be acquired by Meditrust Companies. Meditrust is a paired shared real estate investment trust and among the nation's largest health-



ACQUISITIONS

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ClubLink's King Valley GC outside Toronto recently picked up a number of public relatives.

ClubLink makes major move into Canadian daily-fee course market

By PETER BLAIS

KING CITY, Ontario, Canada — ClubLink Corporation has acquired 10 public courses and 450 neighboring acres of developable land in the Greater Toronto Area. The new facilities nearly double ClubLink's holdings to 22 courses and substantially increase the course operator's presence in Canada's daily-fee market.

The acquisitions totaled \$43 million, which will be paid from existing cash, debt and \$3.5 million in ClubLink shares, noted Bruce Simmonds, president and chief executive officer of ClubLink.

The new ClubLink properties include:

- Blue Springs Golf Club (27 holes) located near ClubLink's existing Greystone Golf Club and RattleSnake Point Golf Club on Toronto's west side. "Strategically it is important to us because the west end is an explosive growth area," Simmonds said. "Presently that market is undeserved by high-end, daily-fee courses. ClubLink is also building an upscale, 45-hole facility in [nearby] Oakville called RattleSnake Point that will open in early 1999. We're now far and away the dominant player in western Toronto with 120 holes once RattleSnake opens."

- Georgetown Golf Club (18 holes) and Bolton Golf Club (27 holes) are also

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Assumption of risk still a dicey issue

By EDWARD EVERETT VAILL

For years, participants in potentially dangerous sporting activities accepted that their pastimes were protected by the legal doctrine of "assumption of risk," which held that if the participant knowingly or implicitly assumed the risk and was injured, there was no liability. That isn't entirely true, anymore. In the wake of some of California's recent legal rulings, it is apparent that assumption of risk is a complex legal area in which the stakes for potential liability to sports operators can be very high. The point is, the provider is never automatically absolved of responsibility in participant

injuries.

Two interesting California cases demonstrate the gamut of interpretations of this law and serve to reinforce the need for recreational operators to identify and prevent safety problems, and for participants to use common sense. In some instances that isn't enough, and the issue of fault must be decided in the courts, often at a daunting cost to defendant and plaintiff.

In one troubling 1995 lawsuit, the plaintiff was hit on the head by a golf ball and sued the golf course operator for negligence. A frequent golfer on this particular course, the plaintiff claimed he was injured near the 5th tee, because the operator had removed a diseased pine tree that had protected the plaintiff in the past from balls flying from the 4th tee. The appellate



EDWARD EVERETT VAILL practices business, antitrust, entertainment and insurance litigation with the Los Angeles-based firm of Shaub & Williams.

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Fuller seized opportunities, made his own

By PETER BLAIS

William "Billy" Fuller, 48, has what many superintendents would consider a dream job. "You don't sit back and plan every activity that happens in your career," Fuller said. "Some of those things just evolve. Opportunities come up and I've been very fortunate in that regard."

Fuller is senior agronomist/associate for Cupp Design, making him responsible for meshing agronomic technology with the golf course architectural firm's design and construction programs.

His involvement begins with the first day of planning a new course, and includes such items as qualifying turf selections, evaluating equipment



Billy Fuller

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## ClubLink

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near Greystone and RattleSnake Point. The same family owned the two courses for the past 25 years. Georgetown has an additional 125 acres that could be developed into housing, more golf holes or both.

• Gormley Green Golf Club (36 holes) and Rolling Hills Golf Club (54 holes) are located near ClubLink's Emerald Hills Golf Club and DiamondBack Golf Club. Situated on 650 acres, Simmonds said the combined Gormley Green and Rolling Hills facilities represent the largest golf operation on one piece of land in Canada. ClubLink plans upgrades to at least two of the courses within the next 10 years.

ClubLink, in partnership with GolfSouth, operates another 24 courses in the Southeast and Midwest United States. ClubLink has another four Ontario properties in various stages of development.

Asked if ClubLink intends to expand its Canadian operations outside Ontario, Simmonds replied: "Right now Ontario is the engine of growth in Canada. It is by far the largest province with 36 percent of the Canadian population. It is the country's business, financial and manufacturing center. We like Ontario's political and financial prospects, so we're not too inclined to go elsewhere until we've built a bigger base here."

ClubLink operates private, daily-fee and resort facilities. Over the next five years in Ontario, Simmonds said, the company would like to expand its 10 private facilities to somewhere around 20; its 12 daily-fee operations to roughly 30; and its two resort properties to five. "All together, we'll be looking at 50 to 60 golf courses in Ontario in the next five years," he predicted.

As for other areas of the country the company may consider, ClubLink's president said: "The areas we'd look at would have a strong corporate community. That's our target market, especially on the private side. Golf is exploding in Canada as a means of corporate entertaining and charitable fundraising. We're tapping into the strength of that market."

"Montreal and Calgary are probably the next areas we'd consider," the ClubLink executive said. "Vancouver is a bit of a funny market. It's had an overheated real-estate market for some time. And, frankly, we don't like the politics of British Columbia at the moment. They have a socialist government and they are also somewhat susceptible to the problems of Asia because of the influence of Asia on their economy."

## Brightstone Management in acquisition mode

WILLIS Texas — Brightstone Management is in the buying mode," said David Pate, chief operating officer and director of golf for Brightstone Management, LLC.

Brightstone started in 1996 by Darsheg Chen, president and chief executive officer, with the purchase of Gulf Hill Golf Club and Resort in Ocean Springs, Miss. The company has since bought several courses, mostly in Texas. The company's stated goal is to acquire six to eight courses in the next two years.

In January, 1996, Brightstone purchased Texas National Golf

Club in Willis, which serves as Brightstone's headquarters.

Brightstone acquired Northcliffe Golf and Country Club in Cibolo, Texas in August 1997. The 18-hole course is a Joe Finger design opened in 1978. The goal is to recreate Northcliffe by installing a new irrigation system, sand traps, renovation of the pro shop and clubhouse, a golf teaching facility and eventually a bed and breakfast. Brightstone purchased Rio Colorado Golf Course in Bay City, Texas in December. It is an 18-hole course designed by Gary Player in 1991.

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