

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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## Billy Fuller

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requirements, designing irrigation systems, selecting qualified golf course superintendents, evaluating overall construction specifications, estimating construction costs, post-construction management and overseeing maintenance operations.

It's fascinating work, but not exactly what he had in mind as an undergraduate at North Carolina State University. After spending three years studying civil engineering at the Raleigh campus, Fuller changed gears and graduated in 1972 with an agronomic degree emphasizing turfgrass management.

"The economy sort of went sideways in the late 1960s," Fuller explained of his move from engineering to turfgrass. "Guys coming out of engineering classes in front of me were getting desk jobs as secretaries, practically."

Over the next 17 years, he served six courses as superintendent and/or director of outdoor maintenance, gaining extensive experience in new construction, course renovations, and grow-in. Those facilities included Seabrook Island Golf Club in Charleston, S.C.; Wildewood Country Club in Columbia, S.C.; Palmetto Dunes Golf Club in Hilton Head Island, S.C.; Kiawah Island (S.C.) Resort; and Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, Ga.

Fuller became recognized as an expert on creeping bentgrass management in the Southeast. That expertise was in large part responsible for Augusta hiring him to oversee its conversion from Bermudagrass greens to bentgrass. Fuller was the head man at Augusta from 1981 through 1986.

But his dream was to become part of a major design and development firm.

Fuller met Bob Cupp in the late 1970s while they were working on Jack Nicklaus-designed Turtle Point at Kiawah and the two became close friends. Cupp left Nicklaus in 1985 to open his own firm. "During my time at Augusta, Bob and Jack worked with us on projects from a design point of view," Fuller recalled. "When Bob left Jack, he said, 'When my business gets large enough, I'm going to call you and offer you an opportunity to come in with me.'"

Fuller left Augusta in 1986 to accept Cupp's offer to become general manager at a project Cupp was designing, Port Armor Golf & Country Club at Lake Oconee, Ga. In addition to overseeing the entire Port Armor operation, the position also allowed Fuller time to start his own consulting business, working with designers on post-construction programs related to design and construction at other facilities.

Fuller incorporated himself as William R. Fuller Inc. and consulted on

other projects for Cupp and Tom Fazio. Fuller's post-construction expertise involved those items that impact ongoing maintenance — i.e. maintenance facilities, equipment inventory, purchasing schedules, grow-in and course specifications as well as locating superintendents, establishing landscape programs, evaluating irrigation designs and grassing plans.

"The idea was to be an additional entity in the process to carry the owner forward with his program," Fuller said of his consulting business.

In August 1988, Cupp asked Fuller to join him full time. "The unique thing about our firm is that we take an owner from Day 1 through grow-in," Fuller explained. "Most design firms are pretty much done when the contractor demobilizes and the grass is on the ground. The architect usually goes away at that point and just comes back for the grand opening. He may have helped select a superintendent, but then it's up to the superintendent to see that the course grows in."

"But grow-in is not taught in the schools, nor is it something you can read about. It's more an experience thing, although maybe one day I'll write the book... I did not sit in a classroom and figure any of this out. When I took my first job at Seabrook Island, for all I knew I was going to be there a long time."

But then the phone rang and the guy from Wildewood made an offer. Four years later, the phone rang and the opportunity came to go to a bigger situation [Palmetto Dunes] with different kinds of challenges. Kiawah Island was a chance to be part of a development where they built a new Nicklaus course.

"Design, construction and grow-in were always very intriguing. Every time I moved I was a part of those things. Even at Augusta, do you have any idea how much renovation goes on there every summer? I realized after awhile that I really wanted to be involved with the design part of the business. Augusta came along and I put my consulting idea on the shelf for awhile. Then Bob came along and here was my chance to take it off again."

Asked about the possibility of superintendents moving into the design field, Fuller noted how few people actually make a living designing courses and the even smaller number of firms offering agronomic services.

"It's just not an easy deal to penetrate," Fuller said. "You may spend 20 years trying to get into a position where someone will give you that money [the millions of dollars required to build a course] and you may or may not have the opportunity... Then you look at the number of people who inherit the opportunity from Dad. You can evolve into the business, but it's tough."



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