Rain Bird snags AGC exclusive

By M. Levans

AZUSA, Calif. — The directors of maintenance at American Golf Corp. (AGC) have changed its irrigation supplier with the recent signing of an exclusive three-year agreement with Rain Bird.

AGC estimates that it will use Rain Bird Products — from replacement sprinkler heads to the new Cirrus central control irrigation system — in 20 new course irrigation system installations this year. The arrangement could eventually trickle down to all 260 AGC courses.

According to AGC, it will continue a service contract with Toro, AGC's previous irrigation supplier, to maintain the existing equipment.

"There are perceptions that we go after the low bidder," said John Meyer, director of fleet management and national accounts at AGC. "That is not the case. We have 8 directors of maintenance. I look at them as the committee and say, 'Irrigation is coming up, who should get a proposal.' The only two names that come up are Rain Bird and Toro. Quality versus quality, you can't get any better in this industry."

Rain Bird won the tight battle, said AGC, with its commitment to extensive after-market service.

CCA banks on PGA ETC

From wire services

DALLAS — The International Group of ClubCorp has acquired a 23-percent interest in PGA European Tour Courses PLC (PGA ETC) from Thompson Investments, Ltd. The transaction is valued at more than $10 million.

PGA ETC is a company that owns and invests in flagship, tournament golf venues in Europe. It is listed on the London Stock Exchange and trades under the symbol (PGA). ClubCorp will also have two seats on the board of directors of the company.

Audubon cracks down

By Mark Leslie

SELKIRK, N.Y. — Probation. Excommunication. These terms that embody enmity are now part of the lexicon at Audubon International (AI), long a bastion of teamwork and cooperation.

While the majority of the 66 golf courses in the 4-year-old Audubon Signature Program are committed to it and swear by its effectiveness, others have fallen off the bandwagon, or perhaps were never aboard, according to AI President Ron Dodson.

Lamenting the fact that he had to, first, "place on probation," then "excommunicate" one of the eight fully certified Audubon Signature facilities, Dodson said: "Our strongest program is only as strong as our weakest one, and we can't allow people to make our name look weak. We already

SEE FEATURE ON ESTATE COURSES, PAGE 59

Estate courses on the rebound

By Mark Leslie

SUGAR GROVE, Ill. — Disappointed in Augusta National's famous par-3 12th hole at Amen Corner, Jerry Rich came home to his 2,000-acre estate and built what he calls a better one. Disappointed in Augusta's 200-yard-long Magnolia Lane, he built a Magnolia Lane of his own. It meanders across two miles.

This is Rich Harvest Links. This is Jerry Rich's dream — a dream that grew from the idea of a modest couple of practice holes to a stunning facility that will open 18 championship-
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FROM THE COVER
CCA/PGA ETC
Continued from page 1
ments accepted the ClubCorp offer after consulting with the two other primary shareholders. Primary shareholders of PGA ETC are PGA European Tour, which owns 18.9 percent and International Management Group (IMG), which owns 19.3 percent. Approximately 38 percent of the shares are in the hands of the public.

Said Robert Dedman Jr. president and chief executive officer of Club Corporation International, "Our company expects to complement the expertise and skills of PGA European Tour and IMG with the 40 years of successful experience we have had in operating tournament-caliber facilities while building quality relationships with tournament sponsors, players and host course owners."

PGA ETC owns and manages high-profile courses in England, Sweden, and Portugal which are the sites of internationally prominent golf tournaments. In England, PGA ETC owns a 50-percent interest in the Woburn Golf Club near London, the home of the British Masters, as well as two other tournament courses near London, Collingtree Park and Stockley Park.

The PGAETC-owned property in Sweden is the home of the Scandinavian Masters.

In Portugal, PGA ETC owns the Quinta do Lago golf courses on the Atlantic coast, which have been the site of numerous tournaments such as the Portuguese Open and the Johnnie Walker Euro Classic. PGA ETC has a course built to Ryder Cup standards near Barcelona, Spain, currently under development.

Club Corporation International owns or manages more than 220 golf-related properties and private clubs worldwide.

Leslie comment
Continued from page 14

Gamble used to use the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval, said Bob Swift, general manager of Indian River Club in Vero Beach, Fla., one of seven fully certified Audubon Signature golf facilities.

"What’s really ironic," said superintendent Tim Hiers at Collier’s Reserve in Naples, Fla., "is, you hear somebody say, ‘We don’t have the money to join [Audubon golf programs].’ They’re really saying: ‘We don’t have the fortitude, desire or intent to do what is right.’"

Upon hearing that his design of The Classic at Madden’s had won third-best New Upscale Public Golf Course in 1997, superintendent Scott Hoffman said: “My first reaction was that I was really happy for Brian [owner Thuringer], that it worked out. Not to sound like I’m not grateful, but when I look at the ratings, how do you rate all these golf courses? It’s like rating your kids. Which is best? There are a lot of great courses out there. We were fortunate. It’s good for our area."

Carter Morrish’s pay from Bill O’Connor for designing three holes on the cliffs overlooking Malibu in 1992? (See story page 39)

“My deal with him was no charge," Morrish said. "He was to take me to play Rivera, Bel Air and Las Angeles Country Club."