It’s a ‘softer, gentler’ Nicklaus in design

By TED JOHNSON

He is an icon of golf. Perhaps the greatest golfer ever, his face recognizable the world over. He has rung up scores of PGA Tour and Senior Tour victories, was named Athlete of the Decade for the 1970s and, in 1988, was selected Player of the Century. He has a closet full of green jackets from Augusta National for his Masters victories.

Yet, the 58-year-old Columbus, Ohio native’s work as an architect may be more lasting than his playing records.

“Of the early courses I did, more than half were for tournament golf,” he said during the ceremonial first round at Grand Haven Golf Course in Palm Coast, Fla. “So I got a reputation for doing difficult courses because I had to build them that way. I have opened 164 courses. Of those at least 100 you probably won’t hear of. The ones you won’t hear of Grand Haven. Yet more than 60 of my courses have held more than 300 professional tour events. We’re very proud of it.”

After the round, Nicklaus sat down for an interview.

Golf Course News: Is there anything on this property that shows how you have evolved as an architect?

Jack Nicklaus: Twenty-five years ago...

CEC Properties purchases First Golf

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif.—CEC Properties, Inc. of Newport Beach has bought substantially all of the assets of First Golf Corp. of Tempe, Ariz.

First Golf manages the construction of golf courses nationwide and has built more than 25 courses since 1987. Its newest course, Harbor Links in Nassau County, Long Island, N.Y., recently had its grand opening and had a very strong first month. First Golf Acquisition Corp. becomes a wholly owned subsidiary of CEC Properties.

“CEC Properties, a golf services company, has now acquired both a golf course construction management and golf course facility management company as wholly owned subsidiaries,” said Paul Balais, CEC Properties president, chairman and chief executive officer. “This gives us a tremendous advantage in being able to provide excellent and expanded services to the golfing industry.”

First Golf currently has contracts for the development and

Ex-Paragon employee starts fresh

By MICHAEL LEVANS

ATLANTA, Ga. — Terry Bohannan — a 20-year veteran in the golf development business — believes that you learn from the mistakes of others.

As a matter of fact, he’s so certain that this lesson applies to the golf course construction business that he’s gone off on his own to form Live Oak Golf Construction Co., based here.

“Being in this business for so long I was able to see that there’s a lot of work out there right now,” said Bohannan. “And with the right management and the right people it’s a great time to be in this business and do it right.”

For the last four years he worked with Paragon Construction International as project manager and director of field operations. In that capacity he managed the construction operations of 13 golf courses in the Pacific Rim, including Shanghai Links in China, New Capital in Japan and Borneo Golf Club in Malaysia.

COST ESTIMATE BOOK UPDATED

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — The Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBA) has updated its Guide to Estimating Cost for Golf Course Construction, originally published in 1996 as a tool for prospective golf course owners and developers. The guide contains descriptions of 25 line items in the construction of a golf course, with charts showing their average costs in the regions of the continental United States, and directions for estimating the cost of a given project. Contact information for the GCBA’s Builder Members and a bibliography of additional resources are also included. Guide to Estimating Cost for Golf Course Construction is available for $50 from the GCBA office, 920 Airport Rd., Suite 210, Chapel Hill N.C. 27514; phone 919-942-8922.

NASHVILLE GETTING FIRST TEE

KINGSTON SPRINGS, Tenn. — Nashville’s Metropolitan Parks and Recreation and the Tennessee Golf Foundation’s Vinny Pro-Celebrity Invitational are bringing to Nashville a First Tee golf course and ongoing programs for minority and at-risk youth through an agreement. The Riverview Course, a nine-hole short course at Shelby Park in East Nashville, will be extensively renovated as a par-3 First Tee course. A new clubhouse will also be built to serve as home for a broad range of instructional, educational and vocational golf programs for juniors, officials said.

THREE BY FOSTER NEAR COMPLETION

LAS VEGAS — Golf course architect Keith Foster is putting finishing touches on his three designs that are under construction, including Anthem here in Las Vegas on which he collaborated with Hale Irwin. Anthem is an upscale Del Webb private community, boasting the par-72, 7,109-yard course that has been grassed. A December opening is expected. Shepherd’s Crook in North Chicago is six months ahead of schedule and will be completed by late September. The Tennessee at Kentucky Lake is a daily-fee course that is being grassed and will open in late summer of 1999. The Tennessean is located near Kentucky Lake in Paris.
Q&A: Nicklaus improving with age

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I had basically two ways of doing golf courses: fairly severe and penal, or something kind of soft. Now, I have so many different ways I do things. So many different ways I do greens. Different ways I can do approaches. Different ways of bringing the ball into fairways, repelling and collecting. And I fiddle around with them. And I mix them up.

This is the 164th course I've done, and there is a lot of variety in those courses. I hear from people it's a typical Nicklaus golf course. Well, what is a typical Nicklaus golf course?

I suppose the typical Nicklaus course would be generous off the tee. I've always felt people really enjoy hitting the golf ball and finding it. That means you can make it a little more demanding around the greens. But you have bailouts, where the average golfer can play. I collect golf balls rather than repel them. If that's typical, so be it. I thought Augusta National is a pretty good golf course. That's the way Augusta is. I felt Royal Melbourne is a pretty good course. That's the way Royal Melbourne is. Most [Donald] Ross courses are pretty much that way.

GCN: Is the ultimate compliment of a course that you never get tired of playing it?

JN: I don't think you'll get tired of this course. No two holes look alike. The fault with this course, in my own mind, is that the back nine goes out and back in a row. But that's the way the property set. If I had the ability to break it up, I would have. But you work with the property you have and the way it fits.

GCN: What specifically did the owners want at Grand Haven?

JN: They wanted a good golf course but not a backbreaking golf course. One that will help development of homes, one that will represent the area. The second course [Ocean Hammock, tentatively slated to open in spring of 2000] will have a little more pizzazz, with the holes particularly on the ocean.

GCN: Is there one element in your courses today that 15 or 20 years ago wasn't considered?

JN: There are features I don't use as much as I used to. When I did Loxahatchie [Jupiter, Fla.] and Grand Cypress [ Orlando, Fla.], it was kind of a fad to be rolly and bumpy, and I hadn't done any of that. At Loxahatchie, they moved a million and half yards of dirt [that] we had to get rid of. So I had to come up with an idea of how to get rid of it. So I did just that. Would I do that again? I'd take the mounds and make them softer. The chocolate drops, you can't cut them.

I'd make them softer so you could take a Bushmower and cut them all.

When I did Desert Highlands and Country Club of the Rockies at the same time, both owners told me, "Jack, we love your courses but your greens are too easy." You can't say that on those two courses. You don't walk out there at night without breaking a leg on those greens.

I did flat greens at Colleton River [Hilton Head, S.C.] and rolling greens at Country Club of the Rockies. I'm more able to adapt to what the owner wants. If an owner says, "I don't know, just build me a good golf course," I'll build one that fits that property, and I won't get severe with it. I'll be fairly conservative. The last thing an owner wants is to have someone walk off a golf course and not want to play it again, or not buy a piece of property.

GCN: Is the sharp edges that were in so many courses in the 1980s, like yours at the Nicklaus Resort course in La Quinta, what we'd see again?

JN: That's the way they wanted to maintain it. Drop it straight down. I don't like it, personally. I like to blend it all. It's too harsh. But when the owner says, "That's what I want," I do it. It's his deal.

GCN: Any special consideration for women in today's designs?

JN: I don't take a lot of special consideration for women. It's like, how do you design a golf course for a man who shoots 110? You don't. What you do is try to give enough room and

Continued on next page
Q&A: Nicklaus

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Take-all Patch

(Gaeumannomyces graminis var. avenae) on Annual Bluegrass

Application Interval (days) Single applications, all treatments applied 10/21/97, on Annual Bluegrass

Snow Mold

(Microdochium nivale and Typhula ishikariensis) on Annual Bluegrass (M. nivale only) on Turfgrass (T. incarnata, T. ishikariensis, T. phacorrhiza and M. nivale) on Annual Bluegrass

Percent Control

100

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1.2 oz. & 80 & 85 & 85 & 83 & 85 & 83 \\
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4.0 oz. & 80 & 85 & 85 & 83 & 85 & 83 \\
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Application Interval (days) 
Single applications, all treatments applied 10/21/97, 11/17/97, and 11/29/97

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