

BRIEFS



DPC NAMES DEVELOPMENT CHIEF

ORLANDO, Fla. — Bob DiMarcantonio has joined Diamond Players Club (DPC), an Orlando-based golf management company, as vice president, strategic planning and development. DPC is headed by Arizona Diamondbacks pitcher Todd Stottlemire.



Bob DiMarcantonio

Stottlemire said DiMarcantonio, a former Walt Disney World business development executive, "will play a key role in the expansion of Diamond Players Club into

an internationally recognized provider of affordable golf facilities, golf and travel programs and branded clothing and equipment. His extensive experience in development, leasing and operation of golf, resort and theme properties adds a management dimension vital to our growth." DPC operates Sweetwater Country Club and Diamond Players Club Wekiva, both in Longwood, Fla., and is building a new course, Diamond Players Club Clermont, scheduled to open in September.

MATRIX ADDS TWO

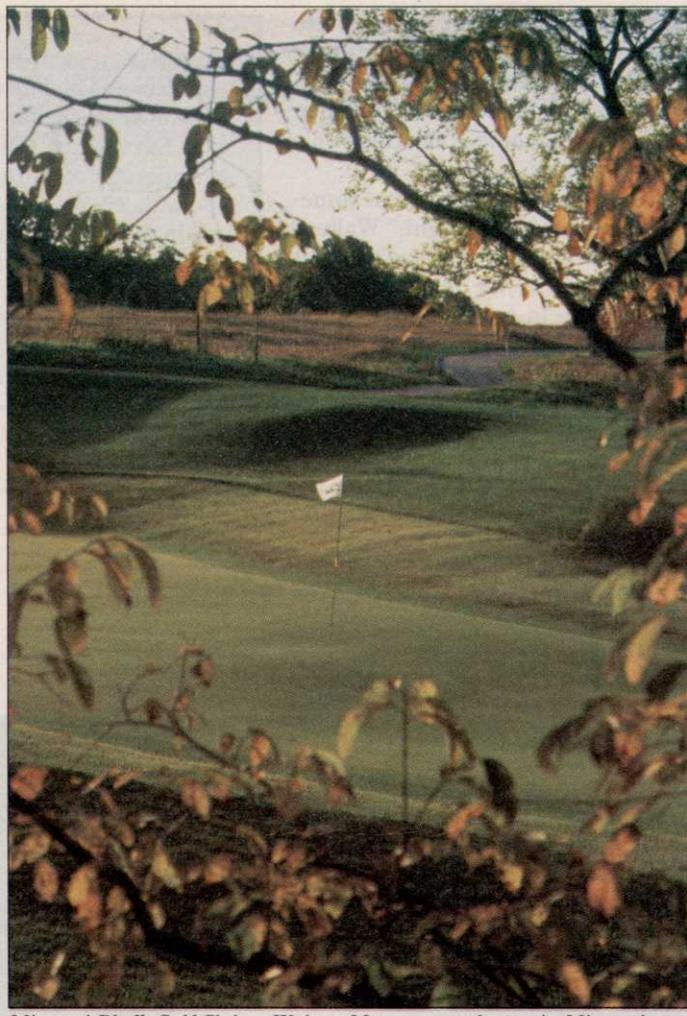
CRANBURY, N.J. — Matrix Golf & Hospitality is continuing its expansion with the purchase of Jumping Brook Country Club in Neptune and Ashbourne Country Club in Cheltenham, Pa. Matrix teamed with Senior Tour Players Inc. of Boston on the Jumping Brook acquisition. Matrix, which leased Ashbourne for the past four years, plans to take the semi-private club private over the next three years.

RDC COMPLETES FORSGATE PURCHASE

PARSIPPANY, N.J. — An affiliate of RDC Golf Group, now owns 100 percent of Forsgate Country Club in Jamesburg, having purchased the 49-percent interest of its former partner in the property, National Fairways Inc. The two originally bought the property in September 1997 for \$24.4 million. Since the 1997 purchase, RDC has invested more than \$3.5 million in capital improvements.

CMAA'S SINGERLING HONORED

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — James Singerling, executive vice president of the Club Managers Association of America, has been nominated to serve on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Association Committee of 100. The committee is a prestigious group of chief staff executives in the association community.



Missouri Bluffs Golf Club, a Walters Management layout in Missouri.

Walters strikes gold in St. Louis golf market

Management firm content to stay put — for now

By PETER BLAIS

Dennis Walters is bullish on the St. Louis marketplace. "Twelve years ago it was probably on the endangered species list, according to the National Golf Foundation," said Walters, president of St. Louis-based Walters Golf Management. "Since then we've opened a number of new facilities. It's become a very competitive market."

Walters entered the golf business in 1962 when his father bought Bogey Hills Golf & Country Club, a Wayne Clark-designed layout in St. Charles, Mo. The course had laid dormant for 25 years. Walters, who was in high school at the time, did some redesign work with his dad (an optometrist), and the course re-opened as a nine-hole layout later that year. Bogey Hills expanded to 18 holes a decade later and went private in 1980. Walters became the club pro.

In the early 1980s, Walters decided to follow in his father's entrepreneurial footsteps and developed Whitmoor Country Club, a private, 36-hole, Karl Litten design in St. Charles that opened in 1988. That was followed by:

- Missouri Bluffs Golf Club, an 18-hole Tom Fazio layout in St. Charles that opened in 1995 and Golf Digest later ranked the No. 1 public golf course in the state.
- The Links at Dardenne, an 18-hole public course in O'Fallon, and Gateway National Golf Links, an 18-hole Keith Foster design with bentgrass fairways in Madison, Ill., both came on line in 1998.
- The Golf Club of Wentzville (Mo.), an 18-hole public facility

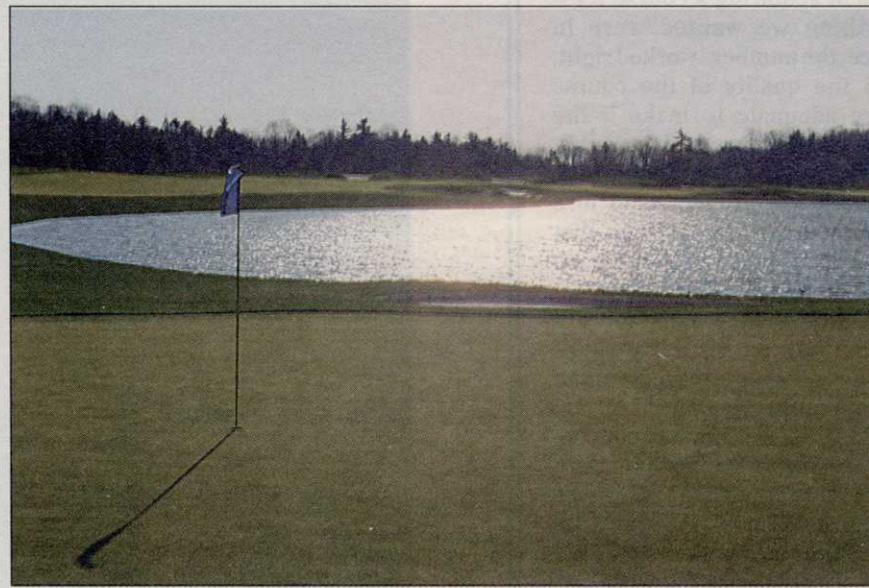
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Palmer receives additional \$50m from Olympus

SAN FRANCISCO — Arnold Palmer Golf Management LLC and Olympus Real Estate Corp., a Dallas-based private real-estate investment firm affiliated with Hicks, Muse, Tate & Furst Inc., have announced that Olympus has committed an additional \$50 million to expand their partnership to consolidate the golf course industry in a branded chain format.

"The relationship with Olympus and Hicks, Muse has been very successful so far," said Palmer Management founder Arnold Palmer. "Their capital and real-estate expertise have enabled us to greatly accelerate the growth

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HEARIN' THE RATTLE IN TORONTO

Tim O'Connor photo

ClubLink Corporation-managed RattleSnake Point Golf Club in Milton, Ontario, opened recently. Thomas McBroom designed the 45-hole private club, which spreads over 685 acres with views of the Niagara Escarpment landmark that is its namesake. RattleSnake Point represents ClubLink's second development initiative, following on the heels of The Lake Joseph Club in Muskoka.



The Links at RiverLakes Ranch, an Environmental Golf facility under construction in Bakersfield, Calif.

Environmental Golf busy in Calif.

CALABASAS, Calif. — Environmental Golf has been busy building several Southern California courses over the past few months.

Westridge Golf Club in La Habra and The Links at RiverLakes Ranch in Bakersfield are expected to open in early fall. Both are 18-hole, daily-fee courses and will be operated by Environmental Golf.

The Links at RiverLakes Ranch, a Ronald Fream/GolfPlan-designed layout, is in the "grow-and-mow" stage with all holes complete and all of its 12 lakes filled. Construction of the 8,000-square-foot clubhouse is underway with opening scheduled for September.

The back nine at Westridge Golf Club in La Habra is complete. The construction crew is concentrating its efforts on the

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Walters Golf

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opened in 1999. Walters also signed a management contract with Cherry Hills Golf Club in Greenwood, Mo., earlier this year.

Walters' facilities cover the price spectrum, ranging from \$20 per round at The Golf Club at Wentzville, to \$30 at The Links at Dardenne, \$40 at Cherry Hills, \$50 at Gateway National and \$80-\$100 at Missouri Bluffs.

As for the two private facilities: "We probably do more tournaments than anyone in the marketplace," Walters said. "We do about 90 a year at Whitmoor. Missouri Bluffs does about 75. We can help any tournament organizer, from the group that wants to spend \$40 per player to the one that wants to spend \$200 per player."

With the exception of Cherry Hills and The Links at Dardenne, which is owned by the Whitaker family, Walters has an ownership interest in all these facilities.

"We would prefer to build rather than acquire courses," Walters said. "We know what we get when we build it ourselves. That doesn't mean we wouldn't look at acquiring a course if everything we wanted were in place, the numbers worked right, and the quality of the course were adequate to make it the way we would want to have it."

Whenever he has built, Walters has attempted to hire local contractors. "It's not that outside contractors don't do quality work," he said. "It's just that they have to make a profit when they do that. If we hire local contractors, we feel we can get more for our dollar."

To date, Walters has concentrated on the St. Louis marketplace. "From one end to the other of our holdings is roughly a 45-minute drive," Walters said. "We like to be hands-on with our management style, so we've clustered in St. Louis. We've had opportunities to venture outside St. Louis, but at this time we've chosen not to do that. Down the road, we may look at becoming a more regional company with access into Kansas City, Memphis and maybe into central Illinois."

"We'll be another 18 months to two years in just St. Louis. We have two potential projects in St. Louis we want to look at first. After that, we may look to go more regional."

The desire of Walters and his key staff to remain "hands-on" is one reason the firm is moving cautiously in its expansion plans.

"We've all been in the golf business for a long time," Walters said of his staff. "[Golf Director] Jeff Smith was involved with the PGA for a number of

years. [Director of Operations] Lucy Mitchell has been in the food service business over 20 years. Rob Dillinger, our director of agronomy, came from the Arnold Palmer Golf Management Co. We've tried to get the top people in each area.

"Our only business is golf. Our roots are in golf. Our whole management, from top to bottom, has grown up in the golf business."

Which makes Walters hesitant

to consider other careers. He has been approached by other firms, especially between 1995 and 1997, that were interested in acquiring some or all of his firm's properties.

"I would never say that something can't be bought," Walters said. "But our goal isn't to sell properties. We feel very comfortable in our location. I'm 54 and I plan to be in the business for awhile yet."

CCA GROUP, FUJI STRIKE DEAL

PARIS — The Fuji Country Group, owner of Apremont Golf Club near Paris, has entered a management agreement with CCA Europe Ltd.. The Fuji Country Group is a leading owner and operator of golf and country clubs in Japan. Fuji owns and operates 21 golf clubs in Japan, three in the United States and one in the United Kingdom. CCA Group was founded in 1980 and is a major developer and operator of private clubs in the Asian Pacific region. Operating in 14 countries, CCA Group manages 30 clubs in Asia with six more under development around the globe.

Weather.



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