MANAGEMENT NEWS IN 1999

The consolidation beat goes on in the golf course management industry. Management companies, individually and sometimes in union, continued to buy up individual courses and/or other management firms in 1999. A prime example was the joint effort by American Golf Corp. (AGC) and ClubCorp to purchase the 45-course portfolio of Cobblestone Golf Group. AGC and ClubCorp put up $353 million and then split the courses between them.

ClubCorp's name appeared numerous times in GCN's 1999 management pages as the Dallas-based firm launched joint efforts with other major management/development companies. Early this year, ClubCorp announced the development of its first course (located an hour north of Atlanta) in conjunction with Jack Nicklaus' Golden Bear International. It purchased a portion of the stock in ClubLink, a major Canadian course operator that acquired highly regarded Glen Abbey Golf Club in Toronto from the Royal Canadian Golf Association and later expanded its Montreal cluster by purchasing 59 percent of Quatre Domaines Golf Club. The United States Golf Association handed over responsibility for managing everything outside the ropes at its most prestigious tournament, the 1999 U.S. Open at Pinehurst, to a ClubCorp subsidiary, Pinehurst Championship Management.

While big players were making news, small- to mid-sized course management firms continued to do well. Among them, Wilson Golf Group of White Bear Lake, Minn.; Sports & Fitness Management of Missouri; Walters Golf Management of St. Louis; and Signet Golf Associates of Pinehurst, N.C.

USGA turns over U.S. Open mgt. reins to ClubCorp subsidiary

By PETER BLAIS

PINEHURST, N.C. — The United States Golf Association (USGA) has handed over responsibility for managing June's U.S. Open at Pinehurst No. 2 to an outside party — Pinehurst Championship Management (PCM).

PCM is the sports marketing division of ClubCorp, the Dallas-based firm that owns and operates Pinehurst. PCM will be responsible for everything from handling transportation issues to developing corporate partners.

The USGA will retain control over what occurs "inside the ropes," according to the USGA's Tim Moraghan, who oversees course preparation for Open events for the USGA Rules and Competition Committee. "Outside the ropes," said PCM head Jon Wagner, "everything with regard to marketing, corporate hospitality sales, operations, presentation, and volunteer coordination will be done by PCM. Inside the ropes, we will receive guidance from the USGA and do as they tell us."

Pinehurst is one of golf's shrines. It was famed architect Donald Ross' longtime home and has hosted many prestigious championships including the North and South Open (the nation's longest-continuous golf championship), the 1936 PGA Championship, 1951 Ryder Cup, and 1982 U.S. Amateur.

Pinehurst suffered from neglect in the late 1970s, but was restored to prominence by ClubCorp, which purchased the complex in 1984. ClubCorp restored the course to its original condition and hosted the 1989 USGA's Women's Ama...
The Colorado tracks are 15 miles apart on the Western Slope—Adobe Creek in Fruita and Chipeta in Grand Junction. The company also owns a piece of land outside St. Paul that will see construction of course No. 8 within the next 18 months, Stang said.

With four Minnesota courses apiece, WGG, Continental Golf Group and American Golf Corp. are the largest course operators in that Upper Midwest state.

"There are a couple others [management firms] that have started up that have one or two on hand," the Wilson Golf Group executive said.

Wilson becoming major force in Upper Midwest

WHITE BEAR LAKE, Minn. — Wilson Golf Group (WGG) has acquired Turtleback Golf Course in Rice Lake, Wis., giving the White Bear Lake-based management firm seven golf facilities in the Upper Midwest. "We're trying to acquire a course per year," said Greg Stang, WGG's director of acquisitions.

WGG courses include four in Minnesota and two in Colorado. The Minnesota facilities are Oak Glen and Applewood Hills in Stillwater, Gem Lake Hills in White Bear Lake and North Links in North Mankato.