Forecaddies making a comeback at Marriott

By JOHN TORSIELLO

An innovative forecaddie program at the Seaview Marriott Resort in Galloway, N.J., has been such a success that the company is considering expanding the program to other Marriott-owned courses.

Rob Bartley, director of golf at Seaview, located near Atlantic City, said the feedback from golfers playing the resort’s two courses—The Pines and The Bay Course—has been “98 percent positive” in the program’s first year.

The unique aspect of Seaview’s caddie program is that the service is mandatory, making it one of the few resorts where golfers must be accompanied by a forecaddie. Bartley said Seaview’s program was patterned after a similar program at Coeur D’Alene Resort Golf Course, Idaho.

The price of a forecaddie is included in a golfer’s greens fees. Tips—the club recommends at least $10 per bag—are encouraged.

“The forecaddie program has been a way for us to differentiate ourselves from other courses in the area,” said Bartley. “It’s been a huge success in its first year. We think of our forecaddies as on-course concierges. Not other employee spends as much time with the customer as they do. There is certainly a potential that it can be molded to other Marriott facilities.”

Brendan Lenihan, director of guest services at Coeur D’Alene, said that resort’s mandatory forecaddie program, now in its eighth year, has been popular among golfers.

“I think the program has been successful because it is mandatory and not optional. I don’t know if it would work if golfers had a choice,” he said.

Lenihan said forecaddies have positively affected speed of play at Coeur D’Alene.

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UCA, Palmer join forces to build network of U.S. university clubs

By ANDREW OVERBECK

COLUMBIA, S.C.—University Clubs of America (UCA) and Arnold Palmer Golf Management have formed an exclusive joint venture to develop and operate university- and college-affiliated golf clubs across the United States.

The UCA-Palmer collaboration began Oct. 21, with its first course here at the University of South Carolina.

According to E. Linwood Johnson, President of UCA, this partnership will be the first step in a major expansion for UCA, which builds customized golf courses and themed clubs to suit the needs of individual colleges and universities, which in turn offer memberships exclusively to their alumni and university supporters.

Terms of the partnership state that all participating clubs will bear the UCA brand and be managed by Palmer Golf.

“UCA’s resource is club design, marketing and its ability to cater to the needs of individual universities,” said Peter Nanula, president and chief executive officer of Palmer Golf. “They’re niche experts. This partnership brings together the best of both worlds.”

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K-State’s management program draws students

MANHATTAN, Kan.—Kansas State University's golf course management program is up and drawing attention from not only students, but from other universities as well, said Jack Fry, associate professor of horticulture, forestry and recreation.

“Our golf course management program is the first of its kind to shift emphasis to business and other academics. Most other programs just offer the traditional turfgrass management program,” Fry said.

Offered as a new option under K-State's horticulture major, the golf course management program focuses on more than how to get and maintain the optimum playing surface. It also covers all aspects of managing an 18-hole course, including business, hospitality and food-service operations.

“The program was developed with help from experienced golf course superintendents, who emphasized that skills students can develop in business, communications and personnel management are as important as the education they receive in plant and soil sciences,” Fry said.

“The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) and the PGA Tour are advisers to the program and are working with us in structuring internships and evaluating the program’s effectiveness in educating the next generation of golf course superintendents and facility professionals,” he said.

“Enrollment has been good. We have nearly 40 students, including several students from out-of-state and K-State students who switched their majors when the program became available,” Fry said.

That’s what Jonathan Bakalar did. The junior from Charlotte, N.C., was majoring in business, but switched when the golf course management option became available. “I’ve been playing golf since I was a little kid. I love it,” he said. “I want to be a golf course superintendent or be a

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D'Alene. "Five hours a round is the norm at resort courses. Here, it's 4:17 a round. With forecaddies, we don't need marshals out on the course. They move play along."

The Seaview program is run by Caddie Masters Enterprises of Fairfax, Va. Caddie manager Kieran Bell said the forecaddies serve a variety of purposes.

"The forecaddies certainly affect speed of play," he said. "They have a local knowledge of the course. They go out ahead of the foursome to spot balls so you eliminate a lot of time spent hunting for stray shots."
The caddies also give yardages, rake bunkers, clean clubs, fix ball marks on greens and read greens.

Bell said the Seaview program is "the first time forecaddies have been marketed to a great extent." He added that feedback from players has been positive. The club has rating cards that golfers fill out concerning the performance of their forecaddie and that 90 percent of the ratings have been excellent.

When Seaview went to a cart path only rule on its Pines Course, officials worried about speed of play. The forecaddies have eliminated that fear, said Bartley.

"We were worried that the cart path only rule would add three quarters of an hour to rounds on The Pines Course. But with the forecaddies, the average round only rule would add three quarters of an hour to rounds on The Pines Course. But with the forecaddies, the average round condition on a day to day basis."

Bartley said Seaview adopted a mandatory forecaddie program for several reasons.

"We wanted to make the program an added plus for golfers here. And, if it just wouldn't have worked had we allowed golfers to an option. What if the four-some ahead of you didn't have a forecaddie and you did. It would have made for some uncomfortable moments on the course."

Seaview toyed with the idea of installing laser yardage finders in its golf carts. "But that just didn't fit with what Seaview is. We wanted a person dealing with the customer and that's what the forecaddies do for us," Bartley said that while he has fielded some complaints about mandatory use of forecaddies, the vast majority of comments have been favorable.

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