GCBAA BUSTING OUT

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — The Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBAA) grew by more than 25 percent in 1998, adding 46 construction companies and suppliers to bring its total membership to 212. “I think it’s a sign that the golf course construction industry is maturing,” said Phil Arnold, executive vice president of the 27-year-old organization. “Naturally I’d like to think our association has had a lot to do with fostering that process, but we’ve also benefited from the explosive growth in the golf industry as a whole. There are some huge general contracting companies that have been building golf courses for years, but as a small part of their overall business. Those companies are now coming to our association.”

PALMER INKS MICHIGAN PROJECT

FENTON, Mich. — Arnold Palmer and Palmer Course Design Co. have selected to design the Preserve at Black Bear Resort here. The 18-hole championship course is being developed by the Preserve Corp. The Preserve at Black Bear Resort is scheduled to open during the summer of 2000 and will feature a clubhouse and 72 natural wooded home sites. Lakes and pronate hardwoods pave the way for large ravines that run the entire property. Woods pave the way for large ravines that run the entire property. The preserve at Black Bear Resort is expected to start construction in October. Sierra Star Resort in Mammoth Lakes was completed last year and will open this summer. Olson is also remodeling El Dorado Golf Course in Long Beach, Calif., by adding and improving on the water features and bunkers and extending the yardage.

Dick Phelps: An all-terrain architect

The 16th green at Saddle Rock Golf Club in Aurora, Colo., invites a clean approach shot. Designed by Dick Phelps, Saddle Rock was voted 8th-best new public course in 1998. It hosts the Colorado Open, the state men’s championship whose past winners include Hale Irwin and Dave Hill.

Dick Phelps has been designing golf courses since he graduated from Iowa State University in 1963 with bachelor’s and master’s degrees in landscape architecture. In 1966 he and land planner Donald Brauer formed a partnership in Minneapolis and a year later Phelps opened his own office in Denver. When they split in 1973, he formed a partnership with Brad Benz, and in 1981 they added J. Michael Poellot. Benz and Poellot left a year later to form a company in California, and “from 1981 until now I’ve been master of my own destiny and I enjoy it,” Phelps says. In 1990 Phelps and U.S. Open champion Hale Irwin began working together, but Irwin has since started his own design firm.

Wildhawk fills void of ‘affordable public’

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Aiming to fill the need in Northern California for affordable, public-access golf, Southgate Recreational Park District has opened Wildhawk Golf Club here.

“We believe that Wildhawk will prove to be a prototype golf development concept for local municipalities, county governments and park districts who have the vision and desire to use idle land, and at the same time provide an income-producing, high-quality, affordable golf facility for their constituents,” said J. Michael Poellot Golf Design Group senior designer Mark Hollinger.

The course was created on a completely flat piece of farm land “with almost no existing natural features with which to work, not even one tree,” said Hollinger. “We had poor, rocky soils... and a short timetable. The completed project, however, has become a high-quality, daily-fee recreational golf facility that is now coming into its own with a significant level of play.”

Builders moved more than 350,000 cubic yards of dirt to mold the 6,695-yard parkland-style course. The course features four sets of tees, undulating fairways and creative movement on the greens set Wildhawk apart.

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