AGC/CCI to buy Cobblestone Golf

By PETER BLAIS

DEL MAR, Calif. — Two major players in the golf course management industry — American Golf Corporation and ClubCorp Inc. — have joined together to acquire Del Mar-based Cobblestone Golf Group from the Meditrust Companies for $395 million.

The new partnership, Golf Acquisitions LLC, is expected to close on the 45-course acquisition by March 31. Upon closing, the two companies will divide the Cobblestone portfolio.

Meditrust, a Massachusetts-based real estate investment trust (REIT), bought Cobblestone in late 1997 for $241 million. Cobblestone nearly doubled in size under the Meditrust banner. But the REIT experienced some

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Griffin walks the walk

By MARK LESLIE

ORLANDO, Fla. — Griffin Industries has become the first company to join the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System, committing its 20-odd properties around the country to environmental stewardship.

Announcing the move at a press conference here, Audubon International President Ron Dodson said Griffin has “picked up the mantel of conservation activism at their plant sites and corporate facility. They are, indeed, walking the walk and talking the talk.”

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N.C.’s Grand Strand opens 101st

SUNSET BEACH, N.C. — March 1 saw the opening of the first 18 at Thistle Golf Club, the area’s 101st golf course to hang the ‘open’ shingle. Thistle was designed by Tim Caire, a protégé of noted architect Willard Byrd. Above is the par-4 6th.

Audubon gives players a view to remember

LACEY, Wash. — Peter L.H. Thompson’s Vicwood Golf Links at Hawks Prairie will be open and ready for play this spring. Built on a former logging site, the course offers rolling terrain, wetlands, water and this stunning view of 14,000-foot Mr. Rainier.

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Richmond 1st Tee ready to roll

By MARK LESLIE

RICHMOND, Va. — A judge’s stunning reversal of his own decision has paved the way for the Richmond First Tee project to finally, get under way.

Richmond organizers, who had hoped to open the nation’s initial new First Tee facility, had been stalled for months by opponents using legal challenges and appeals to administrative-county approvals. Now, it appears, they can proceed.

On Feb. 3, Circuit Court Judge Jack B. Stevens reportedly told a
John Deere’s Gator goes electric

John Deere has introduced the Electric Gator. Designed for customers concerned with operational sound levels and exhaust emissions, the Electric Gator is a clean, quiet option for such indoor work areas as college campuses and resorts.

The electric utility vehicle provides the same advantages of the gas and diesel models—low ground pressure to help prevent ground compaction, smooth operation that’s easy to learn, safety protections, durability for long life and easy access to service points for convenient maintenance.

Designed for quick acceleration and steady performance between chargings, the Electric Gator is a clean, quiet option for customers concerned with operational sound levels and exhaust emissions. The Electric Gator provides the same advantages of the gas and diesel models—low ground pressure to help prevent ground compaction, smooth operation that’s easy to learn, safety protections, durability for long life and easy access to service points for convenient maintenance.

Redexim Charterhouse announces 2nd generation Verti-Drains

Redexim Charterhouse announced a second generation of its Verti-Drain aeration system. The Verti-Drain models include the 75 Series of larger, higher work-rate units as well as the company’s new, high speed Mustang 7117 model. Along with the new Verti-Drains, the company has also announced a few new products for the North American market, including the Silt Seeder, Tow-N-Seed and Pedestrian Scarifier (dethatcher) units.

For more information, contact 800-597-5664.

Griffin

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Rick Geise, director of marketing for Griffin, said: “Our approach has always been plain, simple country values: conserving resources conserves money. We believe that nobody does as good a job on the environmental side as we do as a company. But we also want to try to do better, which is one of the challenges we’ve all embraced with Ron’s program.”

Griffin Industries produces Nature Safe fertilizer at a plant in Henderson, Ky., but also operates nine plants that recycle bakery feeds and others that are rendering or cow-hide operations. All the properties included in the Sanctuary System encompass several thousand acres in the Southeast, Southwest and Midwest as well as headquarters in San Francisco, outside Philadelphia and Cincinnati.

“To me,” said Dodson, “this forms the basis of a very unique partnership... Lots of environmental groups have gotten involved in licensing of logos – green watch issues where they stick logos on things saying they are wonderful products. We decided not to do that. We decided to form a partnership based on corporate philosophy and an Audubon philosophy being adopted by a corporation, not necessarily just a product.

“We challenged Griffin Industries to adopt the Audubon Principles of Sustained Resource Management as part of their corporate mission statement. They’ve done that,” he added. “We challenged them to put all of their corporate facilities in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program and try to get all of them fully certified as Audubon Cooperative Sanctions. In other words, we told them, ‘You need to walk the walk before you talk the talk. You need to make a personal and corporate commitment to conservation and sustainability in the way you do things. They have risen to that challenge.”

The long-term partnership with Griffin, Dodson said, will improve the quality of the environment, and help people make

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Golf courses
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golfer with increased opportunities — seen as a real bonus in an era where time and space are at a premium.

The safety of the golfer on a golf course is equal to that on a full blown course thanks to the lower number of golfers per acre. A maximum of three matches and twelve players can use the court at any one time.

With Christy O’Connor Junior and Laura Davies lending their support in the company brochure, a certain level of kudos have been achieved. In the United Kingdom, there are already 10 golf courses going through planning consent in the United Kingdom.

With leisure entrepreneur Chris Drummond promoting Golf Courts in South Africa and the new company offices in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the compact layouts look set to gather an international following.

John Sale again: "We see our biggest potential market in the United States and plan to break into it as soon as possible."

The major client base for golf courses appears to stem largely from the following social groups: hotel guests, children, women, beginners, business people, senior citizens and the disabled members of society. Environmentally, golf courses are naturally very acceptable — aside from taking up only one tenth of the size of a normal golf course, they also use less water, fewer chemicals and disturb the surroundings much less.

The compactness of a golf court allows inner cities to accommodate them on brown field derelict sites, creating an "inner city lung" right in the middle of a section of society who either have no chance to play the game or who have to travel many miles in order to do so.

This final point has long been cited as an important aspect for the development of golf as a growth sport.

As long ago as 1933 that doyen of revolutionary golf courses architecture, Dr. Alister Mackenzie, stated that: "...golf courses for the masses are of value only when they are in close proximity to large towns."

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