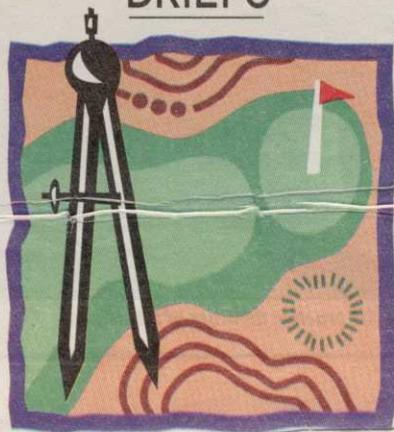


BRIEFS



OGRIN DESIGNING FIRST TRACK

HOUSTON, Texas — Community leaders and friends joined Jack Frey of Jack Frey Properties and PGA Tour professional David Ogrin to celebrate the groundbreaking for High Meadow Ranch Golf Club. The course, co-designed by Ogrin, sits on a rolling terrain of sandy soil and features more topographical differences than other courses in the area. This is the first golf course designed by Ogrin, a 15-year PGA Tour veteran and winner of the 1996 Texas Open Championship. He is co-designing the course with Nugent Golf Associates. The daily-fee golf club will feature an 18-hole course stretching to over 7,400 yards and routed in three loops of six over a unique rolling terrain highlighted by an abundance of native pine trees and dense hardwood vegetation.

HARBOTTLE GETS WIS. DESIGN

MADISON, Wis. — John F. Harbottle III is beginning a new golf course design at Hawk's Landing, a 520-acre upscale real-estate development near Madison. The 7,000-yard layout sits on about 200 acres of gently rolling farmland, winding through hardwood groves and around three large ponds. Haen Real Estate of Madison is developing the project. Construction will be completed by Oliphant Golf Construction, Inc., also of Madison. A late summer/fall construction start is planned. Other new Harbottle projects include a new 27-hole course on the Ralph Ranch in Livermore, Calif., and another 27-hole facility, Hira Country Club, near Nagoya, Japan.

\$14M PROJECT PLANNED IN FLA.

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, Fla. — Capital Golf Development Corp. has announced plans for a new golf club in Indian River County. The \$14 million project, Southern Dunes Golf Club, will feature a course designed by Kenneth Kavanaugh. Southern Dunes is located on the natural sand dune paralleling the Indian River Lagoon in Indian River County. Situated on more than 180 acres of land, the course provides 7,300 yards of golf from championship tees. It encompasses pine forests, water and sand dune topography. A special area of the course offers links-style golf. To accommodate golfers who enjoy walking, a caddie program will be in place. Construction is scheduled to begin in April. Course opening is set for January 2000.

Lowry 'builds' true island green



The island hole at Timber Lakes Golf Course presents a tough challenge to finish up the front nine

By MARK LESLIE

M T. OLIVE, Ill. — A real island green will face golfers when the new front nine of Timber Lakes Golf Course opens in May here, halfway between St. Louis and Springfield.

"Yes, the island green is unique," said Bill Lowry, owner of Professional Landscaping, Inc., who built the course and co-designed it with owner Mike Favre, "but it also has three peninsula greens, and I don't think you'll find that on any course, anywhere."

To play the peninsula greens, golfers will have to wait until fall, when the back nine opens. But the island green stands ready to test them as they come to the clubhouse to finish the front nine.

The 15,000-square-foot island was not always an island, Lowry said. It was a horseshoe-shaped peninsula with a 6- to 8-foot-wide "moat" until Lowry widened

the moat to 50 to 90 yards.

Lowry said the 6-acre lake was drained and then dug out in order to widen the moat. Water was 5 to 6 feet deep and now it is 30, he said.

Now the piece of land sits as an island, complete with trees and an 8,000-square-foot, three-level green for the 275- to 310-yard par-4 9th hole.

The approach shot from the landing area requires a 90-yard carry over the water. A 50-foot bridge takes golfers to and from the green, which can be seen from the clubhouse.

The back nine, Lowry said, is even more challenging than the front.

"The front nine is a 6 on a scale of 10 for difficulty. The back nine will be closer to an 8 or 9," he said. "The front nine is links style, while the back nine is carved out of the woods, uses natural terrain and of

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Golfers putt out on the 2nd hole on the Northwest Angle.

Northwest Angle: Golf like nowhere else

By TIMOTHY LYON

T he club scuffs the ground hard before impact and the ball bounces 20 yards down the recently mowed fairway. A soft curse registers more amazement than anger. George Risser readily acknowledges that his golf game could be better. In all honesty, if he handled his chainsaw and hunting rifle with the same proficiency that he wields a 5-iron, we'd probably be interviewing a one-armed man facing several involuntary manslaughter charges. Yet George Risser is "Mr. Golf" on the Northwest Angle, where his inability to putt or drive is overshadowed by the fact that he has established a legitimate nine-hole course in the middle of the most stubborn wilderness Minnesota has to offer.

Hacked from the popple groves and cedar swamps that choke the Angle, the course has the distinction of being the most northerly in the contiguous 48 states.

The tranquil air and groomed links belie the true character of what lays ahead. The fairways are narrow and lined with forest so dense that only those with a real affection for their Titleists make any effort to retrieve wayward slices. Tricky lake breezes push even fine shots into unplayable lies. And once you've survived the approach, the sand greens are another test. The course is an accurate reflection of the daily lives of the 60 or so Northwest Angle Country Club members.

"A dollar doesn't come easy up here," mused Risser as he confidently addressed another shot, "why should a par?"

Risser, a lifelong Angle resident who ran Pine Creek Pub Bar and Restaurant for 16 years and is in his 23rd year as postmaster, said the course was something he had always expected to do. The time, effort and money all lead back to George Risser. Locals helped with sweat

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IN THE WAKE OF SPLIT

Jones pickier; KLC eye diversity

By MARK LESLIE

PALO ALTO, Calif. — In the wake of his lead architects' departure, Robert Trent Jones Jr. said his golf course design firm will continue to work around the world, but on fewer projects.

Jones' statement came on the heels of an announcement that Don Knott, Gary Linn and Bruce Charlton have left the firm to form their own company, Knott, Linn, Charlton Design. The three had all worked for 18 years or longer with Jones in designing many of his 200 projects from Canada to China and from Fiji to Russia. A fourth member of the new partnership, Steve Schroeder, was RTJ II's vice president of operations.

"From my perspective, it gives me the chance to do more hands-on work on quality middle- to upper-end projects," Jones said. "We have had kind of a machine, grinding out a lot of golf courses because we had good people. I'd rather do six or eight projects a year that are very hands-on."

The change — for Jones as well as Knott, Linn and Charlton — is "a

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COMMENTARY

Golf's future bright

By DR. MICHAEL HURDZAN

I disagree, often, with people in the golf business who fail to see the big picture — or if they see it, refused to believe or to present a balanced view. Call it "the cup is half empty, half full" syndrome if you will. The fact is the damn cup is neither half empty or half full, rather it is both. Stick with me while I rebut an article from the sports section of the USA TODAY that appeared on Tuesday, January 19, 1999 titled "Glut of Layouts Forces Creative Marketing."

The essence of the story was a gloom and doom report about how the supply of golf courses has exceeded demand, and how operators have had to resort to marketing gimmicks to pull in customers. These are the views of the "half-empty" crowd.

But in a side bar chart it showed the rounds of golf for 1997 (the last year reported) had reached a record high of 544 million rounds, 14% higher than the previous year, and 18% higher than any year in the last century. This is how "half-full" folks see golf.

I unabashedly, am one of the world's great optimists (read half full), that believes that golf can grow at a reasonably high, sustainable rate if — if, we remember three

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Rissers bring 'Game of Kings' to Northwest Angle

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and machinery when it was necessary, but it was essentially the efforts of a single man that brought the "Game of Kings" to the Northwest Angle.

"Dave Colson, Gary Dietzler and I talked about it for years," Risser said. "I cut the first tree in 1984 and three years later we were playing golf." Risser's next shot arcs convincingly toward the hole.

Initially a seven-holer, the course has evolved into a solid nine. A high-water

year on Lake of the Woods might dampen play on numbers 4 and 5, but anyone who has ever brandished a 3-wood can deal with such "casual water."

There is a clubhouse, complete with sales and rental equipment. A golf cart rental and mini-storage facility has sprung up across the road in response to the course's success. George's wife Judy, the only other employee, is responsible for the books and helps organize special events. An umbrellaed outdoor patio is a

comfortable gathering place.

"We don't have a club pro in the traditional sense," winked Risser, "but Gary Dietzler is more than happy to come out and tell you what to do with your life during backswings." George line-drives a delicate chip into the brush behind the green.

Northwest Angle Country Club currently hosts four annual tournaments that draw an eye-opening number of participants.

- The Shyster Open, in late August, which pulls in golfers from as far away as Thief River Falls and Grand Forks, had to adopt an invitation-policy policy several years ago when the eight-player per tee box shotgun start format was maxed out.

- The Rivard's Tourney in July is a large friends- and family-type gathering.

- The Red Sock Open in September is a season-ending event where players must wear red socks and bring a dish for the pot luck supper afterward.

- And in an effort to remain "politically correct," Risser sponsors the early-spring Dave Colson/Cormorant Open, pitting Canadian and U.S. game wardens against local resorтер types.

"The game wardens always cheat by bringing in some ringer and dressing him up like he's a warden," growled Dietzler. "They haven't quite figured it out that we're going to lose intentionally, anyway. Wardens are a vindictive bunch, you see, and we don't want any hard feelings when we get back on the water."

Daily green fees for the occasional tourist or cabin owner are \$7. Annual dues are a mere \$60 per person. Carts, the standard method of travel throughout the Angle, go for \$20 per day, allowing for between-games touring at a more leisure pace. Women's night is every Tuesday. The men play on Thursdays. Participants throw \$10 in a hat at the beginning of the season, entitling them to soda, beer and chips until they run out a month or two later, at which time they are asked to ante up again. Four-person teams are picked at random each week, with winners of the Best Ball round receiving a package of three golf balls.

This is not golf at its snobby best.

"It's basically a 'break-even' proposition," said Risser as he struggled a 16-foot putt to within 8 feet of the pin. "I just like seeing people get out and enjoy themselves. Pretty much everything I take in goes back into mowers or flagsticks."

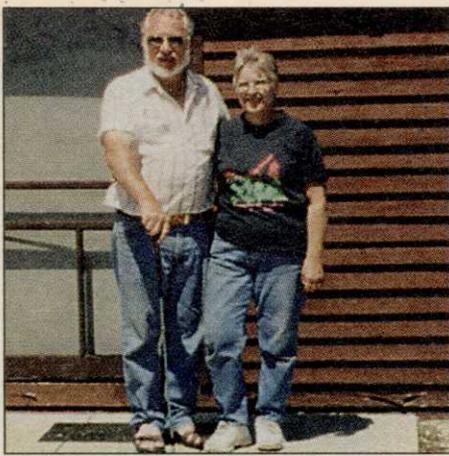
Wildlife is a common sight on the Angle course. Bear wander through on their spring and fall migrations, while eagles and ospreys cast frequent shadows across the greens and tee boxes. Deer are everywhere. Lured out of the unfarmed forest by lush fairway grasses, they have become almost tame, often refusing to budge for even the most hostile of tee shots.

"This pair of fawns just wouldn't move," moaned Paul Colson, another lifelong Angleite who runs Jake's Resort, just down the road. "I yelled and screamed and ran at them, but they just stood there. I finally teed off and clunked one right in the head. He made it okay, though, because I've seen them both out there this year still standing in the same general area. You'd think they would have learned."

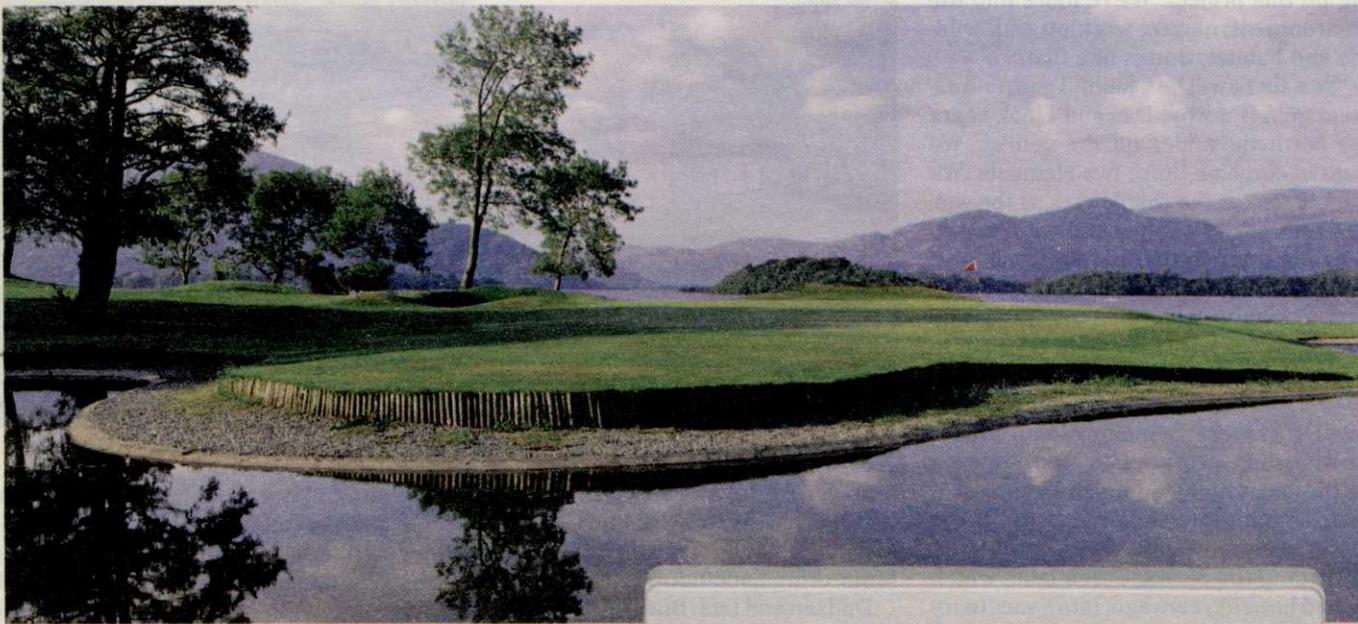
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GOLF COURSE NEWS

Photo by Timothy Lyon



George and Judy Risser outside their Northwest Angle clubhouse.



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CIRCLE #119

By MARK LESLIE

EASTLOTHIAN, Scotland—American golf course architect Tom Doak, once a caddie on the Old Course at St. Andrews and an understudy of Pete Dye, is returning to Scotland to design his first two courses here.

Sandwiched between Muirfield and North Berwick West Links, the Doak-designed Archerfield Golf Links and Fidra Golf Club will give players five miles of contiguous linksland golf along the coastline here. Town officials are reviewing

Doak track between Scottish greats

construction drawings, and developers hope to begin work by late March.

Doak promises four holes of the Fidra layout will flow along the beach overlooking Fidra lighthouse, while the Archerfield course will be a man-made links track featuring sod-wall bunkers and a prominent berm.

Doak design associate Bruce Hepner said there is no evidence of it now, but

a course dating back to the 1700s once sat on the Archerfield acreage. Before that, it was practice field for archers. Thus its name.

Kevin Doyle from Edinburgh, who owns and builds scores of pubs and restaurants throughout Europe and owns a construction company, is the controlling partner in the venture. Managing partner John Ashworth, who owns the famous golf shirt

line, first bought the property and started the project on its way.

This will be the Doak team's first course design in the United Kingdom.

Asked if they felt pressure as Americans building a course in the "home of golf," Hepner said: "Excitement is what we feel. We are bringing as many of our people as we can."

"The land along the ocean is pretty dunesy and windswept, and the rest is a flat field," he said. "This will be a wonderful learning experience."

Northwest Angle

Continued from previous page

The Angle course is more than golf, however. Given the relatively short window of opportunity (an early spring and a late fall might allow for four months of swinging), and the fact that the season coincides with the money-making chances of the fishing world, time on the links is a treasured commodity.

A couples of hours a week re-establishes friendships with neighbors after an eight-month break. Fiery feuds are rekindled. Business deals and expansion possibilities get discussed. Canadian impositions are lamented. Hunting and fishing tales are exaggerated.

Golf becomes an acknowledgment of the need for a social bond in a community that prides itself on the strengths of individuality. A town meeting with a pitching wedge, if you will.

Risser's golf plans for the future are modest. Better mowers. Maybe a little wider fairway for No. 9. A few more bunkers. The right lottery ticket, or a fortuitous will-reading might bring bentgrass greens to the Angle. But for now, that's merely a pleasant thought, just like the course was in 1975.

"We like to think about it," smiled Judy Risser.

George Risser flinches as his errant drive clangs off the guinea fowl/peacock enclosure he placed between the first and second fairways. The birds inside erupt in a raucous warble not unlike some heckling gallery, making it clear to the world that this golfer has misfired.

Risser has taken a chunk of his character and stuck it in this course. Like his neighbors, who have leveled airstrips and dredged marinas in equally improbable locations, he both struggles against and revels in the near claustrophobic solitude of the Northwest Angle.

It might be nice to have things a little easier, but if they were, he admits, it wouldn't be nearly so satisfying. As he swiped through the grass around the bird pen in a fruitless search for his ball, it occurred to me that if easier does not mean better, George Risser must find a great deal of satisfaction in his golf.

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