BRIEFS

FOSTER AT WORK AT SOUTHERN HILLS
TUCSON, Okla. — Golf course architect Keith Foster is overseeing construction, which began in September, of enhancements to the Championship course at Southern Hills, site of the 2001 U.S. Open. During a 60-day timeline, the greens will recapture their original Perry Maxwell sizes.

NELSON, HAWORTH OPEN OFFICES
Nelson & Haworth Golf Course Architects of Honolulu have opened new offices in the San Francisco Bay area and Montreal. They are located at 3030 Bridgeway, Suite 132, Sausalito, Calif. 94965, tel. 415-332-2889; and at 425 Rue St. Sulpice, Montreal, Quebec H2Y 2Y, Canada, tel. 514-574-6551.

Crenshaw, Coore on top of their ‘design’ game

Ben Crenshaw has been in demand this year. Most people are following his captaincy of the American team leading up to September’s Ryder Cup. The challenges were intriguing. But the PGA Tour great also has been busy designing golf courses, including the recently opened Cascowilla in Eatonton, Ga., and tracks at Notre Dame University and on Long Island [East Hampton Golf Club, see accompanying story, which will open next spring]. Crenshaw and design partner Bill Coore have achieved their greatest acclaim for Sand Hills in Mullen, Neb., Kapalua Golf Club’s Plantation Course in Hawaii and Barton Creek in Austin, Texas, where Crenshaw was born. Editor Mark Leslie caught up to Crenshaw and Coore on a job site in Texas, just before the Ryder Cup.

Golf Course News: Coore and Crenshaw are no longer rookies of golf course design. Have you changed your designs over the years?

Ben Crenshaw: We continue to do a couple projects at a time and still feel comfortable with that and with the people who work for us. We can’t see that changing too much in the future...

Bill Coore: If you look at the work we did 14 years ago, you’ll see some differences. We make each course different. We don’t want a stereotyped style.

When we did Kapalua and Barton Creek, they had some sizeable greens. The tendency was for people to say, ‘These guys do big fairways and big greens.’ We only did that because of the clientele and Kapalua — the conditions, the wind. Anything smaller would have been unplayable. But we’ve built small greens as well.

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Green, Aaron and Mahaffey design 9s for 27 in Florida

LADY LAKE, Fla. — Hubert Green, Tommy Aaron and John Mahaffey are designing separate nine-hole golf courses as part of the new Glenview Champions Country Club being developed by The Villages retirement community here. H. Gary Morse, chief executive officer of The Villages, selected Green, Aaron and Mahaffey to collaborate with Village Golf Architecture Group of Clifton, Ezell and Clifton on the 27-hole complex. The Villages had 126 holes of golf already in use. The Champions complex is being targeted as the venue for future professional tournaments. The Villages recently hosted the 1998 LPGA Samsung World Championship. It also is home to the 1999 Villages Charity Challenge between Juli Inkster, Nancy Lopez and Helen Alfredsson.

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Examples abound around this project, called Quintero Golf & Country Club:

• The Rees Jones Connection: McClung and wife Lea are members at Troon Golf and Country Club in Scottsdale, where they met course architect Cabell Robinson at a dinner party. Robinson introduced the McClungs to Jones, who not only jumped aboard the project but helped select the property.

• The Greg Norman Connection: When searching for a way to contact Norman, McClung received a free gift in the mail, a subscription to a newsletter which told readers Norman’s phone number. Lead architect Jason McCoy was in the office when McClung called, and, with Norman, visited the property shortly afterwards, both declaring they were ecstatic with the site.

• The Tony Roberts Connection: Who also happens to be Serendipity made this ‘private resort’ happen for mega-Ford truck dealer

LAKE PLEASANT, Ariz. — Serendipity and a passion for the game of golf. Those two factors have led Ford truck mogul Gary McClung to the verge of opening a unique golf community here, boasting courses designed by Rees Jones and Greg Norman along with memberships in a “private resort.”

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We’ve always tried to apply time-proven design principles. The interpretation of those principles hopefully is a little different in each case. But have we changed dramatically in terms of style or philosophy? I don’t think so.

GCN: Ben, you’re a golf historian and traditionalist. Has the pendulum swung back to the point where most architects are in your camp — that of the classics?

Crenshaw: A lot of projects these days seem to have a heavier commitment to golf. People are asking, Why is a course being built in a specific area? What are the needs? Is it for golf, or real estate? Everybody has to ask those questions. Maybe there is a trend back to the classics, which is great. I don’t think Bill or I would take any credit. It’s flattering. But there are a lot of architects who are very eager to get out their best work. That’s very, very healthy for the people who build golf courses.

GCN: What about the philosophy of a more minimalist approach to design?

Crenshaw: Trends have always been felt, no matter what architectural endeavor you speak of: buildings, offices or residential. It is the same in golf course architecture. It’s wonderful if people have rediscovered courses they had grown up on, or go to new places that have that commitment to minimalism. All of us in the building business continually are challenged with the advances in golf equipment and agronomy. The overall aim is to make it playable.

GCN: Part of it has to do with the available land. There are precious few sites with sand like Pinehurst or Long Island. Are those two giving you the opportunity to build the old-fashioned kind of courses that you like?

Crenshaw: Sand is certainly a blessing no matter where you find it. There are a myriad of things that sand helps so much. It’s certainly aesthetics, it’s raw material, it’s slashes of sand, that lead one to believe it is more natural. It’s a lot more economical in every sense. East Hampton was wonderful because of that main ingredient as well as the native grasses.

GCN: What is your favorite type of hole to design?

Crenshaw: I like short par-4s. They’re very difficult to bring off. But, properly brought up, they’re fun. If you have a hole where it’s a thrilling choice to make, but it’s exacting as well, it brings a real shot value into the scheme of things. Length is always a fascination because nearly everyone can get there in two strokes. A long par-4 is something as well. But you never know how long to make them these days. You never know where to end — at 475 [yards] or whatever. A 310- to 340-yard hole, with smallish greens and exacting nature, can be a lot of fun.

GCN: With Tiger playing, it could be a 3-wood for that hole.

Crenshaw (laughing): It might be a strong 3-wood for Tiger.

GCN: Have we lost the strategic value of the older courses because of the distances the pros hit the ball?

Crenshaw: If these courses are played in optimum conditions —
The Ryder Cup, the Country Club and Carnoustie

With the British Open at Carnoustie in Scotland in the recent past, and looking ahead to the Ryder Cup at The Country Club in Brookline, Mass., where he would captain the U.S. team in September, Ben Crenshaw was asked to compare the two designs.

"I opted not to play in the British Open this year," he said. "But I have played Carnoustie. And the Country Club is so entirely different. Carnoustie was a very difficult course before this year. The setup (for the Open) was amazing. It was unbelievable to watch it on TV. A links course like that, to me, should have a little more room to play. My gosh. So far as the shot values, Carnoustie remains one of the toughest courses in the world. The Country Club is a totally different proposition. Bill Flynn and Howard Toomey were two wonderful architects. It is very natural and they have beautifully depicted shot values on that terrain. Their bunkering is wonderful — the positions, the things you are required to do with the ball, the contouring. You feel you are playing against New England terrain."

Carnoustie has always been a harsher test of golf. There are some very difficult holes at The Country Club, but there are some very smallish greens. The bottom line is, their team and ours have their hands full playing that golf course."