

BRIEFS



GLOBAL GOLF MANAGEMENT ACQUIRES SHINING MOUNTAIN

WOODLAND PARK, Colo. — Global Golf Management LLC, doing business here as Shining Mountain Golf Club, has acquired the former Woodland Park Fujiki Golf and Country Club here. John F. Golden will be the managing principal of golf facilities. The championship golf course and clubhouse are open to the public for daily golf, outings and special events.

TROON GOLF NAMES SKELTON GM

PEORIA, Ariz. — Troon Golf named Paul Skelton general manager of Quintero Golf & CC here last month. Quintero, an upscale private course, is scheduled to be open for play on November 15. Skelton will be responsible for overseeing the balance of construction on the golf course and directing all operational functions of the facility.

EETEIME.COM ADDS COURSES

LA QUINTA, Calif. — Tee time reservation operator eTeeTime.com, has added to its reservations network with the signing of agreements covering Michigan, New Mexico and Florida.

Guerra, Pillsbury to lead American Golf charge

By ANDREW OVERBECK

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — In response to the challenges posed by the increasingly competitive course management industry, American Golf has named Joe Guerra and David Pillsbury to the posts of co-CEO. In their newly created positions, the golf industry veterans will be working to transform the company from an acquisitions-driven organization into a service and sales-driven organization domestically. Internationally, the company will be renewing efforts to expand through acquisitions.

"There is a de-emphasis on growth through acquisitions and more focus on capitalization of opportunities internally," said Guerra who has moved up from the execu-

tive vice president slot to lead American Golf.

Citing competition from the 400-plus new golf courses a year that have come on stream in the U.S. for several years running and market saturation in the top 20 metro areas, Guerra and Pillsbury have decided to adopt a "grow from within" strategy.

"One day we will be the beneficiary of the growth of this high-quality golf that has come online," said Guerra, who will focus his efforts on golf operations and business development. "But if you take a snapshot today it is not good because the added supply is putting pressure on the industry and the operators. With our inability to raise greens fees

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Joe Guerra



David Pillsbury

NGCOA teams with In-Touch to gauge player satisfaction

CHARLESTON, S.C. — The National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) is initiating a new golfer satisfaction program that will allow course owners to gauge customer satisfaction.

In-Touch Survey Systems, with clients including McDonald's, Holiday Inn and American Airlines, will provide NGCOA members with on-site, automated kiosks, which contain a brief customer satisfaction survey. The golfer uses an electronic pen to answer a

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McCumber Golf's Greystone GC in Dickson, Tenn.

McCumber Golf adds to stable

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — McCumber Golf Facility Management has added to its stable of courses in the Southeast with the purchase of The Course at Northgreen in Rocky Mount, N.C. McCumber Golf has opened the previously private facility to the public and is offering limited lifetime memberships.

"When the opportunity arose to purchase this course, we conducted several months of due diligence," said company CEO Jim McCumber. "There is very little competition in this market for an affordable daily fee course."

According to McCumber, the company will continue to take a measured approach to acquiring further properties.

"We are interested in courses that are turn-around opportunities," he said. "The strategy is to acquire courses that have either missed their mark or not been managed properly."

Northgreen is the perfect example of a course that McCumber thinks has missed its mark.

"The course is very solid. They have played 10 ACC (Atlantic Coast Conference) championships at Northgreen," he said. "It is also ideally located outside of Raleigh, off I-95."

The company is also looking to build and own more courses and has a couple of locations, including one in Florida, in mind.

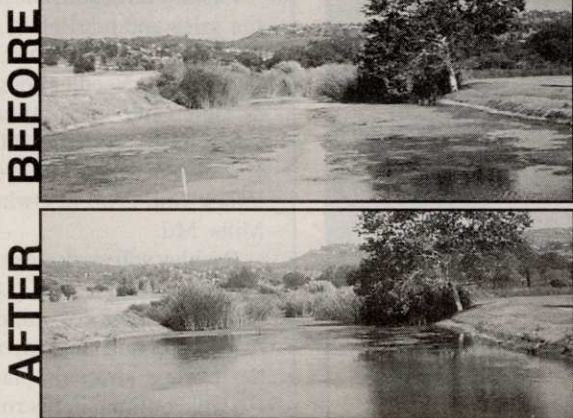
In addition to Northgreen, McCumber Golf manages The Course at Westland in Jacksonville and Greystone Golf Club in Dickson, Tenn.

— Andrew Overbeck

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American Golf

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and dues to achieve our annual growth of 15 to 20 percent, we are going to have to focus on getting more income per customer and do so by providing more services and value."

EMERGING BUSINESS

David Pillsbury will be in charge of these efforts, attacking what the pair calls "emerging business opportunities."

"If you think about the ability to generate revenue, you do three things," said Pillsbury. "One, attract new customers. We are doing this through our player development initiative, but it is a very slow process. Two, slow [member and player] attrition. We are doing this through frequency and loyalty programs and creating better value. And three, figuring out how to get each customer to spend more money with you."

To this end, American Golf will be spending some serious money to implement its three-year plan. The company plans to strategically reposition some of its 320 courses, converting some high-end daily-fee courses to private courses and converting some daily-fee courses to high-end courses. Food and beverage outlets will also be improved and golf shops will be revamped and renovated. A renewed emphasis will also be placed on employee retention and training efforts.

Rising guest and member expectations are forcing the company to make these changes, said Guerra.

"At the high end, customers want more service, more attention and more value. At the more modest courses it is all quality and value driven. The market is experiencing change, so we have to change," he said.

INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

While the focus in the U.S. market will be on sales and services, the company has put in place an ambitious growth-through-acquisition strategy to attack international markets.

Claiming that it is too difficult to peg the value of a course in the U.S. these days, Guerra is looking to grow the business through 15 to 20 international acquisitions a year.

"Overseas there is less competition, the capital is available and we are seeing significant growth in bringing the American Golf formula to foreign countries," he said. "We anticipate more than 50-percent growth coming from Japan, Australia and the UK within three years."

However, he has not ruled out acquiring more courses in the U.S. if market conditions change.

"Eventually those [new] courses will get sold and consolidated and we're going to be standing ready, willing and able to acquire those properties," said Guerra. ▶

NGCOA survey

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short list of questions, which measure their satisfaction with the condition of the course, pro shop selection, courtesy and efficiency of the staff, food and beverage quality and more. Results are then compiled and compared to industry standards.

After the survey period, the data is transmitted back to In-

Touch, and a report is generated and returned to the course within 10 business days. The report provides information on various aspects of the golfer's experience. It outlines those areas that met the golfer's expectations, as well as those that did not. The report also provides information on which elements of the golf experience are most important to the customer, including: staff friendliness, course maintenance and clean restrooms.

Also, owners and operators will be able to monitor and manage a change in performance," said Dave Sutin of In-Touch.

After all participating NGCOA courses have turned in their results, another report will be generated comparing individual course results to overall results, while maintaining confidentiality throughout. This index will allow owners to benchmark their individual performance against an industry standard.

"Using the survey motivates staff to be customer conscious.

Also, owners and operators will be able to monitor and manage a change in performance," said Dave Sutin of In-Touch.

Jay Karen, NGCOA director of membership, explained, "The information in this index becomes more valuable as more courses participate. The input from golfers is very important in creating better golf facilities, and we want our members to take advantage of this data." ▶



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