

Bauer designing course for casino property

TOWER, Minn. — Fortune Bay Resort Casino, owned and operated by the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, has hired Jeffrey D. Brauer of Golf Scapes as the designer for its proposed 18-hole championship golf course here.

"We are very excited to hire someone of Brauer's caliber to design the course at Fortune Bay," said Gary Gotchnik, chairman of the board for Bois Forte Enterprises. "Having Jeffrey as part of our development team confirms our commitment to making this a first-class golf course."

Brauer has already earned acclaim and name recognition in



Minnesota, turning hundreds of acres of former iron ore mines and sand and gravel quarries

into the state's highest-ranked public course at Giants Ridge in nearby Biwabik.

When it opened in 1997, Giants Ridge finished eighth in *Golf Digest's* ranking of the best new "upscale" public courses, and it is widely considered Minnesota's most successful resort course.

This success led Minnesota's Iron Range Resource and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) to hire the Arlington, Texas-based Brauer to design a second course near Giants Ridge.

LAKE FRONTAGE

The proposed golf course would be located on land adjacent to the casino, and Brauer predicts that the high drama of his course will correlate with the drama taking place in the casino.

"I am emphasizing gambling holes, while giving the golfer a good chance to, in this case, beat the designer," Brauer said. "This course will have some unique holes, and will definitely be very fun to play."

"Fortunately, I have lots to work with — some of the prettiest land in Minnesota, fronting on the prettiest lake in Minnesota, and with dramatic granite rock outcroppings, which I hope to feature in the design," Brauer added. "Also, at least one hole will border on Lake Vermilion and the lake will be visible from several holes."

BREAKING GROUND SOON

Preliminary planning and conceptual design work is scheduled to be completed this winter. Course construction could begin as early as next summer. Final approval is still needed by the Bois Forte Reservation Tribal Council. Public comment forms mailed to members of the Band show a three-to-one favorable

response for the project.

Fortune Bay planning director Andy Datko said the Bois Forte Band intends to accomplish two things with the golf course: add diversity to the resort, making it a family vacation getaway; and expand its

amenities for business meetings.

Datko said the tribe hopes to open the course in 2003. The casino has been in operation since 1986. The resort opened in 1996, featuring a hotel and conference center, marina, RV park and nature trails. A 12,000-square-foot cultural heritage center, focusing on the Bois Forte tribe, is currently under construction. It will open next June.

NGF offers satisfaction surveys

JUPITER, Fla. — The National Golf Foundation has introduced a "national customer satisfaction study" to provide consumer information to golf course facility owners and managers.

Designed with the input of several facility managers, the survey measures golfer satisfaction with various aspects of

golf course operations such as condition of greens, pace of play and tee time reservations. The study provides marketing and advertising information as well as competitive analysis.

"Member and non-member facilities of the NGF can all benefit from better understanding what their customers want," said

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USGA to fund new research projects

WASHINGTON — The United States Golf Association's (USGA) Turfgrass and Environmental Research Committee, meeting here recently, selected 15 new research projects for funding. The grants will total \$934,241 over the next three years.

Three of the selected studies focus on putting green construc-

tion. Four projects will examine the environmental impact of golf courses, and eight projects are related to turfgrass management techniques.

The largest of the grants was \$100,000 toward the On-site Evaluation of Golf Course Products: Wetting Agents, a project of the Golf Course Superinten-

dents Association of America (GCSAA). Rutgers University (course construction), University of Georgia (environmental impact), and Kansas State University (environmental impact) each received a \$90,000 grant for their respective projects, with KSU also being awarded \$89,985 for research in the field

of integrated turfgrass management.

These projects bring the USGA's research commitment to more than \$8 million for the 1998-2002 period. The funding also includes continued support for such USGA programs as Wildlife Links, the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program and the Turfgrass Information Center endowment.

From 1983 through 2002, the

USGA will have funded more than 215 projects at a cost of \$21 million. This

private, nonprofit research effort provides opportunities for university faculty interested in working on environmental and turf management problems affecting golf courses. More than 20 new turfgrass varieties, with improved water use or stress resistance, have already been produced.

The USGA research grants are funded on a five-year funding cycle. A call for proposals on the next cycle, beginning in 2003, will be made in late 2001 or early 2002.

Separately, the USGA said that its Foundation Grants Program (FGP) had awarded more than \$6.4 million through November 2000, distributed in 249 grants overall. Begun in 1997, the USGA's "For the Good of the Game" initiative is a 10-year, \$50-million commitment to making golf more accessible and affordable. The FGP targets golf programs across the country serving economically disadvantaged individuals with disabilities and minorities, as well as the construction of facilities created to help introduce the game to new audiences. To date, programs and projects in 47 states and the District of Columbia have received grants.



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NGF surveys

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Barry S. Frank, vice president of membership services. "This will enable facilities to better allocate funds for course conditioning or improvements and will also allow them to develop marketing initiatives based on their existing strengths."

The NGF works with facilities to design a product best suited to their needs. Course operators have the option of either Internet or standard survey versions.

Once the surveys are completed, they are returned to the NGF for analysis. A comprehensive report then shows how golf expectations are being met at the course as well as what key features are most important to the customer.

In a simple example, a key finding from the customer satisfaction study may be that although golfers find the condition of the facility's greens to be only average, a very small percentage may have stated that this is important to them. Information such as this may save a facility thousands of dollars or more in future planning. ■