Munegam breaks ground on Westchester County's first daily-fee course in 63 years

By PHILIP HALL

NEW CASTLE, N.Y. — It's been 63 years since a new public golf course opened for play here in Westchester County. Exclusive private clubs abound (there were 59 at last count), but a dense population and real estate prices gone berserk make the development of public-access facilities a virtual impossibility.

This shortage of affordable golf courses is something local players have come to accept. Indeed, the nation gained insight into this regional problem last year when The New York Times published a front-page story on the subject.

But help is on the way. Ground was broken in June at Hudson Hills Golf Course, an 18-hole daily-fee layout designed by architect Mark Munegam, a partner with Uxbridge, Mass.-based Cornish, Silva and Munegam, Inc. Developed by Westchester County itself, the course is scheduled to open for play in 2002.

"The main portion of the land we're using for Hudson Hills used to be a golf course," explained Munegam. "The club changed its name many times. It was called Pine Ridge when it opened in the 1920s, then Sunset Hills, then Pine Ridge again before it took the name Hudson Hills Golf Club in the mid-1960s."

The club shut its doors in 1982 and today the site is totally overgrown. "We've appropriated the most recent name for this new project," Munegam added, "but we've essentially designed a brand new golf course here, a completely new routing. This isn't a restoration; it's a reincarnation."

DUNES CLUB WRAPS UP $6-MILLION REHAB

MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. — The Dunes Golf and Beach Club has completed the final phase of its year-long, $6-million renovation project, which included renovations to the golf course and the clubhouse. The project, which began in April 2000, added more than 12,000 square feet to the member and guest areas of the clubhouse, doubled the size of the driving range, and modified the golf course. A new tee box was added on the 18th hole. The club also added an "alternate" hole between the 13th and 14th holes. The extra hole will be substituted when another hole is closed for maintenance.

VON HAGGE READIES 11TH MEXICAN COURSE

PUERTO VALLARTA, Mexico — The Texas-based golf architecture firm Von Hagge, Smelek and Baril is preparing for a fall 2001 opening of an 18-hole championship layout here at a gate-guarded development called Paradise Village Beach Resort & Spa. This will be Von Hagge's 11th course in Mexico, making it the most prolific course design company in the country. Mexico ranks second only to Hawaii as a golf destination for mainland Americans, and according to Von Hagge, the potential for golf in Mexico is "unlimited, and magnificent properties are still available in abundance."

The firm also has a new project under way in Genoa, Italy.