Cordillera Group to rehab Colorado's Crested Butte

By DOUG SAUNDERS

CRESTED BUTTE, Colo. — In a departure from its primary role as a developer, the Cordillera Group has taken on the ambitious task of revitalizing the flagging Crested Butte Golf Club.

The Cordillera Group has transformed itself into a golf management firm after the strong success of its first venture, the Cordillera Resort and Community near Vail. Since its opening in 1992, they have built four courses on the 6,500-acre site as well as creating high-end private clubs near Steamboat Springs, Colo., and Santa Rosa, California. The property at Crested Butte interested the group because of the unique atmosphere of the region and the possibility of incorporating the ski area property as an amenity for its club members around the state.

“We recognized immediately how special this property was and what a great value it represents in comparison to other Colorado ski towns,” explained Gerry Engle, CEO of Cordillera Group. In addition to beefing up the maintenance staff and budget, the firm has made more than $1 million in capital improvements including a major renovation of the clubhouse, an increase in the maintenance shop space, and the renovation and expansion of the driving range. Superintendent Steve Rau and Tim Taagen, director of golf course maintenance for the Cordillera Group, are also working on a series of projects to improve the water features, wetlands, and natural areas on the golf course itself.

WEATHERING TOUGH TIMES

Crested Butte Golf Club was built in 1982 in this ski town located in the southwest corner of the Colorado Rockies. The 7,208-yard course flows over a massive 550-acre site located at 9,000 feet above sea level. Architect Robert Trent Jones Jr. created a course with large fairways and well protected multi-tiered greens.

But like many other projects built in the mid-80’s, it suffered from some economic setbacks as the oil economy in neighboring Texas began to slow.

“Through the first ten years I worked here we had several club managers and the instability was felt in constricted budgets for maintenance,” said Steve Rau. “For years I worked with a crew of eight men. I would always develop plans for projects that I hoped to do some day, and

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BRIEFS

TROON NAMES TRUEBLOOD, PROMOTES MUNSON

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Troon Golf has named Richard L. Trueblood as the company’s new executive vice president and CFO. Trueblood came from Heritage Property Investment Trust, where he served as senior vice president, finance.

In a related action, the Troon also announced the appointment of financial officer Jon Munson of senior vice president, finance. Munson joined Troon Golf in 1992 following a stint with Ernst and Young.

EADE COMES ABOARD AT LEGACY

SARASOTA, Fla. — Chuck Eade has joined the Legacy Golf Club at The Country Club at Lakewood Ranch as the new general manager. He comes to Legacy with 23 years of experience in the golf business and 20 years as a PGA member. He has been with Troon Golf, owners of Legacy, since 1999.

CLUBLINK ADDS SAHI TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

KING CITY, Ontario, Canada — ClubLink Corp. has appointed Rai Sahi to its board of directors. Sahi, the president and chief executive officer of Ackton Corp., a public real estate and property management firm, acquired five million common shares of ClubLink in early September.

INTRAWEST GOLF NAMES LANCOT

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — IntraWest Golf has appointed Jim Lanctot director of revenue management and product development. Lanctot comes to IntraWest from IntraWest Corp. where he was the director of business for IntraWest Vacations.

Textron signs pact with Meadowbrook Golf

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Textron Golf, Turf & Specialty Products has signed a five-year agreement with Meadowbrook Golf and its subsidiary International Golf Maintenance to be the exclusive provider of golf cars, turf equipment and specialty vehicles at all of Meadowbrook's facilities throughout the United States.

Meadowbrook Golf owns, leases, manages or maintains more than 100 golf facilities throughout the United States. Through its wholly owned subsidiary International Golf Maintenance, the largest agronomic provider in the U.S., Meadowbrook offers its golf properties comprehensive golf course maintenance services.

“With the addition of Meadowbrook,” said David Davis, E-Z-GO's director of national accounts, “E-Z-GO now has an exclusive relationship with nine of the top 10 golf course management companies in the world, including American Golf, with more than 320 golf properties worldwide and ClubCorp, with more than 220 properties worldwide.”

Meadowbrook had previously had an exclusive agreement with Yamaha Golf Cars.

EDITORIAL

Irrigation Equipment and Focus: System Leasing

Irrigation financing options increasing

By ANDREW OVERBECK

When it comes to installing a new golf course irrigation system and pump station, more courses are exploring leasing and financing options. Many irrigation companies now offer various financing services that focus primarily on the renovation market.

Toro Program Surging

Toro offers one of the most extensive financing and leasing programs in the industry. The program, which was unveiled in 1999, has grown steadily over the past two years.

“The trend is certainly going more towards financing on the renovation side,” said Kristina Spindler, golf marketing manager for irrigation. “When we kicked this off we had one-in-twelve courses financing their projects. Now it is roughly four out of 12 courses.

The company leases items that have residual value such as satellite control systems and offers straight financing on la-

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FOCUS: Irrigation Equipment and System Leasing

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1999

% OF TORO'S IRRIGATION SYSTEM RENOVATIONS THAT WERE FINANCED

2001

33.3

Source: The Toro Co.
Irrigation financing
Continued from page 20

and sales. "We do not do many of these
with new courses because they do not
have established track records."

"We are focusing on the renovation
market," added Spindler, "because one of
the major deterrents to renovating exist-
ing systems is cost. We need to let courses
know that they can get financing for things
like irrigation."

Deere Run Golf and Tennis Club in
Lincoln Park, N.J. recently financed a
Toro irrigation system because the by-
laws of its association would not let the
club go into debt.

"We couldn't go out and get a loan for
the system," said golf committee mem-
ber Ronald Kraft. "So we leased it. It is a
five-year lease, the club will buy the sys-
tem for a dollar.

Since the bulk of Toro distributors also
represent pump station maker Flowtronex, the company can offer a pack-
age deal on all irrigation components.

"We work closely with Flowtronex and
other vendors such as irrigation consult-
ants and installers," said Snow.

Toro's program is handled by San Fran-
cisco-based Bank Group Financial Ser-
dices which offers customized services.

"With irrigation there are a lot of vari-
able," said Bank Group's Mike Meacher.
"It is not like golf cars or turf equipment
that have a high residual at the end." 

Meacher estimates that just five per-
cent of all irrigation systems are financed
each year, but said the market will grow.

"Renovating the irrigation system on
an 18 hole course is more expensive than
a new fleet of golf cars or turf equipment," he said. "With technology always im-prov-
ing there is little incentive to leave a
system in the ground for 30 years. There
are more reasons to upgrade."

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

To convince clubs that financing an
irrigation system makes sense, Meacher
breaks it down on a cost-per-member ba-
sis. "We go in and say, 'You can get the
system for a $4,000 assessment per mem-
er, or you can finance it and raise
monthly dues by $47,'" he said. "When
they look at it that way, one-third pay
the assessment and two-thirds opt for the
monthly payments."

To encourage clubs to do work in the
off-season, Toro just introduced a six
month, no interest, no payment plan.

"This allows courses to do the work in
the fall and winter when there is less play,
and not have to worry about payments
during a time when revenues are lower," said Snow. "They don't have to make
payments until the revenue kicks in in
the spring."

Snow expects leasing and financing to
keep increasing in popularity.

"As courses get more comfortable and
familiar with these options, I think more
will take advantage," he said. paginate