**Hills, Forrest see building market heating up**

**By Derek Rice**

TOLEDO, Ohio — While many in the golf industry talk about the future of the development resting in the area of renovation, Steve Forrest of Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest and Associates said his firm has seen an upswing in the number of new projects it’s being asked to bid.

“New work went on hold between June and December last year, but I’ve seen a change in the last four weeks, where people are starting to move forward with new projects,” Forrest said.

That’s not to say that renovation numbers aren’t a little higher than normal.

“When I counted up the renovation projects we had, we do have quite a few,” Forrest said. “It still probably accounts for 50 percent of the projects. It may be 30 to 40 percent at other times.”

The size and scope of the projects the firm is working on recently, such as the first nine holes of a 27-hole renovation at Ivanhoe Country Club in Ivanhoe, Ill., has increased as well, which Forrest said may be another indicator that the industry is turning around.

“There seem to be more extensive renovations these days than perhaps there would have been in the past,” he said. “Most of them are rebuilding the majority if not all of their greens, certainly all the bunkers and upgrading the tee complexes with too many exceptions.”

In total, the firm is handling about 15 renovation projects, five or six of which—in varying stages—are Forrest’s responsibility.

There are two main reasons course owners look to renovate, Forrest said.

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**Houston development boom leads to renovations**

**By Derek Rice**

HOUSTON — Like most places in the country, the Houston area has seen a lot of golf course development in the last decade. As a result, most of the projects that were underway now, according to Richard Luikens, a consultant for Richard Luikens Golf Services, are renovations.

“In the Houston area, we’ve had such an influx in the last five to seven years. Thirty to 40 new facilities have opened up, and they’re not tapering off,” Luikens said. “I can only think of three golf courses that are under construction in the Houston area right now, and there is not a lot of talk of many more.”

One Luikens project that is underway is a renovation of Lakeside Country Club. The $2 million project broke ground on Feb. 11 and has a reopening target date of July 15. The project includes complete renovation of the greens, replacement of the entire concrete cart path system and expansion of the irrigation system. Luikens is working with general contractor Wadsworth Construction, architect Ron Prichard and superintendant Terry Hutcherson on the project.

“The timetable is important,” Luikens said, because until mid-July the club’s membership has no place to play.

“We spent a lot of time and effort putting the schedules together and getting the contractor in place and the materials in place so that we can turn the golf course back to the membership in a very short time,” he said.

At the moment, members are forced to

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**Spencer building the course of his dreams**

**By Derek Rice**

TOLEDO, Ohio — Denny Spencer of Spencer Golf Concepts will be the first to tell you that. The Golf Club at Saddlehorn, an upscale public golf course, decided to go out on its own last year and move forward with new projects,” Forrest said.

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**Pistol Creek looks to videotape**

**By John Torriello**

BERLIN, Conn. — The owners of recently opened Pistol Creek Golf Club here have come up with unique marketing strategies to make play more enjoyable and keep golfers at the club once they finish their rounds.

Pistol Creek, which opened this month, has cameras located near the 18th green that capture approach shots and action around the hole. The tape is shown on a 15-minute delay in the club’s restaurant and lounge.

“It’s a fun thing to do,” said Gary Schiarrillo, president of the Milford-based GRS Group, which developed, owns and manages the new course. “Whether you have had a great round or a mediocre one, being able to go into the grill room and watch yourself finish extends your round a little longer. To my knowledge it isn’t being done anywhere else.”

The owners of Pistol Creek say they have further made their course player-friendly by limiting the total number of annual rounds to around 29,000 to ensure speedy play.

“We are limiting the rounds because we want people to get around the course in no longer than four and a half hours,” said Schiarrillo, whose company was the consultant and project manager for Great River Golf Club in Milford.

“We’re taking a more long-range view rather than filling as many tee times as possible. We want to have a pleasurable experience and come back.”

To monitor pace of play, cameras will be installed at several key locations on the course. Golfers will not be let out until the previous group is on the first green. Rangers will patrol the course displaying a series of flags informing groups of their pace.

“We feel the flag system is a non-confrontational way to handle course patrol,” said Schiarrillo. “Green means everything is OK, yellow means you’re a little slow, and red means pick it up and move to the next group.”

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**Architect Denny Spencer modeled the entrance to The Golf Club at Saddlehorn after a Kentucky thoroughbred farm.**

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Pistol Creek innovates
Continued from page 14
next hole."
The course will also provide cad-
die service to golfers requesting it,
and plans to add a few new twists in
their food and beverage operation.
Schiarrillo said Pistol Creek,
so named because the course
sits on the site of the state’s first
pistol factory, was designed with
the average player in mind.
"The majority of golfers are in
the 10 to 25 handicap range. We
wanted to make Pistol Creek a
place where those golfers would
be challenged and not be over-
whelmed," he said.
The result is a course filled
with modest sized holes with
generous fairways and gently
contoured greens. The course
presently measures just 6,450
yards from the back tees, al-
though there are plans to stretch
it to around 6,800 yards.
"We designed this course from
the middle tee boxes," said
Schiarrillo, a former tennis pro
turned golf nut. "We have par fours
that many players can try and drive
and par fives they can try and
reach in two. They might not do it,
but they’ll have fun trying."
Pistol Creek, however, is no
pushover. There are a number
of forced carries off the tee box
and from the fairway, with ample
wetlands lining a number of
holes. The layout places a pre-
mium on accuracy and proper
club selection.
Schiarrillo, Phil Katz, an em-
ployee of GRS, and representa-
tives of Vero Golf of Vero Beach,
Fla., were involved in the
course’s development. The Con-
necticut firm Site and Earth
Technologies assisted GRS in
the construction of the course.
The owners of Pistol Creek
have kept greens fees in the mod-
erate range, $65 on weekends and
$55 on weekdays, cart included.
A limited number of member-
ships are being offered in the
club’s initial year of operation.
The course has bentgrass
greens, fairways and tee boxes
with bluegrass/fescue rough.
There are two practice facilities
on the property, including a golf
learning center directed by noted
teaching professional T.J. Tomasi.
Looking ahead, Schiarrillo
gave GRH approval to build a
course to be known as
Waterwheel on 380 acres of land
in the Great Gorge area of north-
west New Jersey.

Building rebound
Continued from page 14
The first is to remain competitive
with the upscale public courses
that have emerged.
"I think [the clubs] felt the
effect of some members who in-
stead of paying monthly dues
just go play some of these new
upscale public courses and have
the same experience and more
variety," Forrest said.
The second reason revolves
around some sort of problem with
green complexes and other cos-
metic-type issues, Forrest said.
"Perhaps [the green com-
plexes] were constructed many
years ago and have just deterio-
rated or they are rebuilding them
so the superintendent will have
the best possible growing  me-
dium to grow grass," he said.
As for the future of new
courses, Forrest said his firm is
optimistic that the demand will
return sooner rather than later.
"We’re just starting to see
some new inquiries in 2002.
We’re encouraged by what’s
been happening here," he said.