



BRIEFS

AAGMC SEEKING MEMBERS

LAWRENCE, Kan. — The American Association of Golf Management Companies (AAGMC) has kicked off its first ever membership drive and has hired Cynthia K. Smith as its executive director.



The association was formed in 2000 and made its debut this fall.

The association will be active in lobbying efforts, undertaking joint efforts to address legal issues, and improving industry reporting. Members of the AAGMC advisory board include: M.G. Orender, president of Hampton Golf; Bob Barrett, CEO of Honours Golf; Tom Martty, president of Martty Golf Management; Gil Patterson, president of Caliber Golf; and Brent Krause, general manager of the Wynlakes Golf and Country Club in Montgomery, Ala.

ONCOURSE STRATEGIES LAUNCHED

AUSTIN, Texas — Robert E. Kuhlman and J. Michael Ussery have formed OnCourse Strategies. The firm will offer professional services to the golf and real estate industries including transaction services, brokerage, valuations, lender support and operational consulting. Kuhlman is the former head of the GolfTax division of Deloitte & Touche and Ussery is a former vice president with ClubCorp.

EMPIRE GOLF NAMES FREESWICK

POMONA, N.Y. — Empire Golf has appointed Brian Freeswick as general manager of the new Branton Woods Golf Club in Hopewell, N.Y. Located north of New York City in Dutchess County, the 18-hole public layout was designed by Eric Bergstol, founder and president of Empire Golf. Freeswick previously served as general manager at the Brigantine Golf Club in Atlantic City, N.J.

HEGARTY JOINS ALISAL

SOLVANG, Calif. — Michael Hegarty has been appointed director of golf at the Alisal Guest Ranch and Resort here. Hegarty will manage the daily golf operations of the property's two par-72, 18-hole courses. He comes to Alisal from ClubCorp where he operated three public and semi-private clubs in Southern California.

AGC to double learning center commitment

By PETER BLAIS

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — With rounds, revenues and the economy flagging, a program that expects to create 30,000 new golfers this year is the type of good news the golf industry sorely needs.

"If half the public courses in America achieved half those results, we would easily achieve the goals put forth in the Golf 20/20 initiative to create more than a million new golfers a year," said American Golf Corporation co-CEO David Pillsbury of the management company's Nike Golf Learning Centers. "That would benefit all of us — operators, manufacturers, and others."

AGC is so convinced of the importance of creating new golfers that it is pressing forward with its \$3-million Nike Golf Learning Center program in the face of some difficult financial times of its own (see story on page 1).

"In a company that wasn't thinking strategically about its business, I could see a program like the Nike Golf Learning Centers being cut," Pillsbury said. "But we're actually doubling our investment. We're spending more in one year [2002] than we did in the previous four."

Nike Golf Learning Centers are operating at 50 American Golf-operated facilities, with another 50 planned to open in the next 12 months.

"They are located where we have our largest concentration of golf courses, major metropolitan areas primarily in the Sun Belt," Pillsbury said. "The new ones will be similarly located. We started out West and the expansion will be primarily into the East and Midwest. The more mature centers are doing very well — a couple in Southern California, a couple in Northern California and one in Chicago. Those are typically larger facilities with a strong population within a 10-mile radius. They are usually connected to a golf course."

TEE IT UP 1

The Learning Centers combine traditional golf fundamentals

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Editorial Focus: Golf Cars

Car makers optimistic despite slowdown

By ANDREW OVERBECK

The economic slowdown, the events of Sept. 11, stagnant levels of participation and a sharp downturn in new golf construction have combined to create tremendous uncertainty in the marketplace. However, while most golf car makers report that buyers have deferred or delayed purchases in the last few months, some are cautiously optimistic about 2002.



Dewey Holland

"There has been some softness in the market as buyers go back and look at their fourth quarter balance sheets," said Dewey Holland, Club Car's vice president and business manager for golf. "New construction starts are down, but we look at the age of fleets and the fact that people understand the value of new cars and the quality they bring to the image of the course. We are cautiously optimistic about 2002."

Lower interest rates and other leasing incentives are also driving car maker's confidence.

"The irony of the whole thing [customers delaying purchases] is that financing costs are at an all time low," said Todd Sauey, president of Columbia Par Car. "They can lock in at rates that will not go any lower."

To help customers justify the purchase of a new fleet of vehicles, car makers are working to introduce new products, add new features and roll out new concepts.

CLUB CAR

Club Car formally launched its new IQ System in July and 2001 sales quickly exceeded the company's expectations, said Holland. This year its cars will all come with the

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GMI oversaw the construction of Joe Lee's Musket Ridge Golf Club in Myersville, Md.

GMI expands golf operations division

By ANDREW OVERBECK

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Golf course design and construction management specialist, Golf Management Inc., has expanded its list of services to include golf course operations.

GMI was founded in 1999 by president Chris Wilkerson who spent 10 years as a vice president and director of construction for the PGA Tour. Wilkerson has steadily added to his team that consists of golf course architect Tim Freeland, ASGCA, and operations manager Rich Hohman. The firm cleared \$47 million in revenue last year and now has 26 employees.

"We hired Hohman last year to go after third party management contracts," said Wilkerson. "We see an opportunity to pick up after some management companies that

are dropping projects. If we can get them for a reasonable sum, step up the operations and maintenance, then we can bring good projects back to profitability."

MANY POTS IN THE FIRE

Wilkerson hopes that its design and construction management divisions will also turn into management deals. The company currently has several construction projects underway including: Pete Dye's Wintonbury Hills Golf Club in Bloomfield, Conn.; Tim Freeland's Old Hickory Golf Club in Prince William County, Va.; and Lighthouse Links in Freeport, Grand Bahama Island. The company also recently opened Joe Lee's Musket Ridge Golf Club in Myersville, Md.

Hohman said the pooling of resources

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KSL acquires La Costa Resort

SAN DIEGO — KSL Recreation Corp. has added another marquee resort to its portfolio with the acquisition of La Costa Resort and Spa in Carlsbad.

The group bought the famed resort from an affiliate of Japan's Sports Shinko for an undisclosed amount. Sports Shinko bought the property in 1987 for approximately \$250 million.

The expansive 479-room resort is set on 400 acres in the coastal foothills north of San Diego. It features two 18-hole Dick Wilson and Joe Lee-designed golf courses, a spa and a tennis center. Additionally, the resort offers meeting, convention and banquet facilities.

"We are proud to include La Costa Resort and Spa in our family of signature resorts," said Scott Dalecio, president of KSL's resort division. Dalecio added that KSL plans to embark on an ambitious improvement plan for the property.

To oversee that work, KSL has named Ted Axe to the post of vice president and general manager at La Costa. Axe will make the transition from his current role as vice president and general manager of KSL's Claremont Resort & Spa in Northern California.

HMS Golf bulks up portfolio

By ANDREW OVERBECK

ATLANTA — HMS Golf has aggressively entered the golf course management arena, adding six courses to its portfolio in the last 18 months. The company, which began in 1983 as a development and construction concern, continued its strong push in November adding two more properties and is looking to sign another five to six facilities in the next two months.

Early in the month, the firm added to its growing stable of Atlanta area courses with the signing of Gold Creek Golf Club in Dawsonville, and it picked up another property in South Carolina at Island West Golf Club in Hilton Head to close out the month.

"We are telling our clients not to build courses right now," said HMS Golf's director of business development James Haslam. "The market is not favorable."

The company's only construction project this year is the Cider Ridge Golf Club in Oxford, Ala. The semi-private layout, designed by Bill Bergen, will open in March. "It was a tough, hilly piece of property," said Haslam. "The course is well positioned 45 minutes north of Birmingham and is close to the Robert Trent Jones golf trail."

Haslam sees a lot of opportunity in ex-

panding into course management. "The worse the golf market is, the better we seem to do," he said. "We are a cost and profit oriented company. It is easier for us to make money than it is for an individual owner."

HMS Golf offers cooperative advertising and marketing and runs a reciprocal program for its Atlanta-area courses that Haslam said has been a huge selling point for memberships.

TURN AROUND AT GOLD CREEK

While Haslam reports that existing courses in the portfolio are doing well this year, the firm's new additions will take some turn around work.

"At Gold Creek we changed out the general manager and superintendent," he said. "In a turn around deal you often have employees that lack leadership. We put in new management and will retrain the workers."

The new superintendent Eric Daughtry will be charged with improving course conditions and Joe Rullan will take over the general manager reigns.

For now, HMS will continue with its strategy of hiring strong on-site managers, but Haslam admitted that they will need to add staff as they expand.

"We have been small enough that we have not had to put in regional managers," he said. "But we will as we get larger."



Editorial Focus: Golf Cars

Underground golf car facility saves money, increases efficiency

By JOEL JOYNER

PLYMOUTH, Mass. — Here at the Pinehills Golf Club, Centennial Golf Properties saved money and established a more efficient operation by installing an underground golf car facility. The facility is in the basement of the clubhouse and has enough car storage to handle two 18-hole courses.

"Right now we have 85 cars which we used last year for our new 18-hole Rees Jones Course, but there will be 160 cars available in the storage area by the time our second course [an 18-hole Nicklaus Design layout] opens this May," said head pro John Tuffen. "It allows the cars to be easily accessed and keeps them in great condition."

The 13,000-square-foot clubhouse was designed by the Childs Bertman Tseckares architectural firm of Boston, and Club Car was involved in the base-ment design for the car facility.

"It's in the basement of the clubhouse with ramp access leading out one side of the building," said Larry Boudreau, project manager for Centennial Golf. "We built retaining walls around it, and those

retaining walls are the foundation for the clubhouse."

The original plan was to have two buildings with the car barn as a separate structure, according to David Leibowits, vice president for Centennial Golf. "Our initial concerns were about the grades. Once we managed to get the grades to coincide with the building of the clubhouse, we decided it was the most efficient way to operate."

Ceiling-mounted electric boxes allow for quick recharging of multiple cars. "There's a steel-framed grid hanging from the basement ceiling that has wire and piping running to all of the outlets," Leibowits said.

When golfers approach the Pinehills entranceway, they're directed toward the bag drop area with a pavilion structure where they are welcomed, explained Leibowits. "The bags are dropped off and players park and make their way to the pro shop."

"Once they check-in, they head toward the driving range on the other side of the building where their cars and bags are waiting for them," he said. "It's very functional."

Car manufacturers

Continued from previous page

IQ option that lets courses run diagnostics on and customize the performance of their fleets.

"Through the hand-held controller, you can analyze any system failures and change settings for speed and acceleration and braking sensitivity," said Holland. More than a third of its customers have ordered the system on new vehicles.

The company is also following up on leads created by its partnership with GPS provider, UpLink. The system is currently on 42 courses and the alliance fits in with the company's overall solutions-based selling strategy, said Holland.

"We are looking at improving a course's profitability," he said. "Our 1-PASS is a handicapped vehicle that expands the market, the CAFÉ Express beverage car offers more revenue capacity, and the GPS system offers the ability to add to revenues and profits."

YAMAHA

In addition to implementing its five year warranty program this year, Yamaha Golf Cars is working on new products that are slated to roll out of its new factory in Newnan, Ga., later this summer.

At this year's trade shows, president Bill Szarowicz said the company will showcase some "exciting concepts for the future" along the lines of its new "tougher than golf" marketing strategy.

"The Battle Ready Vehicle (BRV) that OGIO introduced earlier this year was based on a Yamaha car and fits well into our plan," he said. "We will have some similar looking things in our display," he

said. "We are supplying OGIO with 200 to 300 of our cars for the BRV concept."

While Szarowicz declined to comment on how many of these concepts will make it to production, he said new products will be unveiled in July.

E-Z-GO

E-Z-GO is pinning its 2002 efforts on increasing the market's awareness of its GPS system that is provided through an alliance with ProLink.

"When you consider that a lot of courses are struggling right now with revenue generation and differentiation, we have shown that ProLink can be a helpful tool to a golf course," said Ron Skenes, marketing communications coordinator for E-Z-GO.

The system is currently used by more than 200 courses. Skenes said the company expects the increasing popularity of GPS to drive sales.

"Golf car fleets are still revenue generators even in tough economic times," he said. "We need to educate the market on the value that GPS adds."

The company is still working on its Eagle adaptive golf car that is expected to be ready for the market this year.

COLUMBIA PAR CAR

Columbia's newest car with the ACE EPS using permanent magnet technology went into production in June and is currently in use on six golf courses across the country. According to president Todd Sauey, the reaction from the marketplace has been positive. He expects the product to sell well during its first full season of availability.

Sauey said the new car is lighter and more efficient than previous cars while offering the same amount of torque as a gasoline model. ■



Yamaha powers OGIO's BRV

PGA of America expands employment services

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. — The PGA of America has expanded its online employment services to include PGA CareerNet and PGA CareerLinks.

On the Web site, www.PGAEmployment.com, the CareerNet service allows employers

to make job postings that will be made available to interested PGA professionals. The complimentary search service, PGA CareerLinks, was created to help employers locate PGA general managers, directors of golf, head professionals and other key management staff.

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