

BRIEFS

THIRD-GENERATION AULT PROMOTED TO PARTNER

KENSINGTON, Md. — Ault, Clark and Associates Ltd. has promoted Eric Ault to partner. Ault follows his father, Brian Ault, who is currently president of the firm, and grandfather, Edmund Ault, who founded the firm in 1958. Eric Ault joined the firm a little more than 10 years ago, and has participated in the design of many projects, including Worthington Manor Golf Club in Urbana, Md., and two courses for the State of Kentucky Parks Department. He is currently working on projects in China, Costa Rica and Honduras.

STONERIDGE RE-OPENS REVAMPED NINE

BLANCHARD, Idaho — In early May, semi-private Stoneridge Country Club reopened nine of the 18 holes it had under renovation as part of a \$3 million project. The course had been closed for 13 months, after the new owners decided the course needed major renovation of its tees, greens, bunkers and irrigation systems. Three new holes have been constructed and the course has been lengthened slightly. At press time, the club expected the remaining nine holes to reopen by Memorial Day.

CROWN TO RENOVATE NORTHDAL

TAMPA, Fla. — The Northdale Golf Club closed in early May for renovation, which includes the rebuilding of all 18 greens, numerous bunkers and the repaving of cart paths. Weather permitting, Crown Golf Properties, which manages the club, hopes to reopen the course by Oct. 1. The total cost of the improvements should be in the neighborhood of \$750,000. While the course is shut down, members will be able to play for a discount at one of two local clubs, and Crown has suspended monthly dues and extended prepaid memberships.

DYE BREAKS GROUND ON PRESERVE

JUPITER, Fla. — In early May, architect Pete Dye broke ground on The Dye Preserve, which he called the "chance of a lifetime." In less than seven months, the Cypress Links course, which Dye designed in 1988, will be transformed within its existing routing plan. The 175-acre Dye Preserve will reside in a park-like setting 30 minutes from Palm Beach.

Lehman renovation close to home

By DEREK RICE

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — PGATour golfer Tom Lehman's latest project as an architect hits close to home. Lehman's firm, John Fought-Tom Lehman Golf Course Architecture, is renovating DC Ranch, where Lehman lives off the 10th green.

While Lehman admitted that the firm's hiring probably had much to do with marketing, his familiarity with the course played a big part in the decision.

"I've played the course so many times, I have a really good idea of what its strengths and weaknesses are," Lehman said. "The owner would like the course to be a little stronger, and it's really fun for me to be a part of making it that way."

The renovation at the course, which opened in 1997, is being performed by



John Fought and Tom Lehman at DC Ranch.

Landscapes Unlimited. It centers on the course's greens and bunkers. Lehman said the greens "really were not functioning well" and were in poor condition most of the time. The bunkers, he said, were nearly invisible because the tall, wispy prairie grass that had been planted to mark them had to be removed.

"It's both good and bad," Lehman said. "It's bad in the fact that the course is so new and it's a shame to have to redo them so quickly, but it's good in the fact that there were some things that weren't working and will be better in the future."

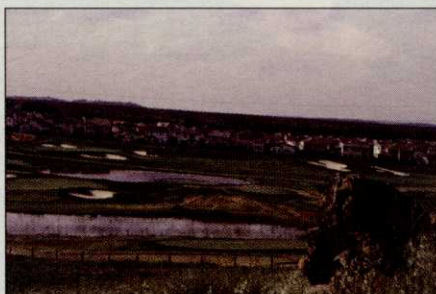
"It had nothing to do with previous architecture," Lehman added. "It was strictly a function of the greens failing for whatever reason."

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Long-delayed course set to open

By DOUG SAUNDERS

FOLSOM, Calif. — Empire Ranch Golf Club, the most recent entry into the public golf market in California opened in May after seven years of fits and starts to bring a public venue to one of the last underserved regions of the state. Not surprisingly, the course will be very different from its



Folsom, Calif.-based Empire Ranch opened in May, seven years after its original planning.

original plans.

Those plans for the 1,800-acre Empire Ranch called for an upscale master-planned community with two golf courses surrounded by 3,500 home sites. The original developers commissioned Ron Fream of Golf Plan to design and build the courses. But as the plan went through

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Stoneleigh completes improvements

By DEREK RICE

LOUDON COUNTY, Va. — Stoneleigh Golf Club has completed most of the \$1 million capital-enhancement program it began last fall. All that remains, according to Joe Cieri, the club's general manager, is the retagging of sprinkler heads and some bridge and cart path work.

Among the enhancements were adding 13 new sand bunkers, constructing new tee boxes, adding a four million-gallon pond that stores water for irrigation and expanding the irrigation system to the practice facility landing area and several areas in the rough on the course.

Stoneleigh sought the improvements after polling its members on their desires for the club, said Joe Goodrich, vice president of Viena, Va.-based Billy Casper Golf Management, which has managed the facility since it opened 11 years ago.

"We surveyed the members, and these were the things they said would enhance

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ACE brings corporate golf to Philly

Gary Player-designed course to serve as marketing tool

By DEREK RICE

LAFAYETTE HILL, Pa. — As more and more corporations look for ways to set themselves apart from their competitors and market themselves uniquely, many are turning to corporate-oriented golf courses as a means to accomplish those goals.

One of those corporations is ACE INA Holdings Inc., a Philadelphia-based insurer, which is currently developing The ACE Club, a Gary Player-designed course 25 minutes from downtown Philadelphia. Slated for a mid-2003 opening, the club will serve a valuable purpose in the company's marketing initiatives, said Dominic Frederico, chairman and CEO of ACE INA.

"Golf has proven to be a critical and effective component of our company's marketing initiatives," Frederico said. "In the

Pellucid hopes to challenge rounds numbers

By DEREK RICE

BUFFALO GROVE, Ill. — The traditional way of looking at golf rounds numbers, which are put out by the National Golf Foundation, Golf Datatech and others, doesn't tell the real story, according to Jim Koppenhaver of Pellucid Corp., because grouping metropolitan areas by geography ignores many important factors. The result, he said, is that no one knows for certain how many rounds of golf are played in the United States.

"It fascinates me that we work in a golf industry where no one can tell you how many rounds were played last year. That's bizarre, and we're going to try to fix that," Koppenhaver said.

Koppenhaver said the major fallacy is to group metropolitan areas like San Antonio, Texas, the proposed home of a PGA Village that has caused controversy in that city (see page 1), by geography, rather than economic factors.

"If you use the Texas numbers for San Antonio, you get this humongous rounds potential number," he said. "But what we know about San Antonio doesn't seem to suggest that it should be a raging market for golf courses."

Another issue Koppenhaver has with the NGF's numbers is that they are based on consumer survey responses, which he said he has shown to be traditionally 15 percent to 20 percent too high.

What Pellucid does is group cities into metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), which are based not on geography but on rounds per household.

"What we found is that there are MSAs

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Warren Henderson and Gary Player on-site at the ACE Club.

insurance business, like most others, customer relationships are key factors in business success. We believe the ACE Club

will serve as a tool for members to use in strengthening those relationships."

While this will be the company's first golf course ownership venture, it is not ACE's first foray into the golf business. For the last five years, the company has

sponsored the ACE Group Classic, a Senior PGA Tour event held in Naples, Fla.

Player, who collaborated on the work with senior design associate Warren Henderson, said because of the course's setting, the ACE Club will be a "testament to strategic design" that will "consistently capture every golfer's interest."

Playing surfaces will include bentgrass tees, fairways and greens, with bluegrass

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Fought-Lehman

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DMB Golf, which developed and owns the club and surrounding community, recently opened a second course not too far from DC Ranch. Lehman said one of the motivations to improve DC Ranch was to prevent DMB's two properties from competing with one another. The company realized that in its current state, the course would run a distant second to the new property, Lehman said.

"If you want to be able to compete with the other clubs in the area, you have to have greens that are going to be as good, as firm and as fast as possible," he said.

Because of his touring schedule, Lehman said this project, as well as the firm's other projects — three in Arizona, one in California and two in Minnesota — are convenient for him.

"Having these projects at home is extremely convenient because I can spend three or four hours a day making sure the bunkers are being done right and I can spend the afternoon practicing," Lehman said. "The other projects work out well because I usually visit them either when I'm leaving to go to a tournament or I'm coming from a tournament. So I'm visiting those places either once a week or once every two weeks."

Lehman said he prides himself on being very involved in each project the firm takes on, which is one reason he and Fought have limited the number of their projects.

"This isn't a hobby or something I do in my spare time, this is my second career. I've been extremely involved in every project that we have done," Lehman said. "We don't do many, only enough where I feel I can continue to work on my game the way I want to."

Lehman said he got into architecture because it was something that interested him, and that the thrill he gets from watching his conceptualizations become reality matches that of sinking a long putt.

"I just love watching a guy get in a 'dozer and shape a bunker," he said. "I could sit there all day long watching them build a big bunker."

Lehman said his firm brings a unique perspective because both have been professional golfers and architects, with Fought bringing a deep knowledge of architecture as well.

"He's very skilled and proficient not only in playing but in design," Lehman said. "We have somebody in our office who understands completely all the phases of design and all the nuts and bolts, yet is a great player. That's such a nice blend, and I think that's the strength our office offers." ■

Establishing long-range priorities

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funding requirements. This tricky phase can sometimes sink a project, so be cautious to use conservative numbers that can be justified with realistic quotations. Setting up bid specifications that will provide the best turf in a short time-frame is essential to a renova-

tion project. With all the basics in place, the task of selling the membership on protecting their "investment" became the main focus of the golf course management team and the greens committee.

We chose to initiate small focus group gatherings and added another series of small

general membership meetings to explain the entire process, because technical questions about turfgrasses and soil mixes cannot be absorbed by most golfers in a quick newsletter or memorandum. The ultimate communication phase of the program began with the smaller meetings which allowed members to ask intelligent questions in

an informal setting. We were able to personally address the questions and concerns of approximately 20 percent of the membership during this year-long "marketing" phase.

In the next issue of *Golf Course News*, we will focus on some of the bumps in the road we encountered and how the bidding process became the final sales tool. ■



Landscape architecture by Toscanini.
Ornamentals by Monrovia.
Turf by Confront.

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