Lehman renovation close to home

By DEREK RICE

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — PGA Tour 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 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 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. “I’m tied in the fact that the course is so new and it’s a shame to have to redo them so quickly, but it’s also unique, many rounds of golf are played in the United States.

“If you use the Texas numbers for 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.

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

“So what we found is that there are MSAs

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, 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 there’s a new 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.

“The original development of the ACE Club will serve a valuable purpose in the company’s marketing initiatives, said Dominic Frederico, chairman and CEO of ACE INA.

“ACE brings corporate golf to Philly

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 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 corporate marketing initiatives,” Frederico said. “In the

Stoneleigh completes improvements

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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 polluting members on their desires for the course, 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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John Fought and Tom Lehman at DC Ranch.

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Some MSAs share similar geographies, while others contain metropolitan areas across several states. For example, in the cluster with the highest rounds per household, 12 of the 21 markets are in Florida. In San Antonio’s cluster, there are 21 markets in 17 states.

Pellucid has been working on its numbers and methodology for about a year now, and only went public with its bi-weekly newsletter in late April. The first issue addressed breaking down geographical barriers in looking at rounds played.

At press time, a future issue was slated to take on the difference in Pellucid’s and the NGF’s rounds played numbers for 2001.

“Because we run the rounds data from last year, the number comes out to 508 million. The NGF’s number, and my own number when we do it from consumer surveys, is between 602 million and 603 million,” Koppenhaver said.

Jim O’Hara, vice president of research at the NGF, said the organization refutes Koppenhaver’s claim. He said the NGF does report consumer-based numbers on a macro level, but that its consulting division relies on facility-based numbers for its research.

“We don’t rely on the volume of consumer based rounds to do our consulting work,” O’Hara said. “The NGF golf demand index is a model that was built on 93,000 households throughout the United States, validated on an independent sample of over 70,000 households. We coupled that with our facility-based rounds played information to do our consulting work.”

O’Hara also said that Koppenhaver himself relies on consumer-based numbers for some of his research.

“We would put our demand model up against his demand model any day of the week,” he said.

Koppenhaver also plans to tackle the way the NGF and other segment golfers, which has traditionally been by rounds played. He said he will advocate using economic values instead.

“What I’m going to show is that just because somebody plays frequently, that doesn’t necessarily mean they’re of high value to us,” he said. “At the end of the day, a guy playing 300 rounds and paying $300 a round versus a guy playing 10 rounds and buying a $1,000 membership is not as valuable to us as somebody who’s playing 10 rounds and paying $300 a round.”

No matter what happens, Koppenhaver said he hopes to turn the industry on its ear and make people take notice that the traditional way isn’t the only way to look at the industry.

“If you can’t gather by now, we’re going to try to write the whole book here,” he said.