Troon looks to continue strong growth in 2002

By DEREK RICE

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Troon Golf hopes the momentum it gained during a strong first quarter in which it added 10 new management contracts will carry over into the remainder of 2002, said Dana Garmany Troon's chairman and CEO.

"We're a little bit ahead of where we should be, and we hope we can continue," he said. "We think we'll pretty much do what we've projected in our budget, which is similar to what we did last year and the year before."

The only thing that will stand in the way, Garmany said, is if Troon decides it doesn't have the personnel to take on the project.

"Growing for us is really a matter of growing where we think we have the people to support those jobs," he said. "If we stop growing it will be because we can't staff the jobs or don't have the people to do it."

Garmany said a large part of his company's growth can be attributed to the slow economy.

"For now, things are moving in a good direction and we've seen that the economy moving slower has, if anything, only speeded up the number of requests we've gotten to take a look at deals," he said.

With its management contract at Newport National in Newport, R.I., along with contracts in the Boston and New York areas, Troon is moving into the New East, a region where it hasn't had a strong presence. However, Garmany said, the

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Redstone retains Houston flavor

By DEREK RICE

HOUSTON — Two years ago, if you asked Evan Johansen, the new CEO of Redstone Golf Management, where his company would be today, he probably would have told you Redstone would be a national golf course management company. Today, however, that goal is much different, with the company hoping to keep its management contracts close to its Houston home base.

Aside from the five-course Bear Trace, a track of Jack Nicklaus-designed courses in Tennessee, all of the 13 courses the company owns or manages are within a few miles of headquarters, Johansen said.

"We just decided we don't want to be absentee managers and owners," Johansen said. "We're 20 minutes from all our projects — with the exception of the Tennessee properties — so if something comes up and we need to go out and take a look at a green, our guys can be there in a short period of time. We just feel at this time this is our best strategy."

That strategy appears to be paying off for Redstone, which recently signed a 10-year agreement to host a PGA event, the Shell Houston Open. That opportunity came almost by accident, Johansen said. The PGA and the Houston Golf Association wanted to move the event out of The Woodlands and into the city itself, and had targeted the city-owned Memorial Park. That didn't sit too well with some in the community, who were unwilling to give up their park for the few weeks the tournament would have required.

"As that deal fell through, it became an option for us to host that tournament on one of our courses," Johansen said. "Redstone Golf Club (formerly El Dorado) is where we will host the tournament in

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InVicta alliance provides marketing tool for owners

By DEREK RICE

The InVicta Club World Alliance, an alliance of owners of golf, business, yacht, athletic and spa facilities, has signed a partnership agreement with Strachan Management Ltd. Under the agreement, Strachan will be allowed to market and expand the InVicta Club program in Canada and the northeastern United States.

Under the InVicta alliance, 10 to 20 golf course owners are teamed in a local alliance and tied into the worldwide alliance. InVicta Club members receive reciprocal playing privileges at private clubs as well as preferred pricing and advanced booking privileges at daily-fee clubs.

"The alliance was designed for owners to drive members to their facilities," said Jim Hoppenrath, president of InVicta Club Inc. "So now you've got a competitive advantage over those guys who aren't a member of this alliance."

The alliance currently comprises 50 member clubs, with 50 more agreements in various stages of negotiation. Hoppenrath said, the goal is to have 1,000 clubs in the alliance, which he said will not add any administrative costs, based on the Web-based nature of the InVicta program.

"The key to this is creating a Web-based database to tap into so that as a member, you can show up at any InVicta facility and be verified and know your privilege set that facility within a half-second," he said.

If InVicta tried to do this using a traditional call-center model, Hoppenrath said, the costs would quickly become prohibitive. "With as many as 1,000 members, you could probably manage that, but if you're going to scale up to a million members, which is our goal, it's an administrative nightmare," he said. "You can't hire people fast enough and the cost is going to go through the roof."

A key feature to the InVicta plan that should be attractive to club owners, Hoppenrath said, is that they don't have to give up any control at their clubs, and they can continue with business as usual.

"We're not just a third party trying to line our pockets," he said. "We're trying to help these guys gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace today. This is just another tool in their belt to be able to sell."

The major challenge Hoppenrath faces in trying to sell the idea of this alliance is the traditional nature of golf and golf course owners.

"These guys are fiercely independent," he said. "It does take a while to get them to realize they're part of a bigger group. You can break a single pencil, but if you put 50 of them together, you can't break them. They're much stronger together than they are by themselves."

Golf insurance

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you have to fit our program." Because Acordia was acquired by Wells Fargo Inc. last year, Connor said, it is able to offer its customers more than just insurance.

"We are currently developing relationships with our bankers at Wells Fargo so we can say to the golf course owner, 'You know all that maintenance equipment you lease? I know a few bankers within Wells Fargo you might want to talk with,'" he said. "We won't be too aggressive about it, but if you don't want to shop all over, we have it all."

VGM/First Tee

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the company to pursue that.

"We feel The First Tee program is an excellent program. We felt that their goals and accomplishments met our requirements for a partnership or relationship, namely it is good for the game of golf," he said. "We believe they are in it for the right reasons."