

BRIEFS

ASGCA'S GOLFCOURSE-1 TO PROVIDE DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION

CHICAGO — The American Society of Golf Course Architects has created GolfCourse-1 to provide those interested in building a new golf course or remodeling an old one with the appropriate planning guidelines and materials. ASGCA president Damian Pascuzzo will head the effort which is meant to grow the game of golf by providing pertinent information from architects on the proper planning, permitting and construction processes for new construction and remodeling. The package will include information on all types of courses, including par-3, executive and 9-hole layouts. The ASGCA already has many of the materials in place and will be distributing them to individual clubs, municipalities and investment groups. The organization will also add a special section to its Web site (www.asgca.org) for GolfCourse-1.

RTJ II CREATES DALE FURBER EDUCATIONAL TRUST

PALO ALTO, Calif. — Robert Trent Jones, Jr. has started the Dale Furber Educational Trust for the son of late Robert Trent Jones II colleague Al Furber. RTJ II has made an initial contribution of \$25,000 and hopes to match that amount over each of the next two years with the goal of assuring the kind of future for Dale that his father would have provided him. Al's brother Les Furber, a Canadian golf course architect, will act as trustee for the fund. Contributions should be sent to Les Furber, Dale Furber Educational Trust, Box 8160 Canmore, AB T1W2T9, Canada.



YORK NAMED TO GCBAA BOARD

TAMPA, Fla. — James York, owner and CEO for York Bridge Concepts, has been named to the board of directors of the Golf Course Builders Association of America. York has been in the golf course industry for nearly 20 years. Headquartered here, his company creates custom designed and on-site construction of timber bridges, retaining walls and other structures on golf courses.

Construction to continue downward trend in 2002

By JOEL JOYNER

JUPITER, Fla. — The U.S. economy hit a recession last year, and a slow down ensued in new golf course construction. The numbers for new construction in 2001 fell off a cliff compared to those recorded in 1999 and 2000. As a result, those in the industry take a cautious perspective on what 2002 has in store for new development projects and where some potential opportunities exist.

New construction hit a peak in 2000 when 524 total projects opened. "Looking at the openings in 2000, it's a pretty safe bet that was the high-water mark. We will not see that number ever again," said Barry Frank, vice president of member services at the NGF.

New development projects completed in 2001 topped out at 377. In 18-hole equivalents, that came to 284 courses compared to 18-hole equivalents of 398.5 courses in 2000 — a downward slide of 114.5 courses. "According to what we see in the pipeline right now, we think there's going to be about 325 openings this year," said Frank. "Our projections are that there will be about 230 daily-fee, 40 municipal and 55 private course openings."

FINANCING TOSS UP

Financing will be a challenging component to most new construction projects. "What the sources out there are saying is

that major lenders for new golf development do not have a great deal of interest," said Frank. "They're primarily cash flow lenders that like historical cash flows that they can project forward, and they take into account the expertise of the operator."

"If there's a choice between putting money into a new project versus something that has a historical track record, lenders are going to go with the history," he continued. "The biggest source for new construction will likely be local banks or private funding in unusual situations."

Real estate related golf projects are expected to remain consistent regardless of demand, according to Frank. "Because they serve an alternative purpose, to sell lots at an increased rate and to increase absorption," he said. "Developers will continue to build real estate related golf projects not so much that they are self sufficient but as an amenity to the overall project."

New construction, however, will continue despite financial barriers. In tough eco-

nomie times, development projects with merit will to proceed, according to Jim McLoughlin with the McLoughlin Group in Pleasantville, Ky. "A soft economy tends

CONSTRUCTION DROP OFF

OPENINGS	2000	2001	DIFFERENCE
PROJECTS	524	377	-147
18-HOLE EQUIVALENTS	398.5	284	-114.5

Source: National Golf Foundation

to weed out weaker projects before they get off the ground," he said. "Projects that are worthy, that are good for the developer and the local community, will continue to be developed."

DEVELOPERS ARE FOCUSING ON SPECIFIC REGIONS

While industry leaders say development depends on locality and demographics, there are some hot spots. According to the NGF, some of the top states for projected openings in the top four regions include: Texas, 31 courses; Florida, 20 courses; Michigan, 18 courses; Ohio, 13 courses; and Arizona, 12 courses.

"The top region is expected to be our South Atlantic region that we project to have 62 openings this year," said Frank.

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Kyle Phillips on site at Morgan Creek GC in Roseville, Calif.

Kyle Phillips returns home to California

By DOUG SAUNDERS

GRANITE BAY, Calif. — For golf architect Kyle Phillips, things have come full circle. Since establishing his own design firm after a fifteen-year association with Robert Trent Jones II Design Group, Phillips has developed a reputation in four short years for visually pleasing and strategically challenging course designs worldwide. Two of his most renowned works, Kingsbarns Golf Links just south of St. Andrews, Scotland, and Golf Eichenhein in Kitzbuhel-Aurach, Austria, have drawn attention to the enthusiastic designer. He begins 2002 by returning to California to design and build in the state he calls home.

Phillips is in the rough shaping phase of his latest American project, Morgan Creek Golf Club, a private club under construction near Roseville, Calif. After several projects abroad, Phillips is enjoying the opportunity to work close to home because it allows him to be even more hands on as the course takes shape.

"I approach every course differently," said Phillips. "The surrounding area, the landscape, the ownership, and the overall plan for any course are all factors that

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Raymond Hearn: Industry must learn that less is often more

PLYMOUTH, Mich. — The one matter of seemingly universal agreement concerning the aftermath of Sept. 11 is that things will never be the same, and it is difficult to identify an industry that remains unaffected. Golf is no exception. But like many businesses, shifts in the golf industry have been percolating for some time.

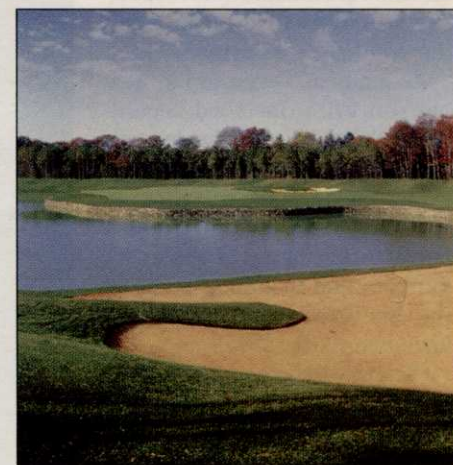
Increased competition for green fees and an overabundance of courses in some areas has been with us for some time now, and the construction of new courses has slowed considerably from the record levels of the 1990s. Plymouth, Mich.-based designer Raymond Hearn addresses possible changes facing the industry and the impact on, and of, golf course architecture.

Golf Course News: What do developers need to consider when contemplating construction of a new course?

Raymond Hearn: Like any number of business endeavors during boom times, the emphasis in the recent past has been on "more is better." The results have often been intriguing, but of course the more bells and whistles in a given design, the

greater the construction and maintenance costs are likely to be. As in any business, profitability can only be achieved by passing along these costs to the consumer.

GCN: How does this trans-



The 16th at Hearn's Sea Oaks GC in New Jersey

late into specific course features?

Hearn: If we listen to golfers across the board, I believe they're telling us what they want. This includes courses that are easier — "more playable" is the current buzzword — as well as more affordable and, wherever possible, less time-consuming to play. This is especially true of golfers new to the game or contemplating taking it up. In general, this means

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"Florida is expected to be the top state in that region with Virginia to follow with a projected 11 openings."

Larry Hirsh with Golf Properties Analyst in Harrisburg, Pa., points to other opportunities that exist for new construction on the East Coast.

"The New York City area is

hot right now and definitely has potential," said Hirsh. "The area between New York, Philadelphia and Washington D.C currently has opportunities available."

A large market opportunity for new construction is within 50 miles or 75 miles of New York City, said Hirsh. "On Long Island — though it's very expensive land — there's opportunity as well as in Westchester County, Orange County, northern New Jersey and

central New Jersey."

One of the development and management companies taking advantage of the opportunity in the Northeast is Empire Golf. The company will be focused on two new projects this year — one in Westchester County, N.Y., and the other in Bayonne, N.J. "There are still opportunities in the Northeast for new construction, but it's certainly getting tougher because the financing is not

there right now," said Empire Golf's president Eric Bergstol.

FEASIBILITY STUDIES ARE KEY

No matter the location, feasibility studies will be essential to any new development, said McLoughlin. "Even in a good economy, you can build a golf course in the wrong place," he said. "In the past three or four years, there has been some overbuilding — not nationally, but regionally."

Good feasibility studies are a good way to stop all unnecessary projects, McLoughlin said. "The feasibility work in this country is not where it needs to be — very few consultants say 'No.' As far as new construction, everything needs to be localized," he said. "There is a massive distinction between regional and national."

"For example, I have a client in Easton, Pa., who wants to build a course. We looked around and saw that there are eight courses within a half-hour drive of the proposed site, none that we're doing more than 30,000 to 32,000 rounds at prices of \$35 or less," he explained. "We recommended that the client not do it. The same client wants to build a course in Allentown, N.J. We did a spot check on the area and found opportunity there."

Overall, across the country, new golf construction has slowed, admitted McLoughlin. "But there's ample room out there to develop if you know what you're doing and you pick your spots," he said. "Even in the middle of World War II, this country was still averaging around 250 courses a year. Golf is a tremendously resilient game, and there will always be places for it." ■

Esler, Ross

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one side to the other. We'll also save existing bentgrass where we can and move it to spots where we need it. We will try to minimize the use of bentgrass sod which is a very expensive item."

Members were reassured about the bunker restoration work when course superintendent Ed Esgar built a sample bunker at the club's practice area. "Along with my crew, we actually built a trial bunker and showed the membership what we had in mind," said Esgar. "It's a grassed-faced bunker like the ones we will be restoring out on the course that have that flashed-sand style."

"The practice bunker was not only successful in educating the members, but promoting the concept and showing them what they had to look forward to," explained Esgar. "The members had discussed restoring some bunkers for a few years now, but there were some difficulties in obtaining the necessary funding. We put the bunker in last September, and it certainly helped provide some incentive to the members."

The superintendent also has finished the ongoing project of squaring off the tee boxes at the club. "We will continue from that stage and, again, address some drainage issues around the tees," said Esler. "We may even have to eliminate some cart paths in the process." ■

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