Continuity leads to consistency during club's reconstruction

Editor's note: This article is the first in a series that addresses the long-range planning and implementation of a reconstruction program at Willoughby Golf Club in Stuart, Fla. The course is an 18-hole residential facility that was owned and operated by a development company and then turned over to the membership after 10 years. The membership has now operated the facility for more than four years but the long-range planning began a few years prior to the takeover. Kevin Downing, CGCS, has been the golf course and landscape manager since the inception of the project and provides valuable insight into initiating their long-range plans.

By KEVIN DOWNING

STUART, Fla. — As Willoughby Golf Club embarks in a full-scale renovation project that will involve closing the course for the next six months, proper long-range planning has been a key organizational advantage. I have headed up the renovation planning process which began in 1998. Since I have been at the club from the beginning, I have been able to easily identify what steps need to be taken to improve the layout because I understand the course's mission.

In the late 1980s the developers of Willoughby set out to create a golf course that focused on the needs of the average golfer. They wanted to create a stimulating round of golf, but realized that most of the buyers were high-handicap golfers.

The developers originally chose the Arthur Hills design firm because of their ability to work with environmentally sensitive property and because they understood the diverse needs of the eventual homeowners and club membership. I worked closely with their firm and the housing configuration to ensure that the course hit the targeted market. The result was a 6,000-yard course that still challenged all levels of golfers.

As courses mature, the design characteristics and landscape materials can alter the playing conditions of the best golf courses is dependent on the sanctity of par,” he said. “Rather than the sanctity of par, why don’t we just create shots. Suddenly the land requirement is about a third. That was the basis of the Golf Trail concept.”

Golf Trail is the combination of a golf course and a practice facility. Golfers use standard equipment to hit operator-supplied balls to target greens and fairways. Players can add a competitive component to their practice by keeping score.

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Twin Creeks project progressing

By DEREK RICE

AUSTIN, Texas — Twin Creeks, a 700-acre residential, country club and golf course community located in the Cedar Park area of Austin, will be the first private country club and the first Fred Couples signature course in the area when it opens this fall.

The project is a venture of Twin Creeks Holdings, a partnership between Crescent Resources LLC and SWD Communities. The development, undertaken by Weitz Golf International of Palm Beach, Fla., broke ground last October and is progressing on schedule, said Harry Turner, senior vice president of Twin Creeks Holdings.

“We’re currently in construction with a planned opening of late this year,” he said. “We hope to have everything planted by the end of August and I believe that we will meet that as long as we don’t get any big rains or anything that’s unforeseen.”

One reason the project is going well, Turner said, is the land itself, which he said is attractive to both golfers and homeowners.

“We’ve got a perfect piece of land. We’ve got 15 holes that don’t have houses directly on the fairway so a golfer’s perspective it gives you the feel of not being in a housing development,” he said. “From a perspective it gives you the feel of a golf course property that was owned and operated by a development company and then turned over to the membership after 10 years. The membership has now operated the facility for more than four years but the long-range planning began a few years prior to the takeover. Kevin Downing, CGCS, has been the golf course and landscape manager since the inception of the project and provides valuable insight into initiating their long-range plans.

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Puddicombe tackling ownership role

By DEREK RICE

EDMONTON, Alberta, Canada — Golf course design firm Sid Puddicombe Associates plans to take the next step and become a golf course owner and operator with the opening of RedTail Landing Golf Club, which is scheduled for spring 2003.

“This is their flagship course,” said Kimberly Schick-Puddicombe, director of sales and marketing for RedTail Landing. “The guys over there have always worked everywhere else but at home, done it for everybody else, and sometimes there are guidelines and restrictions that a particular owner wants, so they just wanted to go to town on their own thing.”

Construction has been completed on the 234-acre site located at the entrance to the Edmonton International Airport’s AirLinks Business Park.

The 16th hole at RedTail Landing, prior to seeding that will take place as soon as the snow melts.

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Twin Creeks

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the homeowner’s standpoint it’s nice because they’re up a little higher and they get the long Texas hill country views as well as expansive views of the golf holes themselves. They don’t just get a confined view of a golf hole like you might think of in Phoenix or Scottsdale or Palm Springs.”

Austin’s mild winter has also contributed to the success of the construction, Turner said.

“We were pretty fortunate with the winter weather,” he said. Turner said he hopes to have a superintendent and general manager hired by the beginning of summer to oversee the final stages of the project.

In addition to the golf course and surrounding community, Twin Creeks will feature a recreation center, two tennis courts and a water park.

BREC course

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Among those issues was the relocation of a six-foot alligator to a neighboring swamp.

“It calls [the wetlands] home, so we’ll see if it comes back,” said Kristi Barnett, director of BREC’s public relations.

BREC is also undergoing a renovation at its Clark Park facility thanks to a grant from The First Tee. Both projects have been planned and overseen by Schreiner.

“We already have extensive junior golf program, we’re just looking to make it better through The First Tee,” Palmer said.

“Clark Park is a beautiful nine-hole course. We’re going to change it a little bit, and add a driving range, make it more friendly for our purposes.”