IGM faces lawsuit in N.J.

By ANDREW OVERBECK

EMERSON, N.J. — Meadowbrook Golf’s growing contract maintenance division, International Golf Management (IGM) has hit a roadblock in New Jersey, losing five contracts in the state over the last year.

While portfolio fluctuations are a normal part of the contract maintenance business, these losses have been punctuated by two lawsuits. Emerson Golf Club’s owners United Properties Group (UPG) filed suit against IGM in April seeking damages for lost revenues and reconstruction costs due to deteriorating maintenance conditions. IGM also has filed suit against Battleground Country Club in Tennent for nonpayment of amounts owing.

In the Emerson lawsuit, club officials and lawyers for both sides declined to comment on this suit, citing the allegations state that IGM “improperly irrigated, fertilized and otherwise improperly maintained Emerson and allowed its condition to deteriorate to such a point that the course was rendered unsuitable for use by golfers.”

As a result of the poor conditions at Emerson, UPG decided to close the course in September 2001 and shift play to its sister course, Valley Brook Golf Club in Rivervale. The lawsuit said this situation caused UPG to lose revenues from 2000 to 2001, the average fees charged at Emerson. As a result, the owners allege both courses suffered damaged reputations and conditions at Valley Brook suffered from heavy play. Both courses are still charging reduced rates this season to drive play back to the layouts.

According to Scott Zakany, executive vice president for IGM, the poor conditions at Emerson GC were due to poor construction.

“Last summer was a tough summer in New Jersey with heat and rainfall,” he said. “We lost three greens because they were 85 to 95 percent Poa annua. The rest of the course was in great shape. These greens don’t drain, they are bowls. When they don’t drain they stay saturated. When you have saturated, brown grass, growing in the sun with poor drainage, you can’t water it.”

“They lost greens for several years prior to IGM coming on property, and they lost them again this year after IGM ended the relationship with the course,” Zakany added.

Part of the secret of the low development costs were the scaled back construction methods used to build the course. The greens are all topsoil and less than 250,000 cubic yards of earth were moved to form the layout. Dye also brought in his own shapers and equipment from other jobs to piece the construction of the course together.

Other cost cutting measures included using used Rain Bird irrigation heads that were bought for $5 a piece and buying mostly used equipment.

“We have one brand-new piece of equipment,” said Davis. “The rest I have bought used. This winter I found a tine seeder for $160 and a five-gang pull-behind mower to use during grow-in for $150. Jack is such a good mechanic that anything I buy, he can fix.”

Dye is out to prove that quality golf can be built for less.

“I didn’t approach this project in any different manner than I would any other project,” he said. “We are trying to build a $10,000 to $12,000 18-hole golf course,” he said. “The market will support low greens fees and we will be below $40, including golf cart and range balls. We want people to come out here, have a ball around and have fun.”

Despite the growth in terms of tourism applications to make sure they cut and doing some light liquid fertilization applications to make sure the grass is as green as possible,” he said.

According to the ALF’s communiqué the group targeted The Meadow Brook Club because one of its members has ties to a firm that conducts animal research. The vandals apparently entered the 270-acre property at one of the most remote areas, three-quarters of a mile from the clubhouse and one mile away from the multi-lane highway.

The Nassau County Police Department’s Special Investigations Unit is handling the case.

N.Y. course recovers quickly from activists’ vandalism

By ANDREW OVERBECK

JERICHO, N.Y. — In a communiqué issued July 31, the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) took responsibility for vandalizing three greens at The Meadow Brook Club, the host of the Senior PGA Tour’s Lightpath Long Island Classic, which was held the first weekend in August. The damage, however, did not disrupt the tournament.

The vandals struck sometime during the night of July 29, digging holes with shovels on the second, fourth and fifth greens. The green on the par-3, 187-yard fourth hole suffered the most damage with an 18-inch wide by one-foot deep hole dug around the cup in the center of the green.

“We found the damage at 5:30 a.m. Tuesday morning,” said superintendent John Carlone, Jr. “We had holes two and five fixed and back into play that morning but we had to close the fourth green.”

All 18 holes were ready to go for the tournament by Friday.

On the fourth green, Carlone’s crew took sod from the back of the green and placed it over the damaged section. They then patched the back of the green with sod from their on-site nursery.

As a result of the damage, the tournament’s pro-am was shortened to a 17-hole event and the fourth hole was shortened for the competition.

“We reduced the size of the hole so they could hit shorter irons,” said PGA Tour media official Dave Senko. “Instead of 195 yards it was 150 yards. Otherwise we proceeded as normal.”

Carlone planned to nurture the turf following the tournament.

“Over the long term I will grow these patches back because they were designed and built for these types of cuts and doing some light liquid fertilization applications to make sure the grass is as green as possible,” he said.

Continued from page 1