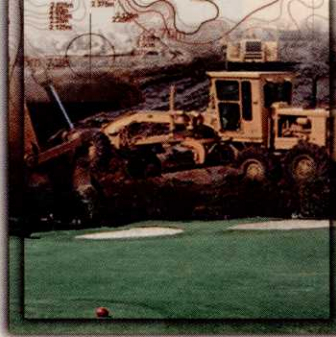


DEVELOPMENT & RENOVATION



BRIEFS

BRIAR COMPLETES CATHEDRAL CANYON RENOVATION

LA JOLLA, Calif. — Briar Golf has completed its \$1 million renovation of Cathedral Canyon Golf and Tennis Club in Cathedral City, a semi-private 27-hole course designed by David Rainville. Capital improvements to the club were completed under the direction of its new general manager, Howard Whiteside.

THE DUKE AT RANCHO EL DORADO TO OPEN

MARICOPA, Ariz. — The Duke at Rancho El Dorado, a new 18-hole course managed by OB Sports Management, will open to the public later this month. Designed by David Druzinsky, the course encompasses 200 acres with 90 acres of turf. The Santa Rosa Wash winds through the golf course, providing interesting boundaries to the fairways and increasing the course's challenge.

FREELAND'S POLO CLUB REDESIGN COMPLETE

BOCA RATON, Fla. — Architect Tim Freeland of Freeland Golf Group recently completed a \$5.2 million redesign at the Polo Club here, which reopened Dec. 4. According to Freeland, the course was "too short, too tight, too hard and too hard to maintain." RyanGolf handled the construction.

WEITZ GOLF COMPLETES RECENT RENOVATIONS

NORTH PALM BEACH, Fla.— Weitz Golf International recently completed two renovation projects. At Rancho Santa Fe Club in Rancho Santa Fe, Calif., Weitz renovated tees, greens and bunker complexes extensively, as well as lakes and streams, car paths, bridges and new turf in recontoured areas. At Weston Hills Country Club, in Weston Hills, Calif., Weitz provided expertise to help the club's maintenance staff improve bunker conditions on the Players Course.

Irwin crafting gem of a course in Minnesota

By JERRY POLING

LAKE CITY, Minn. — In lovely Lake City, Minn., the biggest name in town always has been the Mississippi River, which flows by the city in a broad channel about 65 miles south of Minneapolis.

Much of the town's business, tourism and heritage are connected in some way to the river. In fact, it was in this city in 1922 where water skiing was invented, the city claims.

Lately, a couple new names in town are all that residents seem to talk about. A short drive above downtown and the Mississippi, bulldozers are clearing land for



The Jewel at Lake City, a Hale Irwin design, is attracting a lot of attention just outside Minneapolis.

the biggest planned urban development project in Minnesota history: The Jewel at Lake City, an

18-hole semi-private golf course and residential development. Residents aren't just talking about

the Jewel, but they're talking about who it has brought to town: golf

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Firm stresses view to future in renovation projects

By DOUG SAUNDERS

RANCHO CORDOVA, Calif. — It is a scenario that is being played out in markets around the country. As an established private golf club in a fast growing region sees their membership aging, they are having a tough time drawing new members as newer high-end daily-fee facilities give golfers another option. Should



This drainage pond, located in front of a Safeway store under construction near a PGS client's golf course, solved major issues for all parties involved.

the golf club spend money to upgrade their course to be more competitive or should they put their funds into a new clubhouse instead?

This is just one of the examples of how existing courses, both private and public, are assessing their situation and struggling to decide how to move forward.

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Guest Commentary

Recognize 'red flags' now, avoid future headaches

By BOB PINSON

If superintendents and course owners haven't noticed by now, let me spell it out for you: The course construction business is getting pretty tight, and by that I mean too many contractors for too few projects. If



Bob Pinson

you've put a new construction or renovation job out to bid during the last six months, you know exactly what I'm talking about. I bet you never thought you'd have so many friends in the construction trade.

I've been in the course contracting business more than 10 years, and I can tell you this: When things get this tight, the bidding process becomes hyper competitive—meaning contractors will do almost anything to secure the low bid. I don't mean they'll start sending flowers to your wife (though they might); I mean they will promise a price so low, you'd be crazy to refuse it.

Now, I'm not saying you should refuse it. I'm just saying there are times when a bid price is so low, something isn't right. Something has been left out or ignored, and accepting that bid, as is, might risk

Continued on next page

Harvey completes Berkshire Valley design



Berkshire Valley GC is built atop an abandoned gravel mine in Jefferson Township, N.J.

JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP, N.J. — Golf Course architect A. John Harvey of The RBA Group has completed the design of Berkshire Valley Golf Course for the Morris County Parks Commission. The 6,900-yard 18-hole layout was built on an abandoned gravel mine.

The first five holes play along a terrace carved into a mountain, while the rest of the course lies in the base of the pit, bounding several large ponds that were once used during mining operations for material screening and silt containment.

The tee at the 195-yard 12th hole was constructed within the ruins of a stone building used in the 1910s by Ringling Brothers to house circus elephants.

Berkshire Valley is scheduled to open in spring 2004, according to Harvey.

Recognize red flags

Continued from previous page

the success of your project—maybe not immediately, but down the road when you have to go back and fix what wasn't done properly.

Superintendents, course owners, greens chairmen and general managers need to recognize these warning signs. Here are some "red flag" indications that the low bid on your job might have been dangerously under bid:

- **Clean dirt.** Is this low-bidder planning to clean the fill it finds on-site or brings in from off-site? If he's not, he's either "forgotten" to include this significant cost or he doesn't do good work. Quality fill means the soil has been rid of oversized rocks, big sticks, old bits of PVC pipe and other debris. It's not cheap to screen this stuff out, but if you don't, it will eventually resurface (literally and figuratively) to damage your mowers and aeration equipment.

- **A little water music.** If a contractor has priced irrigation installation by the head, and if the head price is a lot less than everyone else's, you should ask yourself, "Why?" It's difficult to cut costs when it comes to laying irrigation because in most cases the irrigation designer specs the pipe, the sizes and everything else—the contractor just follows orders in this regard. If a construction firm is promising significant cost savings on irrigation installation, maybe he's not planning to put in as many thrust blocks as he should, or tamp the ditches properly, or he plans to level the heads in a way "just to get by" and leave it for the superintendent to do later. Find out.

- **It isn't always greener.** Not all grass is created equal, and the supply of sub-standard turf may be contributing to a blatantly low bid. We've seen recently that some bad grass has come out of Florida—grass the grower would be eager to unload at reduced cost. Be sure this stuff isn't used on your golf course. Familiarize yourself with the farm your course or club will be dealing with. Make sure the turf is clean and certified; check with other clubs that have used it. If grassing costs are markedly lower than those in competing bids, you must do this sort of background checking.

- **Get spec-specific.** With all due respect, many architects spec their jobs in a manner that can be interpreted five different ways. For example, a particular bunker style can be built several different ways but come out looking basically the same in each instance. Bottom line: The superintendent or course owners should go over the specs—alongside the architect—with a fine-toothed comb. Procedures on bunker construction and green profiles must be

spelled out to the last detail. Some course designers might take offense at this sort of scrutiny, but it's vital to determining the lowest realistic bid on your job.

This last point leads naturally to the taboo subject of change orders, i.e. the late-stage springing of hidden costs (extra work authorizations, time and materials). This is an all-too-common method of mak-

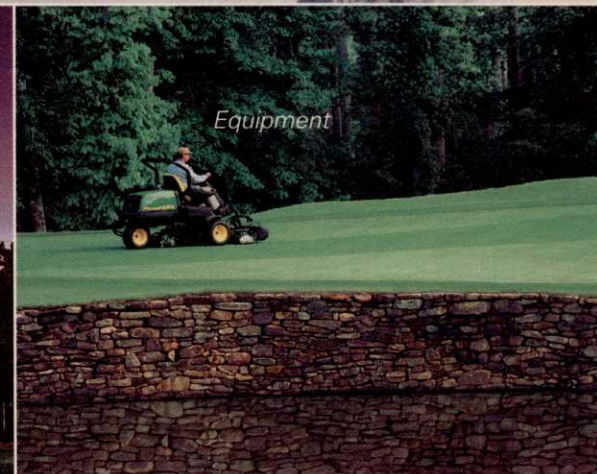
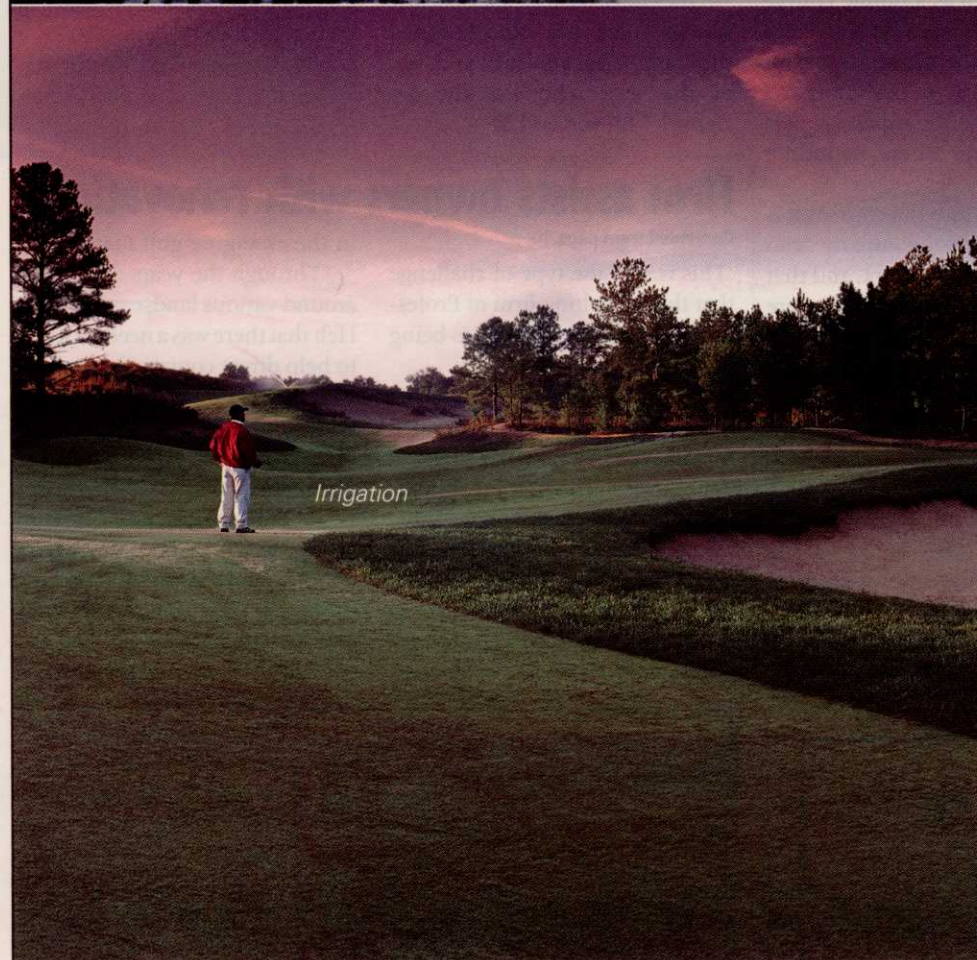
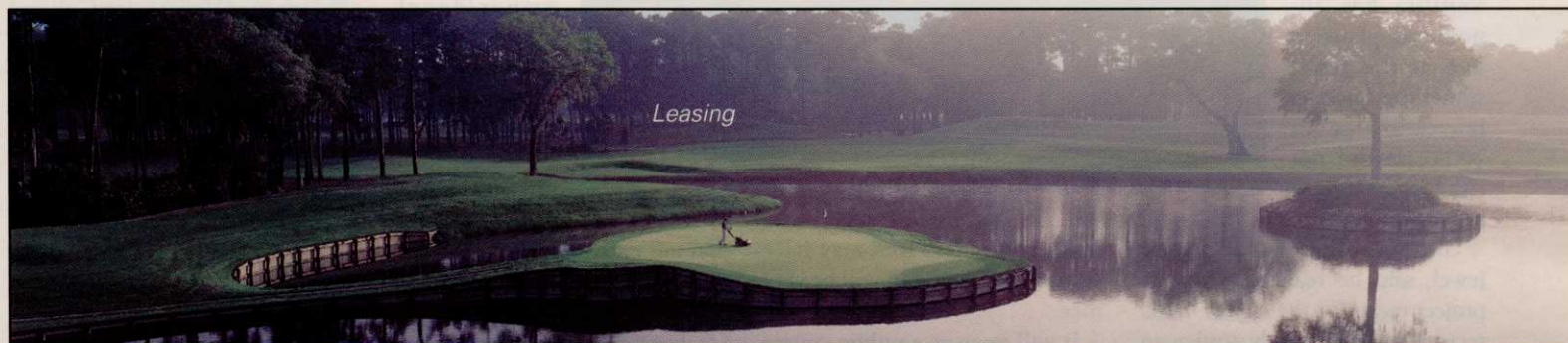
ing unprofitable, low-bid projects more profitable for the contractor. However, if specs are written well enough, and if the superintendent knows them as well as the contractor, the only justifiable change orders would involve unforeseen conditions—like the removal of hidden rock or treatment of totally unsuitable soils. So make sure your act is completely together ahead of time,

and change orders won't be an issue.

The course construction boom of the mid- and late-1990s brought a whole bunch of new contractors into the golf market. Not all of them are members of the Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBA). Make sure your contractor is GCBA, and you probably won't

be dealing with the issues I detail above. That said, I'd still make a habit of checking all the references I can find, because there's no better indicator of a contractor's skill and bid dependability.

Bob Pinson is founder and president of Course Crafters Inc., a golf course construction and renovation specialist based in Gainesville, Ga.



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