

Major turf research lab planned

BY MARK LESLIE

Confronted by intense pressure to reduce water consumption and address other environmental issues, the Florida Turf Grass Association plans to build a research laboratory at the University of Florida at Gainesville.

The FTGA has \$50,000 in hand and needs to raise another \$300,000 for the applied, genetic and ground water research facility, according to Executive Director Bob Yount of the Orlando-based association.

If FTGA can raise the money before the state Legislature convenes in early March, it will be eligible for matching endowment funds, he said.

"A big problem in Florida is that we have the most courses in the country (1,035), with the most under construction ... and we don't

have any pure research facility to explore such things as recycled water," Yount said. "So the American Sod Producers Association and the golf course superintendents said, 'If we're going to live with laws put in place with unscientific data, we have to have real figures' to show lawmakers.

"The lab will benefit the golf industry and Florida's whole environment."

Yount said the 3,100-square-foot Envirotron lab will be half above ground and half below.

The below-ground area will be used for water conservation and root structure studies that might affect ground water and recycled water use.

Scientists will use the area above ground to study such areas as genetic engineering to develop a grass suitable for all regions of the

state.

The university will use the facility for teaching as well as research.

Yount said if the fund drive is successful, construction will begin in 1992. He said the FTGA wants the lab to be operating when the World Turfgrass Conference is held in West Palm Beach in 1994.

He praised the industry for answering the call for funds, saying the first donation — \$3,500 — came from the North Florida PGA.

"This project is unique in that our membership and the industry have decided to do this ourselves. Arnold Palmer is our spokesman. It's rewarding to see the results we already have.

"Now we're going to the public."

NEWS

Battle Creek GC bought by Higginses

The Charles Higgins family has purchased Battle Lake Golf Club at Mart, Texas, from Hammer Golf, Inc.

Battle Lake GC, which adjoins Battle Lake on several holes on the back nine holes, is an 18-hole semi-private course with part of the course on leased city of Mart park land.

Members of the Higgins family will be responsible for day-to-day operations of the club and live on the premises.

It plays 6,508 yards from the back tees over rolling terrain with water in play on several holes.

Family golf, sports center doors open in Palm Beaches

Palm Beach County's first totally family-oriented golf and sports center opened Nov. 1.

Golf & Sports Center of the Palm Beaches, Fla., located two miles west of Palm Beach International Airport at 5850 Belvedere Road, is a 32-acre, golf theme facility said to be the only lighted course in the area.

Situated at the former site of Sportsman Links, Golf & Sports Center has invested more than \$4 million, including \$2 million in the complete reconstruction of an 18-hole, par 3 golf course; renovation of the 14,000-square-foot clubhouse; establishment of family-style restaurant and lounge; development of a driving range and practice facility; establishment of five major league-type batting cages; and operation of a full-service golf shop.

Golf & Sports Center also will boast a miniature golf course and game room.

The new course, with nine holes under lights, features Bermuda fairways and Tidwarf greens.

"While the average golfer will particularly enjoy the Golf & Sports Center, it is the ideal facility for the serious golfer who wants to sharpen every aspect of his or her game," said Robert D. Kelley Jr., president and director of golf.

With the interior nine under a non-glare lighting system, golfers can play until 11 p.m. Kelley reported a number of night league golf competitions would be scheduled during the year.

Landmark Land to oversee Player course building

Landmark Club Management, a division of Landmark Land Co., Inc. of LaQuinta, Calif., will oversee construction of the Gary Player signature golf course at Westin Mission Hills Resort in Rancho Mirage, Calif. Landmark Club Management will work in cooperation with TLS Partnership and Westin Resorts.

Landmark Club Management will act as general consulting managers for agronomy, pro-shop merchandising, accounting, golf car systems, food and beverage, tournament operations, club marketing and other areas.

TLS Partnership owns hotels in San Francisco and a semi-conductor facility in Silicon Valley as well as the joint venture agreement with the Westin Mission Hills Resort.

"Many of the major golf course architects have designed a facility in the Palm Springs area. However, Gary Player has not. This will be his first, and he wants to make an impression," said Joe Hough, director of consulting, management services. "We are pleased to have been chosen, and we look forward to working with Gary Player, his staff, Westin Resorts and TLS Partnership."



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