

As U.S. Open approaches, Pebble Beach in fine fettle

Continued from page 1

renovations and the much-publicized ownership change.

"I think the golf course is in marvelous condition," said Tom Meeks, director of rules and competitions for the United States Golf Association.

Superintendent Brad Hines concurs. "It's never looked better," he said. "And that's not just from me. That's from anybody who's played it or seen it in the last six months.

"We could play the U.S. Open today and it would be just fabulous."

Reports aren't so positive on Minoru Isutani, the Japanese golf tycoon who purchased Pebble Beach last year. In February, with his plans to sell private Pebble memberships foiled by the California Coastal Commission, Isutani agreed to sell the property — at a \$300 million loss — to Lone Cypress Co.

The deal went through March 6, and there is speculation the Pebble Beach sale is part of a larger strategy to maintain Isutani's solvency.

Indeed, Cosmo World Inc. of Nevada — another firm owned by Isutani — filed for Chapter 11 bank-

ruptcy on its Silver Canyon project in Henderson, Nev., in December.

The majority owner of Lone Cypress is Taiheyo Club Inc., a Japanese firm that operates nine golf courses in the Land of the Rising Sun. The minority owner is Sumitomo Credit Service, the largest issuer of Visa credit cards in Japan.

Taiheyo President Masatsugu Takabayashi says his company will be a good neighbor.

"We will make this much better than Mr. Isutani's ownership," Takabayashi told the Wall Street

Journal. "We will make this good for the community, the state of California and the United States."

This means keeping the Monterey shoreline open to the public and not selling private memberships — all of which makes the Coastline Commission happy.

One might legitimately ask, however, if the turbulent ownership issue has compromised course condition at Pebble Beach.

"You always worry about things you have no control over," said Stuart Bloch, president of the

USGA. "But I can honestly say the golf course is in the best shape it's ever been."

PGA Tour players were generally positive following the AT&T National Pro-Am in January. But as Bloch warned: "The players will find the fairways a little narrower than the AT&T."

"It was in nice condition for the Pro-Am, and it should be even better for the Open," added Meeks, who believes the change in ownership has not affected ongoing renovations.

"I don't think it's had any effect at all. Plans were going extremely well under the previous owner, and we've had the same level of cooperation from the new Pebble Beach staff."

In fact, Hines had praise for both Japanese regimes.

"I've been here for a year and a half," he said, "and both owners were very golf oriented. They've been very good about putting money into the course."

This is more good news because the changes at Pebble Beach — which played host to U.S. Opens in 1972 and '82 — are anything but superficial.

In order to conform with the original 1919 specifications of architects Jack Neville and Douglas Grant, a thorough renovation has been undertaken on all collars, tees, bunkers and greens — including reclaiming putting surfaces lost over the years to encroaching rough on their perimeters.

The 4th, 5th and 7th greens have been entirely reconstructed to USGA standards. Furthermore, a unique heating system was installed beneath the heavily shaded 5th green to maintain soil temperature and assure good grass growth during the cold winter months.

Hines said the thermostatically controlled system, employed exclusively at Pebble Beach and Augusta National, keeps the green at 53 degrees year-round. Warm water is pumped through three miles of underground surgical tubing, thus "stimulating the soil temperature to have the right growing medium at all times," Hines explained.

Ground broken on Lake Acworth

MARIETTA, Ga. — As 1991 faded into memory, construction commenced at Lake Acworth Golf Course, northwest of Atlanta just outside Marietta.

Golf West Companies of Fresno, Calif., has been retained by Cobb County officials as the developer. Ken Dye of Houston-based Finger Dye Spann is the course architect.

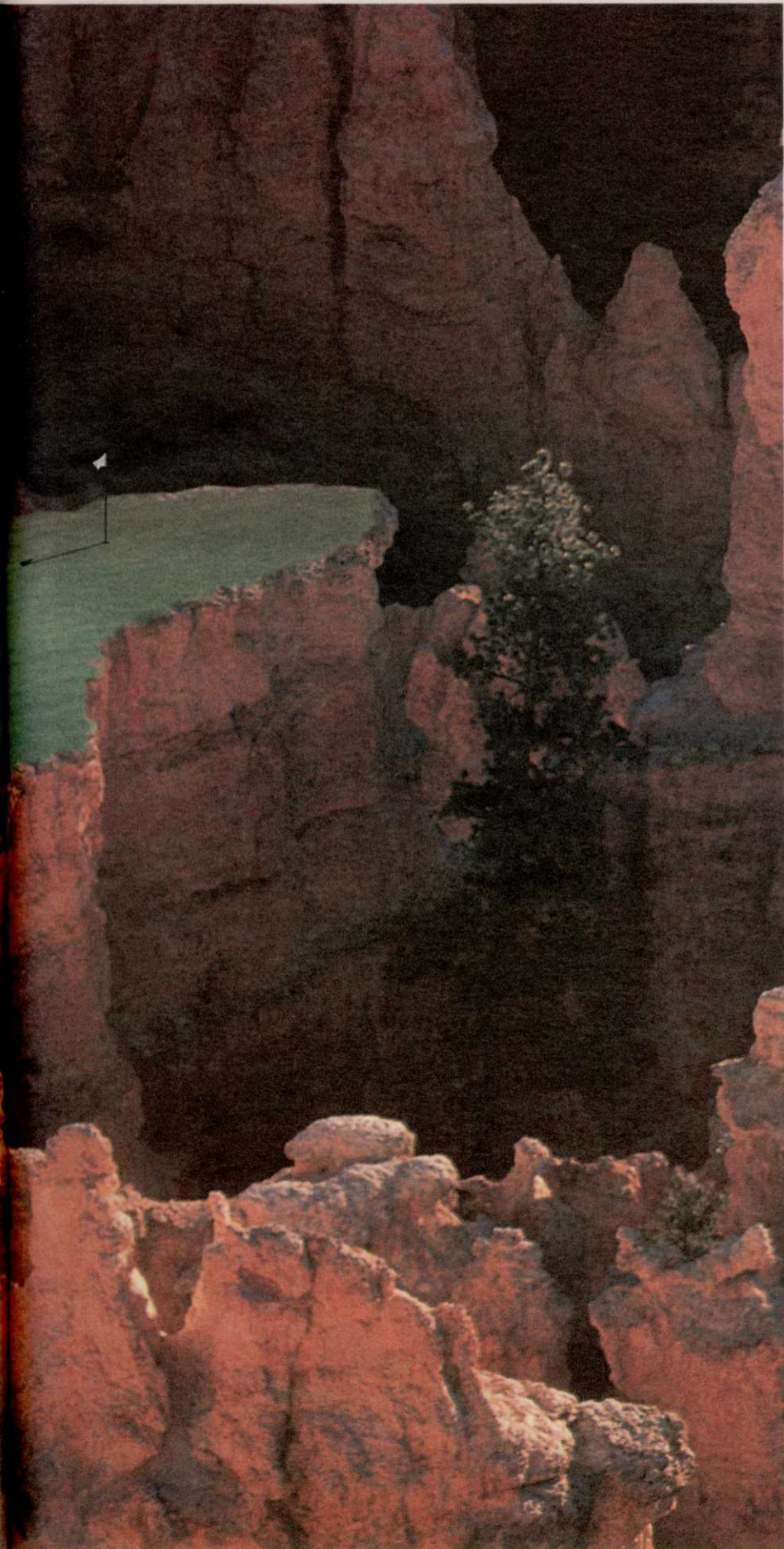
The property is owned by the federal government and controlled by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In 1985, it was leased to Cobb County for 50 years with specific instructions that it be used for recreation.

WITH ALL THAT
HAS TO BE DONE
TO MAINTAIN
A CHALLENGING
COURSE, WHO
HAS TIME TO
NURSE DISEASED
TURFGRASS?

Virtually all of the top golf courses in the United States use Banner.[®]

What these course superintendents have discovered is that a preventive turf program that includes Banner is more efficient. Not just because it's effective against a broad spectrum of diseases like Summer Patch, Dollar Spot, and Anthracnose. But because of its low effective rates and long residual.

Which means that when you use Banner, you treat on your own schedule. Not the disease's.



CIRCLE #116