

Fireman buys Willowbend, adds championship length

Reebok owner puts up \$9M-plus, eyes major tournament in the future

COTUIT, Mass.—Paul Fireman, chief executive officer of Reebok International Ltd., has completed purchase of the Willowbend Club for more than \$9.1 million.

The process has been going on nearly a year, and the new owner's corporation, The Willowbend De-

velopment Corp., has put more than \$1 million into the course.

Changes on the 14th hole, designed to bring it from a par 3 to a par 4, will bring the course up to a championship level. According to Willowbend Director of Golf Bob St. Thomas, four holes will be changed, moved or altered, and the 17th and 18th holes landing areas will be flattened out, making them more receptive to tee shots.

Course architect Michael Hurdzan, who also designed Dennis Highlands, has already drawn

up plans for the course. A \$2-million clubhouse should be ready for unveiling July 4, complete with a pro shop.

The course will now be totally private, with the 30 original members allowed to maintain their membership and interim members asked to reapply for regular membership. Membership is expected to grow to almost 200 this year.

Reebok has invested heavily in the golf merchandising market, and there is speculation that the company may be seeking to stage a

PGA Tour event at the course.

There is already a Pro-Am event, sanctioned by the Tour, scheduled for July 28. It will feature 15 top PGA pros from the regular and senior tours, and St. Thomas believes it will be an annual event. There will be 60 amateur spots available and the money raised will be given to a charity designated by the Town of Mashpee.

Willowbend will serve as co-host of the Mid-Amateur Championship in October and a regional qualifying site for the U.S. Senior Open.

Floating green causing tax disagreement

COEUR d'ALENE, Idaho — Ladies golfing at Coeur d'Alene Golf Course may soon be having better luck with the 14th hole.

The hole, billed as the only floating golf green, is anchored 145 yards out into Coeur d'Alene Lake. The distance makes it hard for female golfers to hit to the green, and Hagadone Hospitality, owners of the course, asked for a permit from the Idaho Department of Lands to put a sod-covered pier out into the lake to move the forward tee to within 80 yards of the floating green.

The course, built on the former Rutledge Mill site, is on property purchased for \$4.5 million in September 1987 and now in the middle of a \$9-million dispute over tax values. Owners of the 135-acre course say it's worth \$3.17 million; Kootenai County puts the value at \$12.12 million. A state Board of Tax Appeals ruling on the debate is not expected until next month.

Most of the debate focuses on the 5-million-pound floating green on the 14th hole. Hagadone Hospitality says the man-made green should be valued at \$1 million, with the city willing to compromise at \$1.25 million.

Overall, the company wants a per-hole assessment of \$176,000, while the county assessor puts the tag at \$662,464 per hole. The assessed value of the land and improvements at the course is about six times more than any other golf resort in Idaho.

County Assessor Tom Moore emphasized that the floating green "throws things way off." The value of the structures on the property is not contested.

Tax appraisers claim the taxes are high because of the resort's unique amenities: water taxis, over-the-water driving range, executive rest rooms beneath the tees at the 7th and 10th holes, 4-1/2 miles of extra-wide cart paths and a computerized irrigation system.

Greenman Group agrees to pact

JOHNSON CITY, Tenn.—Back in 1989, the Johnson City Commission agreed to the concept of a second public golf course, this one with a planned residential community. A developer would build the course and houses, and the city would then lease-purchase the course from course revenues.

Those plans seem to be going ahead now that the Greenman Group of Florida has been hired to build the residential golf community in conjunction with a private development. The earliest the \$4-million course could open would be the fall of 1993.

The city's other public course, Pine Oaks Municipal Golf Course, hosts more than 60,000 rounds per year.

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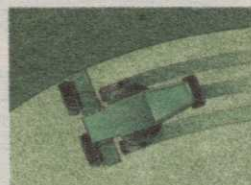
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