

NEWS IN BRIEF

JAMESTOWN, N.D. — The new nine at Hillcrest Municipal Golf Course should be playable late this summer. A week's work in the spring should complete the irrigation system. Grass will be seeded then. Rain last summer delayed the \$500,000 project about four weeks. Work is progressing on the \$49,000 steel building that will be used for the new clubhouse after golf course expansion is complete.

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — Renovation of the second nine holes at 27-hole Schaumburg Golf Club is complete and the refurbished nine opened Sept. 4. Course architect Bob Lohmann of Mareng is overseeing design and construction of the ongoing renovation project. The facility was originally designed in the 1920s by William Langford and Theodore Moreau. Renovation of the remaining nine will begin this month.

BAY CITY, Texas — Rio Colorado Golf Course has joined the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program. Rio Colorado GC will be involved in projects that enhance habitat for wildlife on the golf course and preserve natural resources for the benefit of the local community. These projects may include placing nesting boxes for cavity-nesting birds such as bluebirds and swallows, utilizing integrated pest management techniques, conserving water, and maintaining food and cover for wildlife.

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. — South Smith, former vice president of marketing and development for the National Golf Foundation, has been named national sales manager for Gary Player Golf Equipment. Smith joins Gary Player Golf Equipment after working seven years at the NGF. He also serve as a liaison between the NGF and equipment and apparel manufacturers in the golf industry.

**BEFORE AND AFTER**

The front nine of the Robber's Row course at Port Royal Golf Club in Hilton Head Island, S.C., has reopened after an extensive, five-month redesign by architect Pete Dye. The above photo shows the par-3 8th hole "before" the renovation. The bottom photo shows — believe it or not — the same hole "after" Dye had finished. Dye will complete the redesign of Robber's Row this year, with work on the back nine scheduled to begin this May.



California suppers witness severe fire damage first-hand

By PETER BLAIS

"I was pretty nervous watching the fire come over that last ridge. It was moving fast and jumping all over the place. You'd see an area far away from the fire suddenly burst into flames. The fire was 40, 50 feet high. It was starting to come down the ridge when the wind suddenly shifted and knocked it down. We were pretty lucky."

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. — If not for that sudden wind shift, Pelican Hills Director of Agronomy George Druzisky might be talking about his course, as well as THE FIRE, in the past tense.

As it was, the Tom Fazio design, voted *Golf Digest's* best new resort layout in 1993, escaped with damage to eight acres of native area bordering the Ocean Course's 5th hole, a couple of melted sprinkler heads and some minor turf damage.

The course's good fortune was typical throughout the Southern California golf community, where fires devastated woods, grassland and homes for nearly two weeks in late October and early November.

"The fire department asked us to evacuate at 1 p.m. [Oct. 27]," Druzisky recalled. "The course was pretty full. There was no immediate danger from the fire. But they [fire officials] were concerned about having to close the highways and people not being able to drive away."

"Most of the staff left, except for a few key people who stayed behind to man the sprinklers. We kept those running to slow the fire."

The flames never reached courses farther south in Laguna Beach. Still, several were affected.

The fire marched within a half mile of Coto De Caza Golf Course, ravaging a nearby Audubon Society wildlife preserve, according to head superintendent Lee

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Supers contend with runaway fires threatening California

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Hood. "We had a voluntary evacuation and closed the whole operation for a day," said Hood, who had seen a similar fire brush up against his facility five years earlier. "We had a little ash on the course, but that's about all."

Nearby Dove Canyon was never in real danger, but served as the staging area for two strike teams — six-engine fire companies designed for rapid deployment.

"We were a holding point for fire equipment, a place where firefighters could eat and shower," said superintendent Eric Lover. "We didn't close the course, but we were on alert for a voluntary evacuation."

THOUSAND OAKS HIT

The Malibu fire, as it has come to be called, started in a recreation area behind the 16th green at Los Robles Greens Golf Course in Thousand Oaks.

"It never touched the golf course," said assistant pro Henry Jacques. "They still don't know how it started."

What is known is that the Santa Ana winds quickly pushed the flames away from Los Robles and toward the coast.

"We thought it was going to pass south and west of us," said Duane Koyano, landscape foreman at Sherwood Country Club. "But the Santa Ana winds died down, the ocean breeze came up and started pushing it slowly toward us."

The fire passed through much of Sherwood owner David Murdoch's land. It destroyed homes and trees outside the Sherwood complex and licked up against the edges of holes 14, 15 and 16.

"When we saw it coming over the hill we turned on the sprinklers," Koyano remembered.

The water kept the fire at bay. The water came from an effluent-containing pond. But as the reclaimed water level dropped, so did the pressure. Fortunately, the winds shifted again and the fire traced a path along the edges of the course, doing no further damage.

"Several trees, some native grasses around the tees and the rough areas were singed. We had to resod a few areas. There were a couple melted sprinkler heads, and some Maxi wire for the computers was damaged. We replaced a couple of irrigation clocks. But that was about it," Koyano said.

The fire closed within 400 yards of the maintenance shed. As a precaution, superintendent Bill Hamilton's crew moved most of the equipment out of the facility and onto the practice range.

Murdoch's home construction crew was working nearby. They cleared brush and dug trenches to serve as fire breaks, helping

minimize further damage, Koyano said.

During the PGA Tour's Franklin Funds Shark Shootout held just two weeks after the blaze, Murdoch went on television and explained what had been done to the course and surrounding area.

"You could see the blackened hills behind him. But the course was in excellent shape," Koyano said.

Golf hole target undergoing tests to determine legality

In the wake of a decision that its golf hole target violates the Rules of Golf, U.S. Golf Hole Target, Inc. is having independent tests done on the product.

John Matheny, director of operations for the U.S. Golf Association, has reported that the USGA Rules of Golf Committee ruled that if the golf hole target is installed in the manner recommended, it violates the Rules of Golf.

Featured in *Golf Course News*' On the Green feature in September, golf hole target is a cup liner

manufactured by U.S. Golf Hole Target. The manufacturer recommends that the liner should be installed within 1/4 inch of the surface. But if it is moved down to 1 inch from the surface, it would be OK, Matheny said.

"Sometimes, white paint is used, but we've never allowed a material to be installed closer than 1 inch to the surface," Matheny said. He said the fear is that rigid hole liners might interfere with the ball going into the hole.

After the Rules Committee made the initial decision, the company

appealed the ruling. That appeal was reconsidered, and upheld, last October.

Noting that independent tests are being done, Matheny said: "We are willing to reconsider after evaluating their test results."

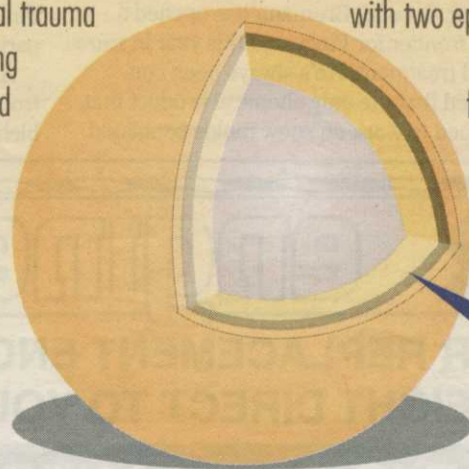
Meanwhile, the USGA Handicap Committee considered the situation at its fall meeting. Matheny said: "We have said that as far as casual play is concerned... if people have chosen to use it [the golf hole target], we won't penalize a golfer using a score on that course for his handicap."

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