

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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Big management firms shying away from RTC

By PETER BLAIS

DANIA, Fla. — The expensive due diligence process and sometimes inflated bidding involved in recent Resolution Trust Corp. auctions of golf properties may scare away potential bidders in the future, according to some golf industry experts.

"ClubCorp wasn't there. Neither were Cobblestone Golf, Fairways Golf, KSL Enterprises and Kemper

Management," said Jeff Woolfon, an associate with CB Commercial Golf/Resort Properties, which marketed Palm-Aire Spa Resort & Country Club and adjacent Oaks Golf & Racquet Club here for the RTC.

"All the big players you'd normally expect just weren't there," said Woolfon.

The only big-name management company to take part in the sealed bid/out-

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Researcher: Effluent yields better turf, with less water

By LYNN TILTON

CHANDLER, Ariz. — Wastewater produces better turf growth and can cut annual supplemental water needs on an Arizona golf course by as much as 22 percent, according to a turfgrass and wastewater expert.

Dr. Charles Mancino of the University of Arizona unveiled the positive results from his research findings at Turf Talk, an annual event sponsored by Garden Valley Distributors of Phoenix and attended by 150 superintendents and others.

"With effluent water, we get better turf growth on an acre foot less of water," Mancino said. Before being used, effluent should first be settled out, clarified and subjected to aerobic digestion to reduce carbon-dioxide levels, he added.

"Water thus treated is very low in carbon and is

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AUDUBON HONORS HIERS

Ron Dodson (left), Audubon Society of New York State president, presents Tim Hiers — superintendent at Collier's Reserve — the first John James Audubon Environmental Steward Award. See page 13 for details.

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DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH?

Boulders occupy the rough bordering the dramatic 16th hole at Diamond Run Golf Club, a private 18-hole course which opened for play in Ohio Township, Pa. — 11 miles northwest of Pittsburgh — in mid-September. For more information on this Gary Player Design and a complete listing of the nation's new course openings, see page 24.

Despite public outcry, Florida DEP backs course conversion

By MARK LESLIE

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — The public is upset. Ditto, most local and county government officials. But the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has spoken and won't budge in a

struggle over the 250-acre Fort George Island and its golf course designed by Donald Ross.

The 18-hole Ft. George Island Golf Club, nine holes of which were designed by Ross in the 1920s, is a landmark to the golf world. But not to the Florida DEP, which has decided to make public lands available for "resource-based" as opposed to "user-oriented" recreation. Resource-based recreation means passive use, such as parks, nature trails, hiking, bird-watching and picnicking. User-

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Shop Talks mean face-to-face sell

By HAL PHILLIPS

ORLANDO — Vendors place the highest priority on speaking directly with potential customers during sales calls, via telemarketing or inside a trade-show booth.

At Golf Course Expo exhibitors will have another opportunity via "Shop Talks," vendor-sponsored presentations that showcase solutions to golf course problems, feature their products and services, and address critical industry issues.

Exhibit hall and conference attendees are able to

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Florida DEP overrules 'locals'

Continued from page 1

oriented recreation entails activities like golf, baseball and softball.

"The public is up in arms on the local level," said Bobby Weed, course designer for the PGA Tour, headquartered here. "The problem is, the DEP is far away from Tallahassee. Locally, we had nine state representatives and senators, and all but two city commissioners, unanimously approve keeping the golf course.

They even allocated \$2 million from the city's River City Renaissance program to refurbish the golf course."

Charges of railroading, arrogance and ignorance have been hurled at the Florida DEP and Audubon and Sierra clubs. Nevertheless, the DEP's so-called 210 Plan, which would allow the course to be overgrown, sits on Gov. Lawton Chiles' desk awaiting approval from him and his cabinet.

The state, which operates the

abutting 30,000-acre Talbot Islands State Parks that now includes Fort George Island, took over the property in 1991 when the city of Jacksonville did not ante up \$2 million to improve the clubhouse, and build a new irrigation well and stormwater system. The city had been leasing the golf course from the state since the state assumed control of the land in the mid-1980s.

Now, having lost Fort George Island Golf Club and seeing two other public-access facilities close down recently, citizens and local public officials want to make the

investment and get the course back.

"Maybe a dozen [user-oriented] people a week go out there," compared to the 40,000 rounds of golf the course hosted in its last year of operation, said Fort George Golf Association President John King.

Gov. Chiles "promised me he would hold off a vote until further study can be made," King said. He hopes that a vote will come after a new cabinet is elected in November. "We tried to delay it and continue to solicit support for the course, but the DEP and Parks

and Recreation Committee have tried to railroad it through. In fact, they did railroad through their 210 Plan by appointing a board consisting of a majority of state employees."

The board King referred to was a 20-person panel that included 11 appointees representing local, state and federal government agencies, three representing environmentally active groups and five independents selected by the DEP. King, Weed and William Blank, the president of the Jacksonville Golf Association, were appointed after the plan was already drafted.

"The park and golf course can co-exist," Weed said. "We're [in the golf industry] all birdwatchers, too. But they're [DEP, Audubon and Sierra] above science. I was shocked. They didn't want to include any discussion from a scientific standpoint."

The Fairfield Corp. had owned the island and tried to develop it in the mid-1980s. Before its plans fell through, engineers produced a 17-volume master resource management plan for the island, encompassing myriad surface, storm- and ground-water issues, aquatic and terrestrial ecological matters and cultural and archeological sites. But the DEP-appointed panel "didn't even pursue" the data, Weed said.

"They kept saying the course was depleting fresh water," he said. "But, we talked to residents who said there has never been a shortage. They have never had a salt-water problem. They're using the same old tactics I'm seeing all over the country: no-growth and scare tactics claiming pesticide leaching, ground-water contamination — the fear tactics they get the most mileage out of."

Weed wrote in a letter to DEP Secretary Virginia Wetherell, with copies to Chiles and several others in the state's hierarchy: "To my knowledge, in 71 years of golf course operations on the island, the original nine-hole Fort George Golf Club and in the early 1960s when the course was converted to 18 holes, there has never been a violation or complaint recorded regarding golf course maintenance pesticide or fertilizer mis-application."

"The state parks have 30,000 acres in this particular area, and we only want the golf course returned to us," King said. "They won't even discuss nine holes."

"I say the golf course and clubhouse may have historical, significant value," Weed said. "The Vanderbilts, the Rockefellers, a Who's Who of members played here. There are many golf courses around the country that have received historical significance status through the National Register of Historical Places. This is one of the biggest travesties I've ever seen in politics and government. It's just one more thing that we're up against as an industry."

Wetherell's office did not reply to questions on the issue.

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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*Based on research conducted by the Center for Golf Course Management, a subsidiary of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

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