

NEWS IN BRIEF

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — A multi-million dollar expansion is underway at Still Waters Resort and Conference Center on Lake Martin, which includes 32 new golf villas, another 18-hole golf course, clubhouse and hotel. The cost of the first phase of construction is estimated between \$7 and \$8 million, according to Bill Hite, general manager of the resort. Defender Resort Development of Myrtle Beach, S.C., is managing the expansion. The 2,200-acre Still Waters Resort opened in the late 1970s.

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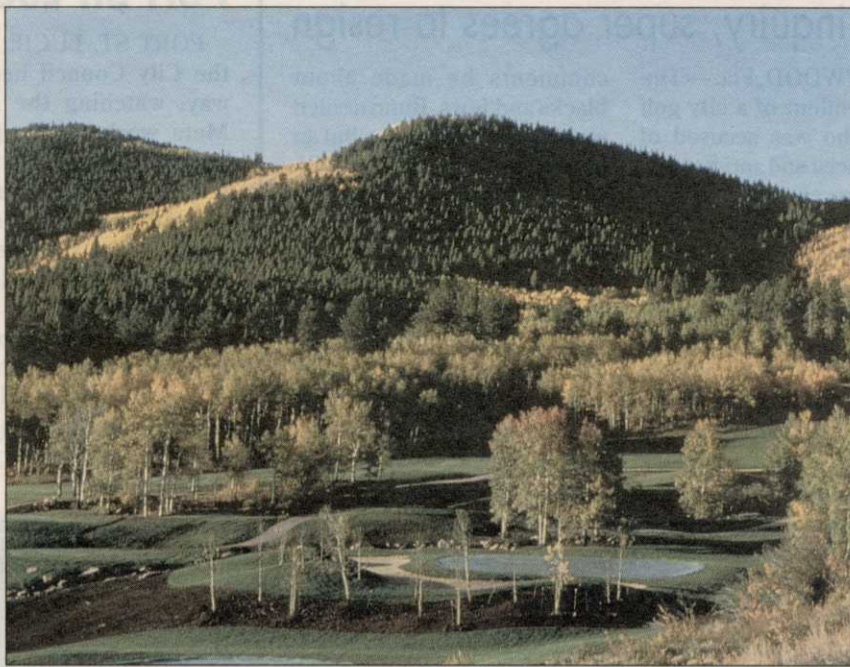
BRIGHTON TOWNSHIP, Ohio — First it was road embankments. Next up, Echo Valley Golf Course? Yes. After watching the Black River gradually gobble up most of a 30-foot road embankment in this northern Ohio town, Lorain County engineers will re-route part of the river 1,000 feet away from the road — and right next to the fairway on Echo Valley's par-4, 8th hole.

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RICHMOND, Va. — Local golf architect Lester George has signed on with Boonsboro Country Club in Lynchburg to help the club in its long-range master plan to renovate and restore the course originally designed by Fred Findlay in 1927. George has also done renovations at Birkdale, Kiln Creek in Newport News, Fort Lee and Hanover.

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BETHEL, Conn. — The Parks and Recreation Commission here is taking a step toward the creation of Bethel's first public golf course. The commission recently earmarked \$7,000 in its 1995-96 budget for a feasibility study of converting part of a town-owned parcel near the Francis J. Clarke Industrial park on Route 53. The idea of a municipal course in Bethel has been floating around for years. The commission does not have a cost estimate for building the golf course. But Timothy Burke, director of the Parks and Rec, said taxpayers won't bear the financial burden of any such project.

**AND FAZIO MAKES TWO...**

The new, Hale Irwin-designed golf course at Cordillera (above) — the 3,100-acre mountain-top community overlooking Vail Valley, Colo — will soon have a sister course. Slated to begin construction this spring, the new course will be designed by Tom Fazio. Situated at a 6,500-foot elevation, it will be called the Valley Course, in contrast to Cordillera's 8,250-foot-elevation Mountain Course (see above), designed by Irwin and opened in 1994. An additional short course is slated to begin construction in 1996.

Conference focuses on Asian management

By HAL PHILLIPS

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — The supply of club managers in Asia-Pacific has never met demand and, as golf course development continues to boom in the region, the need for experienced club managers becomes more and more critical.

With this in mind, the International Association of Golf Course Managers (IAGCM) will stage the first certificate course in "Club Operations and Golf & Country Club Management," beginning Oct. 1 here at the Pan Pacific Glenmarie Resort.

"This program is being held first in the Asia-Pacific region, as there is an acute shortage of qualified golf & country club managers in the region, especially Malaysia," said Jiun Siew, IAGCM secretary.

"Many in the club management profession have risen through the ranks. Very few have achieved degrees in the hospitality field. The ever-changing climate of golf & country club management demands a highly qualified, highly trained professional who can manage the changes occurring daily."

The IAGCM is a non-profit body formed in 1899 to provide for and enhance the international professionalism of the golf club manager. The association is the only one of its kind to represent managers on an international scale, according to C.K. Leong, attorney for IAGCM.

The intensive six-week course will begin Oct. 1 and conclude in mid-November. According to Leong, the program is

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Former ranch may serve as backdrop for eco-showdown

By J. BARRY MOTHES

KNIGHTS FERRY, Calif. — A historic Stanislaus County cattle ranch has become the scene of what could be a landmark legal shootout over development of golf courses on farmland.

Plans to build a 600-acre golf resort on the hilly, dry terrain of Willms Ranch near Knights Ferry have put state farmers, environmentalists and the attorney general's deputies on the same team in a fight against developers and county supervisors.

Who wins may determine what can go on state-protected farmland in the future. The legal battle also may decide whether landowners will get tax breaks for putting recreation developments, such as golf courses, on agricultural land.

The National Audubon Society filed a lawsuit to stop the Willms Ranch project but received an adverse ruling from a Stanislaus County Superior Court judge. From there, the environmental group appealed its case to the 5th District Court of Appeals in Fresno. The California Farm Bureau and the state have joined in support of the Audubon appeal.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the Willms family wants to build a world-class golf course and resort called Wildcat Creek Resort on the 2,500-acre ranch it has owned since the mid-1800s. The plans include a public 18-hole golf course, driving range, restaurant, bar, meeting room, tennis courts and swimming pool.

State officials said the project is symbolic of the disintegration of the Williamson Act, a 1965 state law that gives a tax break to farmers who promise to keep their land in agricultural production for 10 years.

The project was approved by the county Planning Commission and

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CIRCLE #103

Texas state park project moves forward despite opposition

HOUSTON, Texas — State parks officials will proceed with the \$1 million expansion of Bastrop State Park Golf Course despite a decision by the National Parks Service not to help fund the project.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department had applied for a \$500,000 matching federal grant to expand the nine-hole golf course at Bastrop State Park, about 30 miles east of Austin.

The project garnered little notice until environmentalists rented a billboard to warn residents that \$1 million in tax dollars would be used to expand a golf course.

The Park Service turned down the grant request to the surprise of Texas Park and Wildlife officials, who made it clear the state agency had never indicated any problem with the request.

State Parks Director Ron Holliday said the state still plans to expand the golf course. Officials have pledged the 34-acre expansion at the state park would not affect at least 4,000 acres of the Lost Pines ecosystem and the Houston toad habitat.

The National Park Service however received about 100 petitions with about 2,000 signatures opposing the project.

Shiloh Falls gets OK on 18th hole

WEST SHILOH, Tenn. — All last summer the Marriott's Golf Club at Shiloh Falls near the Shiloh National Military Park had the unusual distinction of being a 17-hole golf course.

The course was missing its signature 15th hole—a dramatic par-3 with a 95-foot drop off from the tee to a green surrounded by water — because of construction delays over environmental violations and concerns over erosion into Pickwick Lake.

Course owners have since paid about \$85,000 in various fines

for failing to obtain proper permits, environmental damage and illegally cutting timber.

However, they were recently given the green light to finish the course and construction is underway, according to David Clark, the course's director of golf.

Clark said the 15th hole will be playable by late May or early June. The course's most striking hole, with a waterfall backdrop, has a 95-foot drop and will play from a maximum length of 180 yards.

Calif. shootout?

Continued from page 3

Board of Supervisors, who argued the proposed resort would be a good use of less productive farmland in an area that's trying to pump up its tourist economy.

Willms Ranch, however, is under the Williamson Act contract, which means the owners have agreed to keep the land in agricultural production in exchange for tax breaks. The 10-year contract reduces tax bills by an average of 40 percent. The law was designed to continue taxing farms as farms instead of as potential subdivision land. It aims to keep farmers from succumbing to development pressures in order to meet high tax bills. The contracts essentially allow property to be assessed at current income level. The state then reimburses counties for part of the lost property taxes. The state paid out \$35 million last year to make up for Williamson Act enrollments.

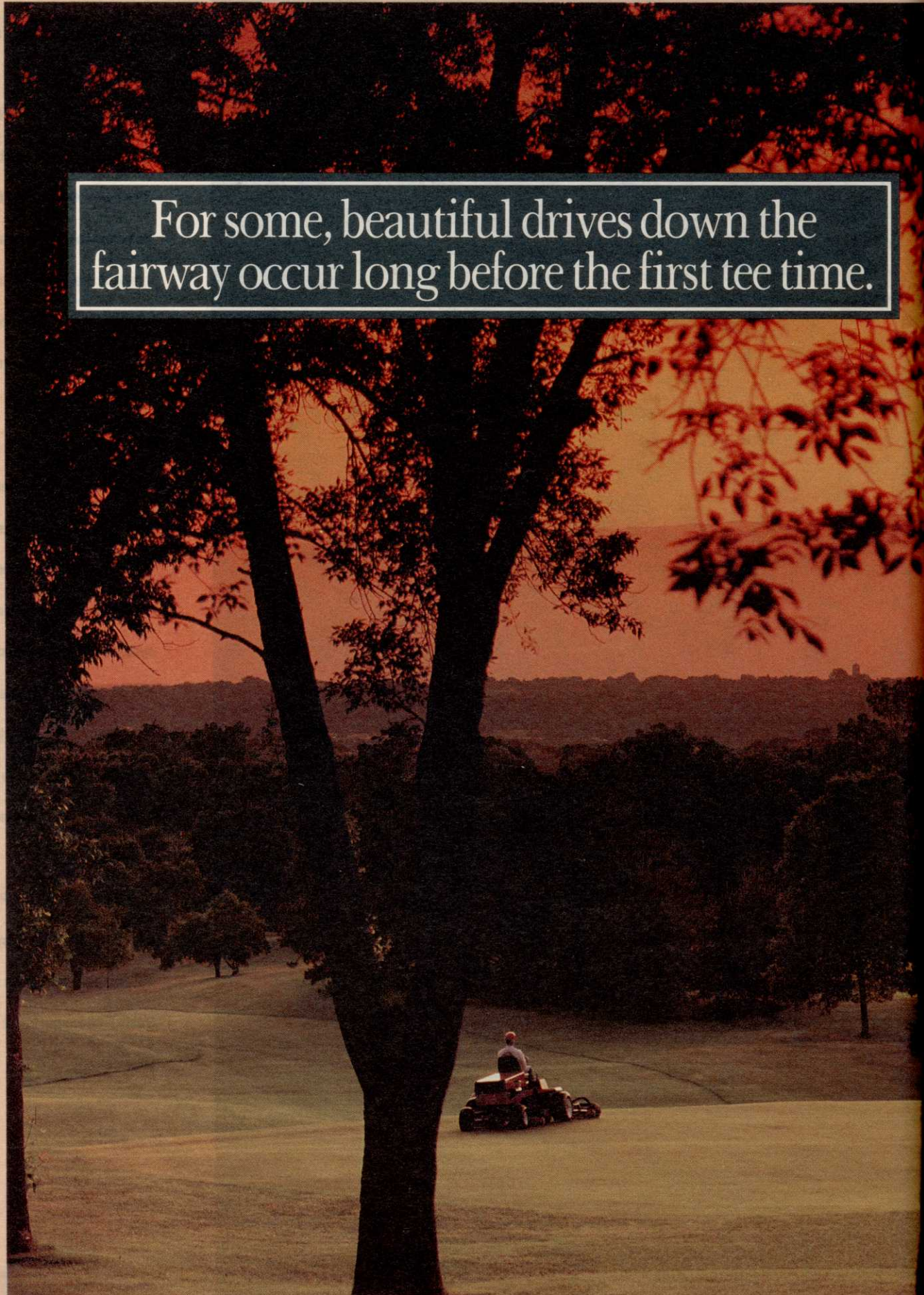
In the past, landowners with Williamson Act contracts who wanted to develop golf courses tried to cancel their contracts, paying hefty fees. Now more and more landowners are trying to argue that golf courses are allowed as a recreational use under the Williamson Act, letting them get other tax breaks and still develop the land.

The lawsuit's petitioners argue that recreational uses on state-protected farmland shouldn't displace agricultural production.

The Willms Ranch case is expected to set precedents for future development proposals on Williamson Act farmland. The case also will shed light on a new law that went into effect Jan. 1 tightening up the definition of what recreational uses are allowed on Williamson Act farmland.

The law doesn't specifically target golf courses, but it bars recreational uses on Williamson Act land that would hamper a farm's long-term productivity or displace the agricultural use of the land. The new legislation was aimed at stopping some of the more adventurous proposals for Williamson Act land, including gravel pits and horse-racing tracks.

The bulk of the Willms property would remain a cattle ranch.



For some, beautiful drives down the fairway occur long before the first tee time.