

Brit speakers to spice Americans' plate

Well-known British turf experts and a panel of British golf architects will be featured speakers at the annual meeting of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, April 22-29, in Scotland.

R.J. Price, author and lecturer, will discuss "The Landscapes of Scotland's Golf Courses" and James Kidd, director of turfgrass management at Gleneagles, will review the famed course's "Integrated Ecological Management Plan" at Turnberry Hotel on April 22.

The British Institute of Golf Course Architects will meet with ASGCA counterparts at the Russacks Hotel in St. Andrews April 26. Presi-

dent Joan Dudok van Heel, Chairman Cameron Sinclair, and Vice Chairman Martin Hawtree will lead the British delegation, which also will include two committee chairmen, Simon Gidman and Howard Swan.

ASGCA President Don Knott expects a record turnout for this Scottish meeting. "We first visited Scotland in 1980 as a group, and it turned out to be a critical point in the society's development," he said. "The visits to golf's historic courses had such an impact on our membership that we voted to have a meeting in the UK every five years, and since have benefited greatly from trips to Ireland and England."

Hills design makes 54 at Bonita Bay

BONITA BAY, Fla. — With the opening of Bay Island, its third championship golf course, Bonita Bay offers 54 holes of golf.

Designed by Arthur Hills, Bay Island opened in early November. It joins The Marsh and Creekside, Bonita Bay's other courses which also boast Hills' signature. In the Bonita Bay tradition, all three courses enhance the existing features of the land and preserve the natural beauty of the property bordered by Spring Creek, Estero Bay and the Imperial River. A wetlands slough frames many of the holes and several on the new Bay Island course play along Estero Bay.

Construction actually netted two new courses for Bonita Bay Club. "We split The Marsh, our original signature course, and combined nine of its holes with nine new holes to form Bay Island," explained Ed Rodgers, vice president of club operations for Bonita Bay Properties, Inc.

"We built nine new holes for The Marsh and brought all greens up to United States Golf Association specifications."

Upscale or die

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upscaling a necessary and desirable goal for many operators.

"Golfers expect a lot more on a public-access course than they did 10 to 15 years ago," said Roberts. "They want to come out and experience more of a country club atmosphere."

Beryl Artz, executive vice-president of Golf Corp., which operates 36 daily-fee public access courses in six states and more than 100 private courses, said Golf Corp. is looking into upscaling an older municipal course that is a unique example of golf course design. In this instance, history and aesthetics are inspiring the upgrade.

"It's in the preliminary stages but we're definitely looking at it," said Artz. "One of the questions is, can we take it to the next level? We think we can."

Upscaling is not an automatic success story. The key, say those with experience, is knowing the demand and needs of the market, and where to target the money. The most common mistakes are misunderstanding what golfers will see as an increased value for their dollar, and spending too much on improvements without having the golfers to pay the subsequently higher green fees.

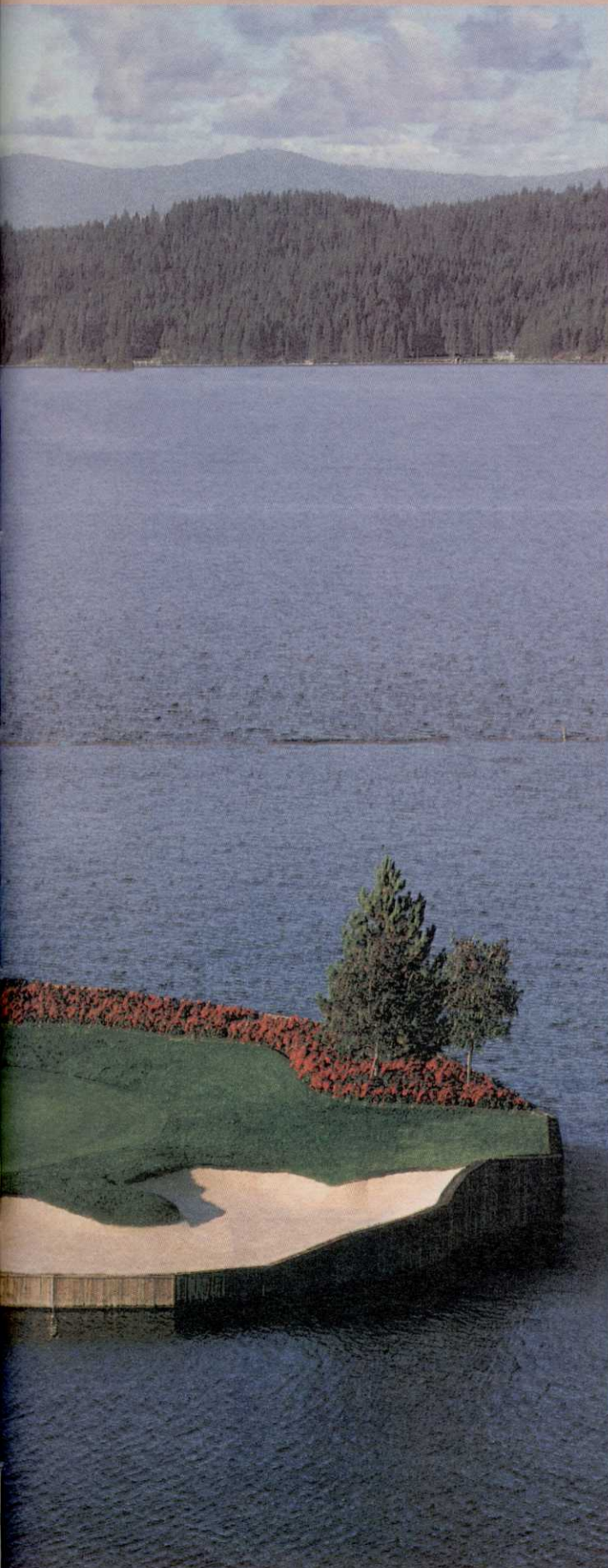
"You do the work first, then, when the golfers are happy with it, you increase the rates," said Roberts of American Golf. "If the work is good, people will still see it as a value."

Like Hirsh, Roberts sees course conditioning — and especially turf quality — as the number-one foundation for any upscaling.

"You must have a consistent, quality playing surface: greens, fairways, tees, rough, bunkers," said Roberts.

Roberts estimated that American Golf has done about 12 upscaling projects in the past four to five years. He said the cost has ranged from \$250,000 to more than \$1 million.

"It's very, very costly to maintain a course and there aren't a lot of entities that have money available to make substantial upgrades," he said. "Most of the time there's barely enough money to keep it from deteriorating. But once it starts to slip it can get away from you and the golfers realize it, they'll go somewhere else."



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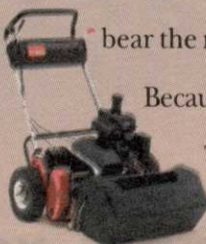
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