

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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INSIDE

GCSAA Report

Prepare for San Francisco with late-breaking news (p. 13), candidate profiles and honorees..... 26-32

Shocking Advances

Are electric greens mowers the wave of the future? Manufacturers act on the new technology 33

One Step Forward...

One step back? Golf races ahead on Mississippi coast but suffers a blow in Jacksonville 35



PALMER KICKS OFF EXPO

Arnold Palmer addresses attendees at the inaugural Golf Course Expo, which drew 1,500 public-access decision-makers to Orlando, Fla. For a complete rundown on the show and conference, see pages 10 and 62.

COURSE MAINTENANCE

USGA redefines regional commitments 13
Focus on Skip Wade & the organic approach 14
Savvy Super finds the ideal storage facility 21

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Q&A with Ohio's grand ol' man, Jack Kidwell 35
McCumber combines fine play and design 37
Larry Hawkins & Tom Walker join forces 39

COURSE MANAGEMENT

ClubCorp thinks global and realigns 47
Mundus promotes good business sense 47
American Golf aids California schools 50

SUPPLIER BUSINESS

GCSAA sponsorships continue to proliferate 53
Deere reorganizes Lawn & Garden division 55
EPA Round-up: Special review for triazines 56

USGA, wildlife groups cooperate on research

By MARK LESLIE

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Extensive research investigating golf courses as ecosystems will be undertaken as early as this fall, thanks to funding from the U.S. Golf Association (USGA) and enthusiastic support from several environmental organizations.

After a meeting here with environmentalists, Ron Dodson, president of the Audubon Society of New York and chairman of the USGA Wildlife Subcommittee, said: "The col-

lective agreement of all those attending was that instead of spending so much time looking at particular species, we should be looking at golf courses as ecosystems.

"And we should focus our attention on ecosystems where there are many golf courses and lots of potential for new courses to be built — like Florida, California, New England and the coastal mid-Atlantic region."

Enthusiated by the input

Continued on page 19

Summit illustrates need for image-building PR campaign

By HAL PHILLIPS

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — The recent Golf Summit yielded this stark realization: Poor public image stands as the single largest hindrance to golf industry growth.

If image isn't everything, it's darn close. Many still consider golf a pastime of rich, white males. Whether this assessment is less accurate than it was in, say, 1970, is irrelevant. The public at large has this perception, and it's particularly damaging because it adversely affects golf's other two major obstacles: the environment and player development.

This became crystal clear during Golf Summit '94, the two-day strategy session sponsored by the National Golf Foundation (NGF) here in November. In response, Summit attendees agreed that golf

Continued on page 12



Joseph Beditz



Pinehurst Plantation is one of the private clubs in the Golf Communities USA portfolio.

Golf Communities USA bucks public trend

By PETER BLAIS

ORLANDO, Fla. — Golf Communities USA President Warren Stanchina has always run against the tide.

When everyone was building private golf course communities in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Stanchina was buying and selling daily-fee facilities. "I usually made money," said the head of the Orlando, Fla.-based firm.

Now it's the 1990s. The consensus is that daily-fee developers are the

king and private course developers the jesters. While some may view Stanchina's recent purchases of several high-profile private course communities as the acts of a fool, he plans on laughing all the way to the bank.

"The United States is fast becoming a two-class country, the rich and the poor," he said. "That's why affordable, private courses will boom in the late 1990s. There are simply too many up-

Continued on page 51

The Ratings Game

What's fair, and has it affected design?

By MARK LESLIE

The good, the bad and the ugly. The dramatic and the costly. The bells and whistles — and foghorns. Golf course rankings have helped create them all.

"We accept some of the credit for elevating standards of golf architecture — which is good for the game and the business — and some of the blame for the escalating costs of architecture and, therefore, golf," said *Golf Digest* rating guru Ron Whitten.

"A lot of courses are built to make a great initial impression," said *Golf* magazine rating coordinator Tom Doak, himself a course architect. "Unfortunately, the surge of popularity of rankings has tended to obscure [the fact that] a golf course is not built so someone goes there once. Does the course have lasting value? Is it going to be better to play the 10th time than the first? Or is it going to get old really fast?"

The consensus is that the mere existence of the *Golf*, *Golf Digest* and other course rankings has meant more competition between architects — and devel-

Continued on page 42

Should
Conditioning
Be Judged? p. 44

Mark Leslie photo

New product pinpoints golf demand

MIDLOTHIAN, Va. - A new product that claims to quantify golf demand and potential for specific market areas down to the zip code level is now being marketed by Forecast Golf Group, Inc. T

he Golf Course Sales Potential Report is aimed at developers, investors and management companies.

Forecast has been providing similar sales potential data for range developers since 1990 and has expanded its methodology to the course segment of the industry to identify greens fee sales potential for public

golf courses. Forecast says it maintains an ongoing in-house database that can generate reports within days of a request.

"Many companies rely solely upon basic demographic information," said Forecast President James Murphy. "This information is essential, but it is only one piece of the puzzle. What makes Forecast unique is our ability to define golfer demand, in terms of dollar sales potential, for every zip code in the U.S."

For information contact Forecast at 804-379-5760.

Golf Communities

Continued from page 1

-scale daily-fee courses being built. Give me 500 members with \$200 monthly dues, and I can make some money. No one else is chasing that market.

"If you've got a good course you can basically trap your customers. They build a \$150,000 to \$1 million home bordering the course, spend \$5,000 to \$25,000 on a course initiation fee and you've got them. That's my focus."

Stanchina, a PGA professional

since 1974, started his real estate career in 1977 as assistant manager of a Michigan golf community. A few years later he formed his own company, U.S. Golf Services and Development, which acquired and operated 15 golf properties from 1983 to 1993. The firm concentrated on underperforming properties, most of which Stanchina righted then sold.

With an infusion of \$30 million of German investment capital several months ago, Stanchina formed Golf Communities USA. The firm's purpose was to acquire, construct and operate country club communities in prime golf destinations throughout the United States.

The company quickly acquired Pinehurst National and Pinehurst Plantation in Pinehurst, N.C. Pinehurst National has an Arnold Palmer-designed course and Pinehurst Plantation a Jack Nicklaus layout. When fully developed, the two communities will have more than 1,000 homesites. The company plans to pump \$7 million into property development and a new clubhouse.

Shortly thereafter, Golf Communities purchased Cutter Sound Golf & Yacht Club in Marin County. In addition to an 18-hole course, Cutter Sound includes 96 boat slips and 200 homesites. Extensive course improvements and a new waterfront yacht club are planned.

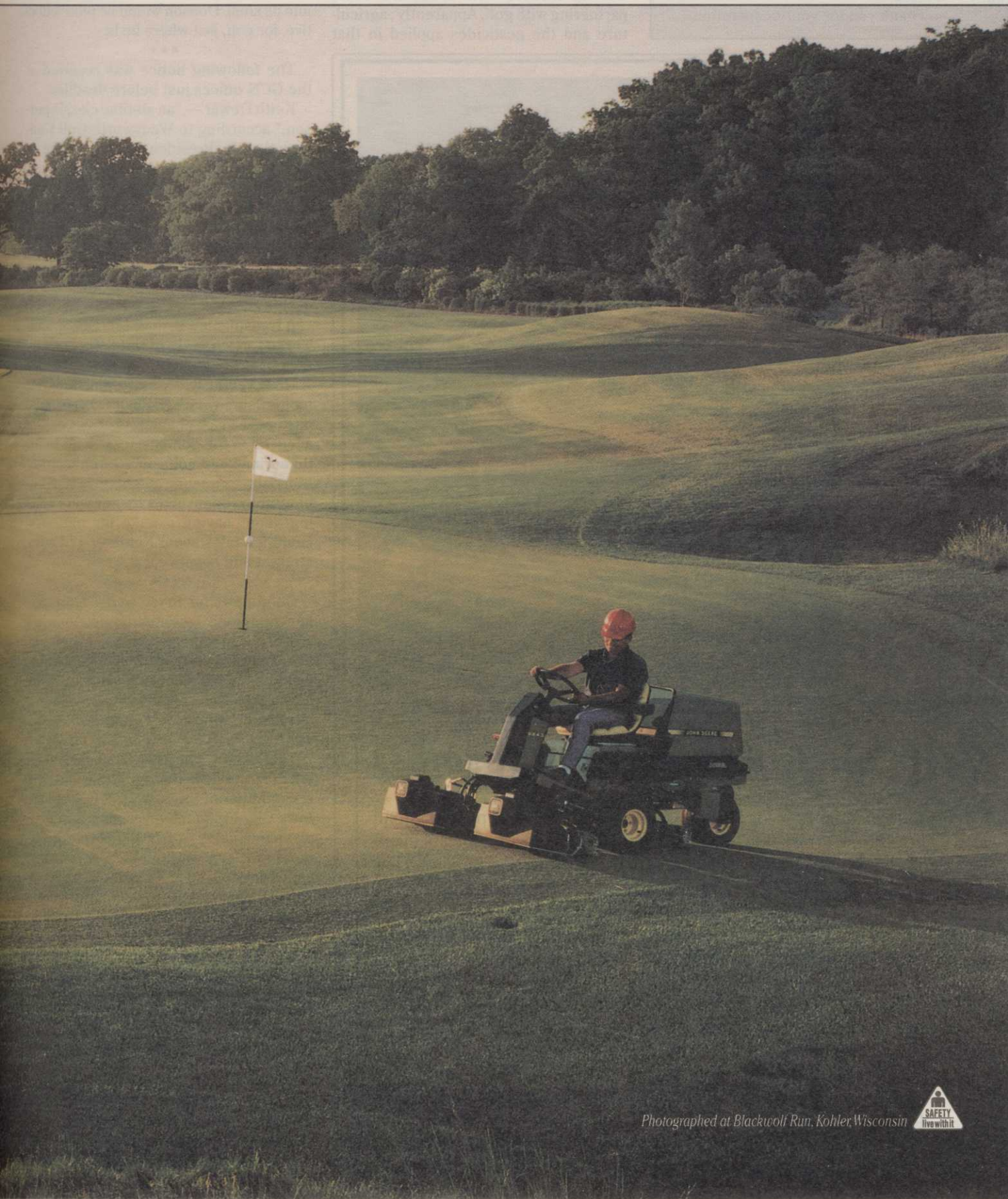
"Our first priority with any project is course condition," Stanchina said. "I have two brothers who are superintendents. We're more concerned about the turf than the presentation of the filet mignon in the clubhouse."

The company is also developing Montverde Country Club in Orlando, a 400-lot subdivision with a Stanchina-designed course scheduled to open next fall; operates Pleasant Hills Golf Club in Mt. Pleasant, Mich.; is under contract to acquire a 9,000-acre project in Tennessee; and is pursuing developments in Naples, Fla., Atlanta, Arizona and the Carolinas.

"Once we get through all that, we'll tighten our belts a little," Stanchina said.

In evaluating potential acquisitions, Stanchina said Golf Communities looks for clubs with roughly 250 members where membership and developer goals may conflict; a quality, modern course with large greens, tees and landing areas; at least 200 surrounding, undeveloped homesites; and a minimum price of \$5 million.

After purchasing a golf property, Stanchina turns it over to a management team whose members have different responsibilities but equal authority. A general manager oversees the entire operation with a superintendent, food and beverage manager, golf pro and business manager contributing their expertise.



Photographed at Blackwolf Run, Kohler, Wisconsin



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