

BRIEFS



NGF PROMOTES FRANK

JUPITER, Fla. — Barry S. Frank, 36, has been named manager of NGF Consulting Inc., a subsidiary of the National Golf Foundation specializing in feasibility and operational studies for planned and existing golf facilities. Frank will direct five other consultants for NGF Consulting, which also offers acquisition/due diligence studies for investors and lending institutions.

DONALD ROSS TREE DEDICATED

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — Oak Hill Country Club, site of the 1996 Ryder Cup, has dedicated a tree on its Hill of Fame to honor famed golf course architect Donald Ross. The Hill of Fame, located on the 13th hole, memorializes golf legends by dedicating trees in their honor. Ross designed more than 400 golf courses during his career, including Oak Hill, Pinehurst and Inverness. Mrs. Dale Shapiro, a granddaughter of Ross, attended the ceremony.

HARBOTTLE BREAKS GROUND

STEVINSON, Calif. — Ground has been broken here on the Stevinson Ranch Savannah Course. The 7,000-yard daily-fee track, designed by John Harbottle and George Kelley, is the first 18 holes of a planned 36-hole project by The Lurie Company and GHK Development. Construction is scheduled to be completed by the summer of 1995.



John Harbottle

ST. LOUIS ADDS COMMUNITY

ST. LOUIS, Mo. — Conrad Properties Co. has teamed with three The Jones Co., Meyer Homes and McKelvey Homes to develop St. Louis's newest golf community. The proposed 390-acre site will have 560 homes and an 18-hole golf course with a learning center. The course will be an upscale daily-fee facility. The project is estimated at \$4.5 million. John C. Allen has designed the course. Construction of the clubhouse began in November, with completion expected in time for a course opening in April or May.

CYPRESS LAKES OPENS EXECUTIVE

LAKE LAND, Fla. — Cypress Lakes, named the number one community in the U.S. by the Manufactured Housing Congress, has completed and opened its new executive golf course. The 3,680-yard course, designed by Chip Powell of Powell Golf Design, winds through and around numerous cypress hammocks.

Mississippi's coast eyed by developers

By PETER BLAIS

GULFPORT, Miss. — Local officials expect a developer to announce plans this month to build one or two golf courses along the Mississippi coast, a move that will help diversify the area's casino gaming-dominated economy.

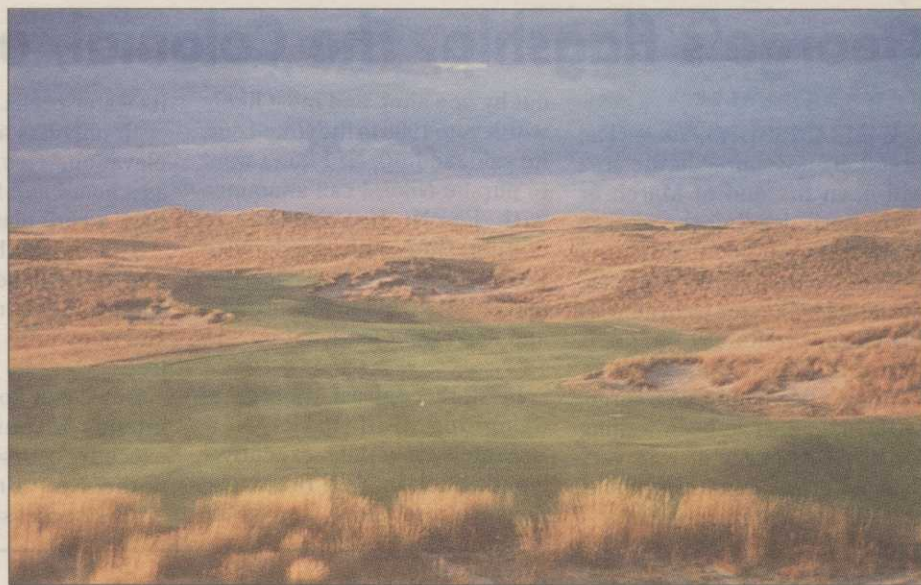
"We've had three groups looking at the marketplace so far and expect three more this month," consultant Donald Wizeman said in early December.

"One group wanted to buy an existing facility and a second was still looking for financing. The third group proposed taking two of the six primary sites we want to develop and would like right of first refusal on the other four. We're negotiating right now and I expect something to be signed by the end of January."

Harrison County Development Commission Executive Director Michael Olivier said: "We're looking at \$4 million to \$5 million signature courses. We need some good tracks for the area to emerge as a major golf destination. We hope to have five or six projects get underway this year and be on line sometime in 1996."

As reported in the August issue of *Golf Course News*, the Harrison

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EARLY FAVORITES?

Golfers everywhere are already talking about where these two golf courses will be rated in the 1995 polls. Owners of Sand Hills in Nebraska, top, and the Links of North Dakota will have to wait to see. Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore designed the Nebraska track out of that property's sand hills, while Stephen Kay tooled the North Dakota 18 out of the Badlands. For more on *The Ratings Game*, see p. 44-46.

Florida Cabinet nixes Ross course in favor of park

By MARK LESLIE

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Jacksonville citizens, city councilors, state legislators and golfers lost a major vote by a "lame-duck" state Cabinet, which unanimously voted to retain Ft. George Island exclusively as a state park.

Jacksonville area citizens, who overwhelmingly support reclaiming Ft.

George Island Golf Club, now must hope the new Cabinet will listen to them.

Gov. Lawton Chiles and the Cabinet voted unanimously on Dec. 13 to keep the golf course closed, retaining the entire 500-acre island as a state park. The Jacksonville City Council had set aside \$2 million to refurbish the Donald Ross-designed golf course, and support was

strong from citizens who pointed out that merely 67 acres would be maintained.

But after 20 minutes of speeches from both sides, including opponents Friends of Fort George Island and the Florida Audubon Society, the governor and Cabinet voted without debate.

"I'm still in shock," said proponent John

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Jack Kidwell: 'Retire' not in his vocabulary

Scratch golfer, Class A golf professional, golf course superintendent and award-winning designer, Jack Kidwell has been one of the most prominent, knowledgeable and respected men in Ohio golf for the past six decades. Kidwell, now in his mid-'70s and living in Columbus, is a former member of the PGA, a past president and lifetime fellow of both the American Society of Golf Course Architects and Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. He started caddying at age 7, worked on a grounds crew at 16, bought the nine-hole Beacon Light Golf Course with his father and ran it at 19, and, in 1958, designed his first 18-hole course at 39. Since then he's designed or renovated more than 100 courses. His design practice has since been bought out by protégé Dr. Michael Hurdzan, but he remains active.

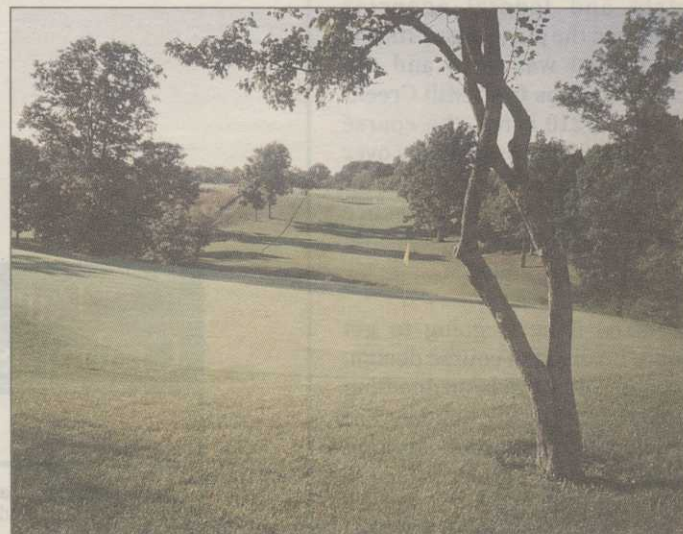
Golf Course News: Did your early experiences with golf, i.e. as a caddie in the 1920s) shape your ideas about golf and golf course design?

Jack Kidwell: I'm from a different age than golf today... The changes in golf have been so dramatic I think sometimes I've

Q & A



Jack Kidwell



A Jack Kidwell creation — Hickory Hills in Columbus, Ohio.

been left behind. I've done a lot of work that's been well accepted but I do find it hard to think of spending \$8, \$10, \$20 million to build a golf course. All I remember about my caddy days was that it was hotter than blue blazes and I was tired. I do think I did learn a lot about human character. A lot of fellas that play golf show what they're made of when they're playing.

GCN: When did you start playing golf?

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Q&A: Kidwell

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JK: I started when I was seven. I won the state high school championship in Ohio with a borrowed set of ladies clubs. I couldn't afford a set of sticks until I was about 18 or 19. Things were tough then.

GCN: What were your early days like at Beacon Light in the late 1930s?

JK: Golf was so cheap then. Brookside had a joining fee of \$100. You could play almost any golf club in Columbus for 65 cents. Beacon Light was being badly

managed. I went home one night and asked my father if you could buy land without any money. We bought it from Otterbein College on a land contract with no money down. I came in and I was the work crew, the pro and the superintendent. I had a young chap, nationally known now, Dr. Michael Hurdzan, who joined me as a laborer when he was 15.

GCN: What was your first golf course design job like?

JK: In 1958 there were two fellas who were nightclub owners that wanted to build a golf course [Twin Lakes GC] on the south side of Mansfield. I remember my

instructions were, "We don't care about the golf course, we want to make sure [the golfers] get by the clubhouse and the bar as often as possible." The bar was going to be their big money maker. We got them by the clubhouse seven times and it's been well used.

GCN: Who are some of the golf architects you most admire?

JK: I'd have to say Mike Hurdzan has come further in a shorter period of time than I ever dreamed of. This boy has his nose in books, articles, and he writes. I don't know how he has time to sleep. Jack Snyder is wonderful. Rees Jones is another. I have to

include Bobby Jones, Papa Jones, he's done more for golf... I hate to name fellas like this because I know so many of them and they are so gifted and talented. I've learned so much from every one of them. I'd have to throw in Mr. Nicklaus too, although I don't know how much designing he does, and don't let me forget Pete Dye [whom Kidwell competed against in high school golf competitions].

GCN: What sort of work did you do in your first years at Beacon Light?

JK: When I got my feet on the ground I started rebuilding

greens and tees — and that was really my apprenticeship.

GCN: Is Beacon Light still operating as a golf course?

JK: No. I sold Beacon Light in 1970 to a real estate developer. It's a housing development.

GCN: As far as courses you've designed, what are your personal favorites?

JK: I have to say that Hueston Woods State Park might be the best 18-hole public golf course in the world for the money. It was \$250,000 to build in 1968. We did one here in Columbus, what you'd call a blue-collar country club, and we built that for \$481,000 — that's Hickory Hills C.C. I think we did three nice ones in Cincinnati: the Vineyards GC, Beckett Ridge G&CC and Blue Ash GC.

GCN: Did you ever consider working beyond Ohio?

JK: My lifestyle was such that I liked to be home at night. Dr. Mike [Hurdzan] has logged 50 million miles since he bought me out. I just couldn't endorse that kind of life.

GCN: What do you think of design in the last 10 to 20 years?

JK: I think the average player that goes out to lay down \$75 to \$150 to play some of these courses needs a potato sack to carry the balls around he's going to need. I'm not so sure that it's possible to design a golf course that everybody can play. For a while there it seemed to be a contest to see who could build the hardest golf course. Most of the \$6, \$8, \$10, \$12 million course they are building,

I look out at the first fairway and it's 100 feet across and, to me, that takes away the skill of hitting the driver that someone's been working on for years. Does it take the \$15 million to make the player? Or can a boy learn to play — and play well — on a golf course that isn't in that class?

GCN: Do you feel your courses have stood up well over time for playability and maintenance?

JK: Most of my work was what you might now call Mom and Pop golf courses: low budgets and a necessity to make money... I designed courses around Columbus that are still getting 40,000 rounds a year.

GCN: Do you see any problems with golf course designing and building today?

JK: I think the golfing industry has been a little bit asleep at catching the new golfer. The National Golf Foundation contends that golf is played by 8 to 10 percent of the population. That means there are 90 to 92 percent that don't play golf and I have to ask why. Some of the most heavily played and successful courses we've done are Shamrock, which is what I called an improved executive.

We did an 18-hole executive at Blacklick Woods and it's outdrawn the big course there consistently. I don't think we've provided enough for the beginner. But you don't build reputations building small golf courses.

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