

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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USCCA to offer clubs group buying option

By PETER BLAIS

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — A recently formed organization designed to cut costs and increase efficiency at private clubs has ruffled a few feathers among other golf associations. The main focus of the United States Country Club Association (USCCA) is a group purchasing program called the Cooperative Alliance for Purchasing (CAP), according to

Jeffrey Dykehouse, USCCA's founder, president and sole stockholder.

CAP reportedly leverages the buying power of USCCA member clubs to provide the best possible price for products and services such as insurance, maintenance equipment and supplies, food and beverage products, office equipment, irrigation materials and equipment, golf

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Jack Nicklaus (from right), Jack II and design associate Chris Cochran survey plans in Palm City, Fla..

Nicklaus hops aboard the public-access bandwagon

By MARK LESLIE

NORTH PALM BEACH, Fla. — The Nicklaus umbrella is about to expand, adding public-access golf clubs and community development and management to its bulky portfolio.

Keying on a market tailor-made for his name and the fast-growing segment of public golfers, Jack Nicklaus is starting a network of Golden Bear Golf Communities featuring semi-private, daily-fee golf courses.

First out of the gate will

be Golden Bear Golf Club at Laurel Springs, north of metro Atlanta in southern Forsyth County. Ground was broken in April. Watch for future communities in Dallas, Chicago, Detroit, Tampa and Nashville, said Golden Bear Financial Services President Ira Fenton,

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SPRING START-UP?



Pro-active, mountain maintenance paves way for late spring opening

By MARK LESLIE

KEYSTONE, Colo. — While golf courses elsewhere across the northern tier of the country are taking off green covers and tending to new young turf in April, superintendents like Steve Corneillier at Keystone Ranch Golf Course are snowblowing their greens clear in May.

"The term 'spring start-up' takes on a whole new meaning here," said Corneillier, whose been keeping to this upcountry regimen for decades. "This is springtime in the Rockies at 9,300-foot elevation..."

"When it snows on July 4th weekend we're never sure if we should count that toward last year's snow or next year's," he laughed, although snow did shut down the course for two days on that weekend in 1993.

In his 20 years at Keystone Resort, this has been

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Sticks & Stones: Firms play the name game

By HAL PHILLIPS

The automobile industry annually spends millions of dollars researching model names that will catch the fancy of consumers. Sometimes the money is well spent; sometimes it may as well have been flushed down the toilet. Who, for example, dreamed up the Ford Probe, a product aimed ostensibly at young women on the move? Unfortunately for Ford, marketing experts believe the name tends to remind young women of pending trips to the gynecologist.

The Probe may be the golf course

superintendents' equivalent to an herbicide called Leech-Rite.

While the dollar value is modest in comparison, suppliers to the golf course industry also spend a great deal of time and money on the formulation of product names. Perhaps because of their sheer number and the often thankless nature of their functions, seed varieties and turf chemicals are tops when it comes to invention. Is it coincidence that so many seed varieties share names with automobiles?

"Mustang, Falcon, Dasher, Fiesta,

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Nicklaus aboard public-access train

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adding that two land deals could be finalized by the end of July.

"Laurel Springs will be semi-private and daily-fee," Fenton said. "Atlanta is a very good daily-fee golf market. This is a gated community, but it will have middle-market housing and ... families whose capital and savings are going to educate their children rather than toward \$40,000 to \$50,000 golf memberships."

"We feel the daily-fee market is an area of opportunity for us,"

said Golden Bear International Golf Development Director Clyde Measey from his office here.

While the first Golden Bear Golf Community is Laurel Springs, Nicklaus and son Jackie are building the first Golden Bear Golf Club in Stuart. Expected to open in December, it will retain the tone of the communities, operating as a semi-private and daily-fee facility, said Golden Bear spokesman Andy O'Brien.

"It will be the first of a network of golf courses — first in the

United States, then internationally," O'Brien said.

Besides the Stuart facility, future Golden Bear Golf Clubs will be tied to the residential communities, Measey said. It's entirely a Golden Bear operation. Nicklaus Golf Design is designing the courses. Paragon Golf Construction, Inc. is building them and Executive Sports Inc., operating under the Golf Course Sports Management Division, will manage them. Former PGA West Director of Golf Steve

Walser has been hired to head the management team.

The cornerstone of the 630-acre Laurel Springs project will be a Jack Nicklaus Signature course, which Golden Bear will design, build and manage, Fenton said. The course should be completed within 24 months. Buildout of 854 single-family homes — by a dozen hand-picked Atlanta-area builders — is expected to begin in five months and be completed in six to eight years, he said.

It will be a model for future Golden Bear Golf Communities. Property owners may elect to

have privileges, like preferred starting times and favorable pricing, that non-property owners won't have, Fenton said.

Saying the Golden Bear group has worked on the concept for two years, Fenton said a key backer is a New York investment banking partner. Over the next five years, the network may number 10 to 15 projects, he added.

He forecast that each project will possess one 18-hole Nicklaus course. "Project size is an important consideration," Fenton said. "In the '70s and '80s you saw massive projects and thousands of house lots. We're trying to stay small enough that we can see the beginning and end of the project and not submit ourselves to unknowns in the economy."

Important in any market is doing business with local developers with proven track records and with knowledge about approvals, zoning, government and environmental agencies, he said. "We are trying our best not to be developers. Our function is to put these deals together with the right people and make sure they are structured in a manner that makes sense, as well as coordinate the marketing aspects."

For instance, Laurel Springs Development Co. in Atlanta consists of local developers Peter Millichap, Fritz Rybert and Lamar Wakefield, who have been in business for years, Fenton said.

Golden Bear chose Atlanta, Dallas and the other cities because of economic advances, particularly "net new jobs."

In recent years, Atlanta has added in excess of 80,000 net new jobs a year," Fenton said. "It is a market that is very strong into the 21st century..."

"Dallas has averaged 50,000 net new jobs a year for the last few years. That brings an ongoing demand for new housing."

Fenton said Golden Bear intends to set itself apart by the prestige of Jack Nicklaus himself.

"People know we deliver a quality product," he said. "Jack is a partner, not just designer, in these projects. When he puts his name on anything, people know that represents quality."

Projects Nicklaus has designed and built for other developers "have outperformed competition for absorption rates and maximizing pricing," Fenton said. "We have done two communities in the past — Wynstone in Barrington, Ill., and Country Club of the South in Atlanta. Both are high-end, healthy products with private golf courses.

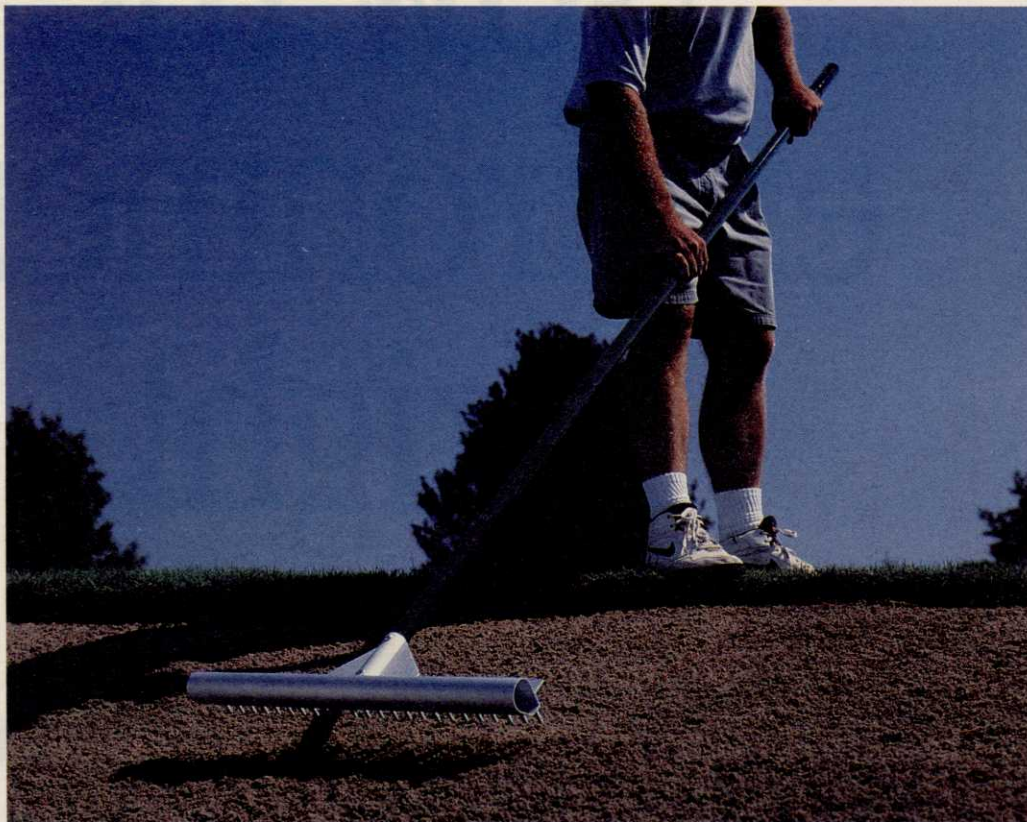
"Today, we're trying to [reach] a much broader market... The average home in Laurel Springs will be \$325,000 to \$350,000, compared to \$800,000."

Meanwhile, since only 30 percent of homebuyers in golf course communities historically play golf, there should be plenty of tee times at the Golden Bear Golf Clubs. At least initially. As the communities mature and fill up, less time will be available, Fenton conceded.

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