

NEWS IN BRIEF

DAYTON, Ohio — Walnut Grove Country Club here recently celebrated the conclusion of a two-year \$650,000 project that has modernized the 60-year-old course. Architect Brian Huntley of Canton oversaw the renovations, which included introducing the course's first water hazards at holes No. 3 and No. 13, a computerized dual-strand irrigation system, bunker reconstruction and grass mounds to provide backdrops for many of the greens. The work started on the back nine in 1993 and finished in April.

OXNARD, Calif. — The River Ridge Golf Club, Oxnard's 18-hole public course, has completed its \$200,000 clubhouse renovation and the first phase of a three-part, five-year golf course remodeling. The Ron Fream Golfplan Design Group Ltd. of Santa Rosa, Calif., developed plans for the course remodel. The labor and engineering were completed by Kyle Kenny of High Tide and Green Grass, the course operator.

EL PASO, Texas — The Underwood Golf Course here at Fort Bliss recently opened the newest 18 holes to be built in the El Paso region since Painted Dunes opened in 1991. The 36-hole facility is now called the Underwood Golf Complex. The new 18-hole layout is a desert-type golf course with very few trees and six small lakes.

FARMINGTON, Conn. — The Tunxis Plantation Country Club is about to become the largest golf facility in Connecticut. Nine new holes are expected to open in July, which will make Tunxis a 45-hole daily-fee facility. The new nine will connect with the club's existing "Green" course. Parts of the Green course have also been redesigned with new mounding to resemble the new holes.

Familiar face, VIT, secures Ocean Course from RTC

By PETER BLAIS

CHARLESTON, S.C. — The owner of Kiawah Island's other three resort courses was reportedly the successful bidder at the recent auction for the Ocean Course, the Pete Dye-designed layout made famous as the site of the 1991 Ryder Cup. Virginia Investment Trust (VIT) was the only fully conforming bidder for the seaside track, according to Tom Harris of CB Commercial, which marketed the Ocean Course for the RTC. VIT operates the Turtle Point, Osprey Point and Marsh Point courses, as well as the Kiawah Resort Inn.

RTC spokesperson Mike Fulwider re-

fused to confirm, however, that VIT was the winning bidder. Any purchase is subject to bankruptcy court approval, Fulwider said. The court is scheduled to render a decision this month.

VIT reportedly offered \$27,000,100, the minimum acceptable bid (also known as the reserve price) set by the Resolution Trust Corp (RTC), which has controlled the Ocean Course since former owner Landmark Land Co. filed for bankruptcy several years ago.

Charles Way, who developed Kiawah's residential area and the private Tom Fazio-



Tom Harris

designed course currently under construction, submitted the only other sealed bid. Way's bid was below the RTC's reserve price making him ineligible to buy the property, according to Harris.

VIT, Way and the Audubon Society of New York submitted an unsuccessful bid to buy the course late last year. A bankruptcy judge rejected that proposal because of concerns whether the partners could meet requirements imposed by local environmental groups. That decision put the

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MANCOUR UNVEILS SUGARBUSH

Sugarbush Golf Club, one of Michigan's newest, upscale, daily-fee courses, opened for play here in Davison on April 29. The Industrial Mutual Association of Flint began construction of the 18-hole, public golf course at its Potter Lake Park property in May 1993. Under direction of designer David Mancour, Sugarbush combines the natural beauty of towering sugar maples, marshlands, and a serene lake with strategically placed water hazards and sand bunkers. Mancour cleared as few trees as possible and those remaining are very mature, offering relative seclusion for golfers on each hole. The front nine holes are similar to the Scottish links courses, featuring rolling hills of heather and sand bunkers. The back nine are predominately wooded, with holes 17 and 18 bordering the picturesque Potter Lake.

Governor scuttles Jersey park plan

By J. BARRY MOTHES

TRENTON, N.J. — The latest proposal to build an 18-hole golf course inside Liberty State Park overlooking the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island has been rejected by Gov. Christie Whitman.

While Whitman's decision was a bitter disappointment to the Liberty State Park Development Corp. which had organized the proposal, it was a shocking but pleasant surprise to those who had opposed the plan for nearly three years. The decision, temporarily at least, puts an end to a long-running drama that had created much debate about golf course development on state-owned park land.

The Liberty State Park Development Corp. had proposed an 18-hole golf course to cover approximately half the park's 578 acres. The park features another 500 acres of water. The idea had been percolating off and on for 18 years.

Supporters of the proposed new golf course said it would help generate money to pay for other improvements in the Jersey City park. Opponents charged the course would run up a debt rather than

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CIRCLE #103

Tenn. park project to be replaced?

TIMS FORD, Tenn. — Tims Ford State Park here on the shores of Tims Ford Lake may not get a new, 18-hole Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course after all.

Just months after the state and the contracted Golf Services Group of Houston indicated Tims Ford had become a leading candidate to be one of the four state parks for new golf courses under a \$20 million project, it appears things have changed.

State Architect Mike Fitts recently told a Tims Ford Council

meeting that the state still has hopes of building a golf course at Natchez Trace even though the site was deemed too costly to build on by Golf Services. Fitts said a new golf course at Natchez Trace would fit with plans to expand a convention center and build a new inn. If Natchez Trace is chosen as one of the four sites to build a new course, Tims Ford would probably be removed from the list.

The other proposed sites are Chickasaw, Cumberland Mountain and Harrison Bay state parks.

Jersey renovation won't impede play

KENILWORTH, N.J. — The show will go on here at the 27-hole Galloping Hill Golf Course complex.

Despite undergoing a \$6 million facelift to improve drainage, install a computerized irrigation system and rebuild all tees and bunkers, Galloping Hill will remain open for public play.

Although the project is expected to take three to five years to complete, play on the

course will not be disrupted, according to County Manager Ann Brann.

Brann said construction will occur on only nine holes at a time, adding that the pitch-and-putt course will not be affected at all.

Beyond the major renovations to the course, the county is also in the conceptual design phase of a new driving range at Galloping Hill that would be lighted for night use.

Liberty Park

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make money. They also said it would turn a large chunk of a public park into a place that only a minority of people — golfers — could use.

"Liberty State Park provides green sanctuary in the state's most densely populated county," Whitman said, in announcing her decision. "More important, the park belongs to all the people of New Jersey. Public sentiment overwhelmingly supported keeping it that way, without a golf course. I agree."

"It is time to close this issue once and for all and move ahead with the original intent of Liberty State Park," Whitman said. "The idea was for Liberty State park to be a park in a classic sense — where people can go to enjoy quiet and solitude. A golf course doesn't fit that definition."

Instead of a golf course, Whitman has said she will direct state officials to tap part of the state's Green Acres fund to improve the park and make more of it available for public use. Officials have said it could cost as much as \$12 million to improve the partially run-down park.

Along with a golf course, Liberty State Park Development Corp. had proposed nine acres of ballfields and a 40-acre picnic and playground area.

Whitman and Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Robert Shinn Jr. had been expected to make a decision on the proposed course before the end of 1994. But several self-imposed deadlines came and went without a decision on the \$20 million question. Her rejection of the proposal was particularly interesting given the fact that she has been criticized by environmentalists for her business-friendly policies.

"It's obviously a disappointment," said Peter Ylvisaker, president of Liberty State Park Development Corp., an advisory group made up of local professionals. "We had asked Gov. Whitman to make a decision on the project and it's not the decision we had wanted. Now the task still before us is what we do with the 225 acres which is a valuable public resource and working on alternatives to the funding of the greening of Liberty State Park ... We still have our thinking caps on."

Whitman's decision to reject a golf course at Liberty Park comes at a time when several other states around the country are in the midst of proposals, some highly controversial, to build new golf courses in state parks. Tennessee is in the midst of protracted negotiations over a contract signed in 1994 to have four new Jack Nicklaus-designed golf courses built in four different state parks (see story above). Golf courses are also either under construction or soon to be inside state park land in Mississippi, Maryland and Texas.

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