

BRIEFS



DALY JOINS PALMER

ORLANDO, Fla. — Paul Daly (below) has been named vice president of club development for Arnold Palmer Golf Management. Daly has 25 years experience in golf having served as executive vice president and chief operating officer with Club Corporation of America, chief operating officer of Great American Clubs and president of Western Club Consultation and Management. Daly will be in charge of growing and managing Palmer Golf's management contract business and take a major role acquiring Palmer Golf's owned private clubs.



Paul Daly



David Rosow

IGG TAKES OVER WAMPONAG

WEST HARTFORD, Conn. — International Golf Group has signed a management contract with Wampanoag Country Club, founding home of the Donald Ross Society, according to IGG President David Rosow (above). IGG also owns Zephyr Spring Golf Club near Tampa, Fla., Persimmon Ridge Golf Club in Louisville, Ky., and Southernness Golf Club outside Atlanta.

SUNCOR PURCHASES GOLF & TENNIS

SEDONA, Ariz. — SunCor Development Co. and WLD Enterprises have purchased Sedona Golf & Tennis Resort, according to SunCor Vice President Thomas Patrick (below). SunCor will complete the golf cart paths, construct a permanent clubhouse and make minor modifications to the Gary Panks-designed course. Work should begin later this year.



Thomas Patrick



Richard Chulick

WALTERS ADDS GC OF ILLINOIS

ALGONQUIN, Ill. — The Walters Group has added The Golf Club of Illinois to its portfolio, according to President Richard Chulick (above). Walters' subsidiary Southwest Golf also operates Paradise Hills Golf Club in Albuquerque, N.M., and Mesa del Sol in Yuma, Ariz. Southwest plans immediate improvements.

AGC plans to expand upscale daily-fee golf course holdings

By PETER BLAIS

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — American Golf Corp. hopes to shed its image as an operator of only municipal and low-end daily-fee courses by adding more upscale properties to its portfolio over the next few years, according to the company's head of acquisitions.



Joe Guerra

"It's important for us to establish credibility by acquiring high-quality properties," said Executive Vice President Joe Guerra.

"We've been viewed as an operator of affordable golf courses. The reality

is that we operate in every segment — municipal, affordable daily-fee, high-end daily-fee, private entry-level and trade-up courses. We're similar to Marriott hotels in a way. They have several product lines among their hotels, everything from Fairfield Inns to their JW facilities. We have several product lines of golf courses."

Numerically, AGC is the largest operator of U.S. golf courses with more than 200 properties and 9,000 employees. Still, management companies in general operate less than 5 percent of all U.S. courses. Guerra sees that percentage growing.

At the same time, he foresees the number of management companies declining, with bigger operators getting bigger and smaller operators selling off their holdings as they realize the enormous returns they'd anticipated simply aren't available.

"The golf industry needs professional management services," the AGC executive said. "Between 1992-94 we saw many developers building courses. They liked the idea of building, but not necessarily the everyday operation of the course."

"AGC is not an owner of golf courses. We're a leaser and operator. We want to make a reasonable and fair profit. Our ratio of employees to customers is fairly high. You throw in uncertain weather and chemical costs, operational problems and a ton of other potential setbacks, and

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The Karsten Course at Arizona State University is one of Resort Management's college layouts.

RMA finds niche in university management

By PETER BLAIS

Resort Management of America operates three courses. The pro shops at all three were recently listed among *Golf Shop Operations* "America's 100 Best Golf Shops."

Now why, you might ask, would a superintendent's newspaper be concerned about that. Primarily because it indicates the philosophy behind one of the up-and-coming course management companies in the United States.

"My goal is to hire someone who knows more than me in each area of course operations and then get out of his or her way," said RMA President

Henry DeLozier.

In the case of the pro shops at RMA's three layouts — Arizona State University's Karsten Golf Course (GC) in Tempe, Stone Creek GC in Paradise Valley, Ariz., and University Ridge GC in Madison, Wis. — that person is Retail Director Becky Adams.

In the case of course maintenance at the three layouts, that person is Director of Agronomy Tom Regan. Prior to joining RMA, the Pennsylvania State University turf school graduate was head superintendent at Bethesda (Md.) Country Club and

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MARKETING IDEA OF THE MONTH

Partnering with hotels can increase course profits

By PETER BLAIS

ORLANDO, Fla. — By working with local hotels, a public course can add dozens of people and thousands of dollars to its marketing efforts at very little cost, according to Elaine Fitzgerald, president of a South Florida marketing firm and one of the featured speakers at Golf Course Expo held here.

"The golf industry as a whole is behind in marketing and public relations," the president of Fitzgerald Productions Inc. told a group of course owners and operators attending the *Golf Course News* -sponsored event. "That's largely because a stand-alone golf course has so few employees. A course usually has one person in a marketing position or the owner does it himself."



Elaine Fitzgerald

To overcome that situation, Fitzgerald developed a partnership between 25 area hotels and two upscale Broward County courses, Deer Creek Golf Club in Deerfield Beach and the Carolina Club in nearby Margate.

The hotels have large sales teams with combined marketing budgets totaling millions of dollars. They promote the golf program in corporate mailings, at national and international trade shows for travel agents, and on sales missions to associations and other groups.

They advertise the course in magazines and newspapers. The result for the courses is increased play by vacation

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PAR tee time service enters Ariz.

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — PAR Golf Systems has entered the Arizona golf market with a tee time network linking a well-respected area hotel with four widely known courses.

Resort Suites can now provide computerized access to instant tee time reservations at Stonecreek The Golf Club; the Karsten Course at Arizona State University; Grayhawk Golf Club; and Tonto Verde Golf Club.

The Hyatt Regency Scottsdale was scheduled to join the so-called PARNET system in February and discussions are underway with a number of other resorts and courses. PARNET allows the golf concierge at the resort to book starting times through the hotel's computer without making a phone call.

PAR has provided the technology for five other regional tee time networks, the largest of which links 55 golf courses and 20 hotels in Myrtle Beach, S.C. Other regional networks are located in Orlando, Fla., Ocean City, Md., Traverse City, Mich., and York County, Pa.

GMs must view greenkeepers in new light, GCSAA official says

By MARK LESLIE

FALMOUTH, Maine — Declaring superintendents are "without doubt responsible for the greatest asset that any club or golf course has," R. Scott Woodhead urged general managers, green chairmen and others gathered here to adjust their views of greenkeepers.

A certified golf course superintendent and Golf Course Superintendents Association of America board member, Woodhead said: "We can no longer be viewed as the dude out in the barn who grows grass while he chews on a blade [of grass] on the mower... It is through our management practices that we have a direct effect on the bottom line of any golf club."

Speaking at a meeting hosted by the Maine GCSA, he said superintendents should not be viewed "as just the largest expense item on the budget, because the success of attracting players is based on a superintendent's ability to meet the aesthetic, agronomic and playing standards of his or her club. There is no question that the more players you have on your golf course, the more green fees you will rack up, the more business there will be in the pro shop and restaurant, the more revenue from your driving range and practice facilities, and, in the case of private facilities, the more members you have the more dues they will give."

The superintendent at Valley View Golf Club in Bozeman, Mont., Woodhead added his colleagues are also critical to the cost savings in the business. "The superintendent's skill in controlling labor, equipment and supply costs has a direct effect on the financial statement of any club," he said. "And by being up-to-date on environmental regulations that occur daily on any golf course, your superintendent is saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines and penalties."

The new breed of superintendent, he said, is "highly educated, highly skilled and highly professional." Agronomy consumes merely 10 percent of today's superintendent's schedule. "I spend 90 percent of my time managing the golf course," he said.

In a remark aimed at club officials, Woodhead said: "Standards set on any course should not be so high they cannot be met with the resources provided to the superintendent. Make sure customers don't expect more than they are willing to pay for. If they want to see Pebble Beach on Sunday morning, they should be prepared to pay \$200 greens fees."

Marketing Idea

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and business travelers who spend large sums on food, lessons and merchandise. According to one study, visiting golfers spend seven times as much per visit to a Florida course as do local golfers. Fitzgerald noted.

"The Japanese always seem to buy a new set of golf shoes," she said. "The Germans and Swedes buy new clubs, because they are so expensive back home. The program resulted in hundreds of thousands of dollars in advertising for Deer Creek and the Carolina Club. We had 100 people from the hotel staffs promoting our courses."

What did all this promotion cost the two Franklin Properties-owned courses? Very little.

The arrangement called for the two courses to guarantee guests at participating hotels their lowest advertised golf rates. A VIP package designed to give hotel guests "that little something extra," provided such perks as range balls, yardage books, bag storage, lockers (when available), souvenir bag tags, merchandise discounts and a second cocktail all free of charge.

But more importantly, guests were allowed to book tee times up to a month in advance of their visit, something most courses don't allow for individuals or small groups.

"Guests are guaranteed the opportunity to get on a world-class course at times that fit their schedules, even in season," Fitzgerald explained. "By reserving in advance through their hotels, guests don't have to fight for tee times once they get there. This is a big selling point for the hotels."

The courses also offered the hotels commissions ranging from \$5 to \$10 for each golfer sent to their facilities. Bellmen, desk clerks and concierges could keep the commission as an incentive for promoting the courses to guests. Hotel sales managers could pass on the commissions to groups to encourage additional business.

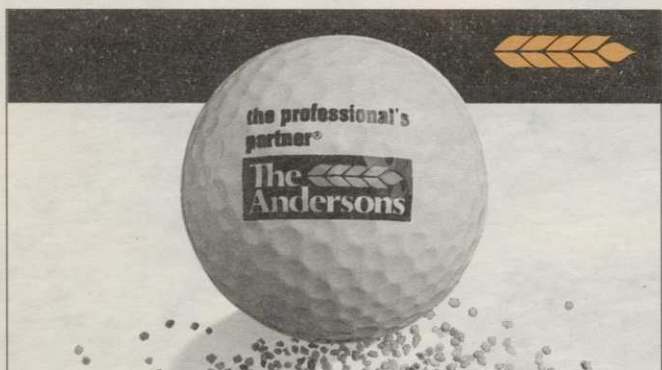
"It's a win-win situation," Fitzgerald said. "The course benefits from the hotels selling their courses and the additional volume that generates. The hotels benefit from being able to provide an additional benefit that helps fill rooms. Golfers get guaranteed tee times at the low rates plus a VIP package that makes them feel special."

The program has been in effect for three years. Twenty-eight hotels are now participating and it is "still going strong," Fitzgerald said.

A similar program could work anywhere there are two or three hotels that don't have courses of their own, but would benefit by having their guests have access to one, Fitzgerald said. All hotel chains have sales staffs as do larger, independently owned operations.

"Even Mom-and-Pop operations can help a course's business. It's inexpensive to print up vouchers that hotel staff can encourage guests to use," she said. "Your golf course is one of many things competing for a guest's time. If the hotel staff is pushing your course, then you can benefit."

"Worldwide, the tourism industry generates \$74 billion worth of business a year. There's no reason the golf industry shouldn't get a good share of that," she added.



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