

BRIEFS



NGCOA ELECTS OFFICERS

ORLANDO, Fla. — The National Golf Course Owners Association elected its officers during the association's recent annual conference here. Re-elected were Jim Scott of Gull Lake View in Augusta, Mich., president; Cliff Rampy of Treeline Golf Club Inc. in Tomball, Texas, vice president; Bill Stine of Kissimmee (Fla.) Bay Golf Club, secretary; and Jerry Hollingsworth of Singing Hills Golf Club in El Cajon, Calif., treasurer. Also newly elected to the board of directors were Roy Clark of Mill Creek Golf Club in Mt. Frontenac, Minn.; Ian Kunesch of Rolling Greens Golf Club in Newton, N.J.; and Kelly Miller of Pine Needles Country Club in Southern Pines, N.C.



Jim Scott

CLUBCORP ACQUIRES COTO DE CAZA

ORANGE COUNTY, Calif. — A Club Corporation of America subsidiary has acquired Coto de Caza Golf & Racquet Club. The club's second Robert Trent Jones Jr.-designed course is scheduled to open this spring. This is the fourth country club a CCA subsidiary has purchased in Southern California in the past year. Mission Hills Country Club (CC) in Rancho Mirage, Desert Falls CC in Palm Desert and Indian Wells CC are the others.

CMAA PROMOTES AUSTIN

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The Club Managers Association of America has promoted Alyson Austin to manager of its Premier Club Services Department. In her new post, Austin will help develop and implement new programs, products and services for club operations. She will also monitor legislative activity and report to members critical information on issues of concern to the club industry. Austin was previously education coordinator.

AGC'S JAMES EXPANDS DUTIES

DALLAS — Ken James, senior vice president of operations, Central Region for American Golf Corp., has added the Eastern Region to his management responsibilities. James, who will continue to work out of Dallas, now supervises operations at 70 resort and daily-fee golf courses in 18 states. James joined AGC in 1983 as regional director for Texas.



Ken James

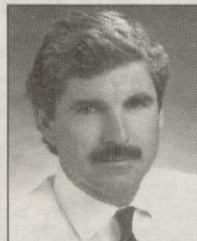
MARKETING IDEA OF THE MONTH

Charleston adds automated tee time network

By PETER BLAIS

CHARLESTON, S.C. — Sandwiched between Myrtle Beach and Hilton Head, Charleston is often overlooked as a golf destination. But course owners, lodging providers and civic officials hope their soon-to-be-unveiled central tee time reservation network will change that.

"Golf has grown significantly as visitors look for things to do in the Charleston area," said Kate Darby, director of visitor services for the city. "We hadn't aggressively promoted ourselves as a golf destination until recently. By [electronically] tying tee times and golf courses together, we hope to increase [tourist] revenues significantly in the Charleston area."



Mike Tinkey

The PAR Golf System network, which is scheduled to come on line in June, is the result of a rigorous, six-month search for a reservation network tailored to the needs of the Charleston area, according to Mike Tinkey of Sports Management and Marketing Services, who facilitated the arrangement between PAR and a consortium of course and lodging facility operators as well as the Charleston Area Convention and Visitor Bureau.

The system will provide one-stop shopping for golf and lodging reservations, electronically linking 17 courses and a dozen lodging providers. Getting course

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Blackthorn Golf Club is one of North American Golf's many Midwest properties.

North American Golf Inc. at crossroads

By PETER BLAIS

A fork in the road looms ahead for North American Golf (NAG).

The Lombard, Ill.-based company recently signed a financial agreement with the real-estate subsidiary of a major utility. The agreement will provide NAG the capital to build, manage and/or buy more courses as it seeks to become an increasingly significant player in the management company market, according to Chief Operating Officer Michael Rippey.

Meanwhile, since the start of the year, a half-dozen firms have approached Rippey with offers to buy his company and consolidate NAG's operations with their own.

Go it alone or consolidate. Right fork or left.

"There are many companies out there like ours where the owners have a lot of sweat equity into the business," said Rippey, whose firm has

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Clubhouse view at Prairie Landing

Chicago firm buys GreenVisions Inc.

By PETER BLAIS

CHICAGO — Crown Golf Properties has acquired GreenVisions, Inc., a Chicago-based golf management and construction company. The agreement melds two management firms that historically concentrated on different market niches.

Crown, also based in Chicago, owns and manages upscale golf facilities, resorts and golf real estate properties. GreenVisions manages public golf facilities under contract or long-term lease, including a number of municipal layouts. GreenVisions has also built and/or grown in 17 courses since 1989.

"Our strengths are very complimentary," noted Tim Miles Sr., president of GreenVisions. "Our partnership will allow us to access the entire market by offering the most comprehensive package of experience and expertise."

Under the agreement, Crown remains general partner. Limited partners who will actually manage the business include Crown's Bill Wolf and Scott Flynn and GreenVisions' Miles, Allan Swaringen and former

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COMMENTARY

Credible feasibility work rare but key to successful golf course development

JAMES E. McLOUGHLIN

We constantly hear of the need for more golf courses across the country. The often-heard cry is "one new golf course opening a day would not be enough." Accepting the premise, it is surprising the industry has so little feel for what it takes to develop golf courses on a consistent basis. Consequently, national golf development has been slowed consistently and unnecessarily.

For example, the basic prerequisites for developing a golf course are: (i) the availability of a sufficient amount of net usable land that is permissible; (ii) credible feasibility analysis; and (iii) adequate funding. Only when all three components are in place can a golf course be developed. Gaining access to qualified land is the easiest of the three tasks. More often than not, the stumbling block is the lack of credible feasibility work, which the industry erroneously takes for granted as an automatically deliverable service.

Common opinion throughout the golf community and its associated media is that the primary reason why more golf courses are not developed is due to lack of consistent adequate funding. This is not a valid premise. There has been a good supply of working capital available for golf course development for some time.

However, the combination of private money availability and the recent Orange County, Calif. bankruptcy has shut down public-sector funding sources — leaving private funding as the sole source of development money today. This is not too serious a problem because private money has been funding up to 80 percent of all golf development through the early 1990s.

The purpose of this commentary is to advise that accessible private-source development funding is not always available to golf because credible feasibility services — without which no

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Charleston

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owners and lodging operators to agree on the components of an electronic system took many group meetings and consultations with system manufacturers to find out what was technologically feasible.

What emerged was five pages of criteria. A request for proposal was sent to a number of electronic tee time systems. Among the general requirements were:

- Sources and method of reservations.
- Strategic direction.
- Security and method of rotation of reservations/confidentiality of proprietary information.
- Information on the golf customer, an exceptional and flexible database.
- Flexibility, ease and speed for reservations and the electronic starter sheet.
- Course information, i.e., make it clear and easy to sell for the reservations.
- Sample screens and reports.
- Tournament and group events management and scoring.
- Service and dependability of system.
- Other considerations, add-on accessories and features.
- Financial stability of company.

Course and lodging operators eventually selected San Francisco-based PAR from among five companies that were asked to demonstrate their systems. Others considered were Smith Business Systems of Canton, Ohio; Double Eagle of Pleasanton, Calif.; SCAT of Charleston; and XRS of Tulsa, Okla.

"Our group was very impressed with PAR's performance in other markets, the itinerary search, the ease of operations of the touch-tone feature, the overall speed of the system and PAR's vision of a global reservations link for golf packages," Tinkey said.

Courses on the network will include three at Kiawah Island Resort (Marsh Point, Osprey Point and Turtle Point), both Seabrook Island Resort courses (Crooked Oaks and Ocean Winds), and the two at Wild Dunes Resort (Harbor and Links). Others are Charleston National Country Club (CC), Coosa Creek CC, Crowfield Golf & CC, The Dunes West Golf Club, Legend Oaks, Oak Point GC, Patriot's Point Links, King's Grant Golf & CC, Shadowmoss Plantation GC and Stono Ferry GC.

The cost for courses to sign onto the system depends on the amount of equipment needed to participate, Darby said. "We had 100 percent acceptance of the fees," Tinkey noted.

The costs of researching the various systems came from the Charleston Area Visitors Bureau while marketing was funded, in part, by matching funds from the state government. "By undertaking group actions like this, golf destination areas can become eligible for various economic

development or state tourism funds," he added.

Tinkey believes more golf destinations will install electronic tee-time reservation networks in the next few years. An area needs a minimum of eight to 10 courses to sign on in order to give golfers enough alternatives, he added.

"Airlines introduced computerized, on-line reservation systems in the 1960s," Tinkey said. "Car rental agencies came aboard in the 1970s and hotels in the 1980s. The 1990s and beyond will see attractions like golf courses and theme parks joining networks."

Crown/GreenVisions

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majority stockholder Ram Thukkaram. GreenVisions Golf and GreenVisions Golf Construction become subsidiaries of the new Crown Golf Properties and will retain existing staff.

"We can provide a full range of services to a broad clientele, while creating new opportunities for our employees," Flynn said.

Added Miles: "We're keeping the GreenVisions name for the construction part of the business. Crown will own, lease and manage the facilities. Our intent is to build substantial operations in both areas. As for building new courses or renovating existing [Crown] ones, nothing definite

has been determined at this time."

The new Crown Golf Properties manages 18 golf facilities in six states. Crown-owned operations include Stone Bridge Country Club (CC) in Aurora, Ill.; Bardmoor North Golf Club (GC) and the Bayou Cub in Largo, Fla.; the golf operations at Snowmass (Colo.) Lodge and Club and the Ojai (Calif.) Valley Inn. Crown also manages Empire Lakes GC in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.; Wood Ranch CC in Simi Valley, Calif.; the Hamptons GC in Hampton, Va.; Riverside and Blackhawk golf courses in Janesville, Wis.; Settler's Hill GC in Batavia, Ill.; Glendale Lakes GC in Glendale Heights, Ill.; Highland Park (Ill.) CC; Lakewood GC in Village of Lakewood, Ill.; and Heather Ridge GC in Gurnee, Ill.



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MILORGANITE DIVISION - MMSD
1101 NORTH MARKET STREET
MILWAUKEE, WI 53202
800-287-9645