

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

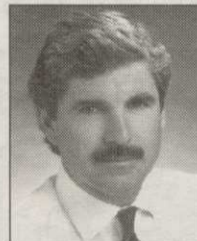
MARKETING IDEA OF THE MONTH

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

Continued on page 59



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

Continued on page 56



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

Continued on page 59

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

Continued on page 58

LESSIG NAMED DIRECTOR OF GOLF AT SUNRIDGE

FOUNTAIN HILLS, Ariz. — Jeff Lessig has been hired as director of golf at SunRidge Canyon, a new master-planned golf community developed jointly by SunCor Development Co. and MCO Properties. Lessig will manage all golf course operations at the Keith Foster-designed layout which is scheduled to open by mid-November.

North American

Continued from page 55

been involved in more than 80 projects and currently manages seven.

"We started this company nine years ago. But there's still a big gap between ourselves and the really big guys. Companies like ours have to worry about holding our own while staying competitive with the larger firms. It's a tough choice."

For now, NAG will continue to mix it up with the big boys on its own. And Rippey is confident his firm can compete.

"There are three things that differentiate us," Rippey said. "First, we have the talent and expertise of the larger companies. Our senior management team is a match for anyone. We're small and can stay close to our clients, but our management team reads like that of a larger firm. That positions us well for the future."

"Second, we're a legitimate full-service firm that can take a project from conception through actual operation. That differentiates us from many other supposedly full-service companies that are actually a consortium bring-

ing various firms together to complete a project. A truly full-service firm is an advantage to a new developer because he can look to one company for accountability all the way down the line.

"Third, we operate a wide range of facilities. Our most significant is Medinah (Ill.) Country Club. It's 54 holes, a prestigious layout with 300 employees. At the other end of the spectrum we have some average-cost, daily-fee facilities where we've succeeded in producing a quality golf experience and a strong bottom line. Some people say it's a mistake to have a wide fo-

cus. But because of our people, we can do a good job anywhere."

In addition to Medinah, NAG manages Blackthorn Golf Club (GC) in South Bend, Ind.; Hawk Ridge GC in Lake Saint Louis, Mo.; St. Lawrence GC in Canton, N.Y.; The Club at Mill Creek in Mebane, N.C.; Prairie Landing GC in West Chicago, Ill.; and Emerson (N.J.) GC.

In each case, the company has assigned a general manager to work with the owner. The GM communicates daily with the corporate vice president for operations.

In 1985, Rippey founded Can-Am Golf Enterprises, a full-service golf company that evolved into North America Golf. As COO and one of five principals in the company, Rippey directs all business development activity at NAG facilities.

The firm recently added two golf industry veterans to its operations management group.

Allan Irwin is vice president of operations. In that capacity he heads the management teams at Medinah, Prairie Landing, and The Club at Mill Creek. Irwin formerly directed the club management division at Jack Nicklaus Development Co. and at one time managed Sentry World in Stevens Point, Wis.

Joseph Zaleski is vice president of golf operations. He oversees Blackthorn GC, Emerson GC, Hawk Ridge GC and St. Lawrence GC. A Class PGA professional, he has extensive daily operations experience. Zaleski was formerly chief operating officer of Fore Golf Inc. and vice president for operations of the Fairway Group.

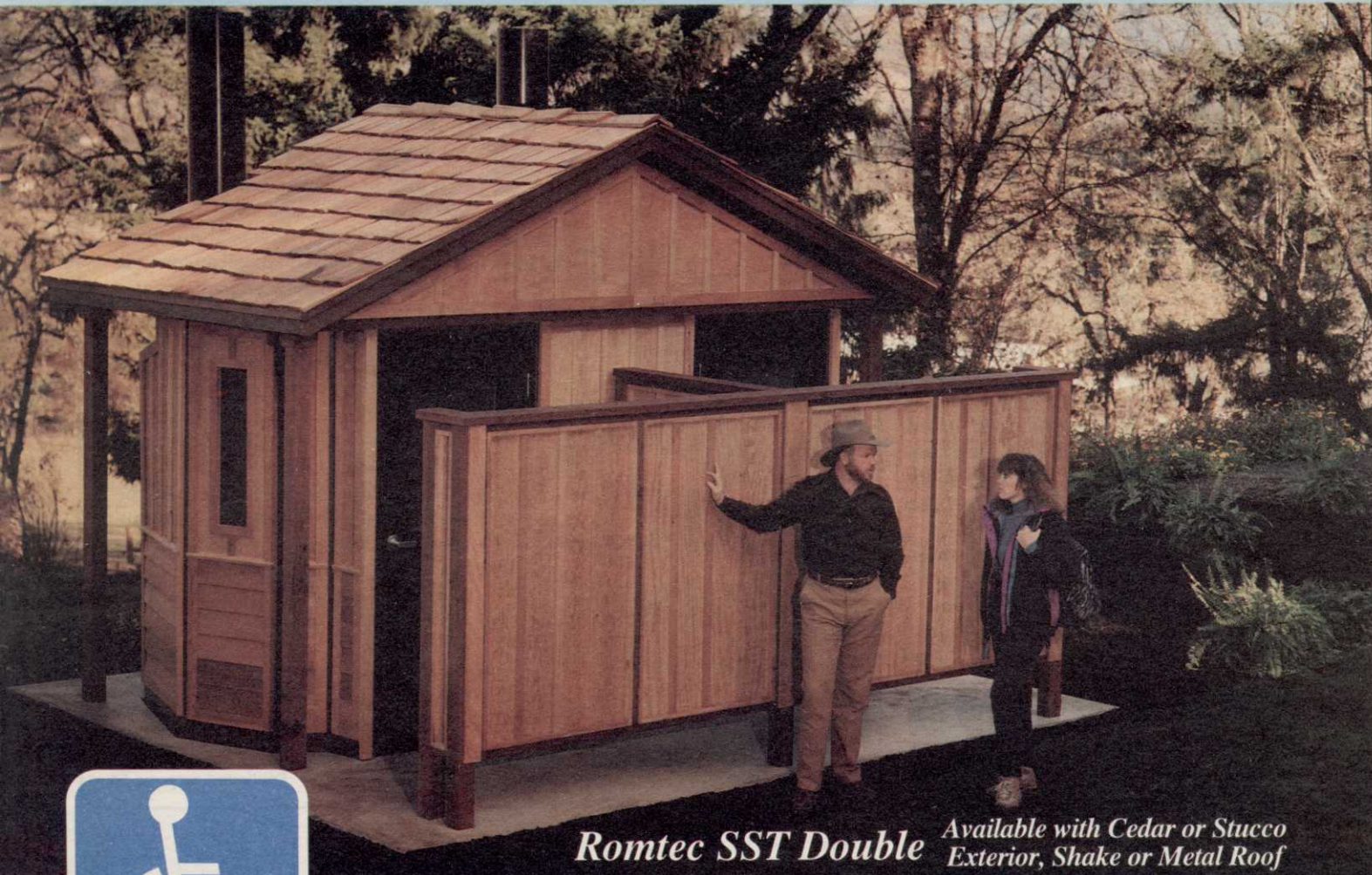
Another key manager is Director of Construction and Maintenance Mark Fischesser. A Michigan State University graduate, he spent several years as a European project manager for Robert Trent Jones Sr. and later became director of maintenance for a European golf course management company. Fischesser directs on-site design and construction activities and serves as a consulting superintendent to NAG-operated courses.

"We have just three layers of management—the principals, two vice presidents and the people who work at the facilities," Rippey said. "That allows senior management to get to know our clients and have personal contact."

With the addition of a new financial partner, NAG management considered six course acquisitions in March alone, Rippey said. The firm is looking for public facilities in the \$2-to-\$5 million range with surrounding developable property. The company is concentrating on cities of 300,000 to 1 million people east of the Mississippi River.

"It's much easier to market a course in a community that size than a large city," Rippey said. "You have to spend \$100,000 on advertising to even make a dent in Chicago. In South Bend we can get a lot of attention for \$25,000."

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