

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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Resort membership? CMAA mulls options

By PETER BLAIS

Expanding its educational program to include more offerings of interest to managers of upscale public resorts is one of the items that could be considered as the Club Managers Association of America (CMAA) reviews its strategic plan in the coming months.

CMAA's main goal is to broaden employment prospects for its 5,000 members, explained James Singerling, executive director of the Arlington, Va.-based organization for private club managers. Increasingly, private clubs are competing financially against public facilities, such as upscale resorts.

Resorts sometimes have far superior amenities and accommodations than nearby private clubs. With hotel rooms running at \$350 a night and green fees of \$150 per round not uncommon, upscale resorts are

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GOLF COURSE



EXPO

ORANGE COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER
ORLANDO, FLORIDA
NOVEMBER 9-10, 1995

A NATIONAL EXHIBITION AND CONFERENCE FOR OWNERS,
SUPERINTENDENTS, MANAGERS, AND DEVELOPERS OF
PUBLIC-ACCESS GOLF FACILITIES

THROUGH PROFIT...

Learning centers in vogue

By PETER BLAIS

They can make money, lots of money. And they don't cost much, relatively speaking. For those reasons, practice centers are becoming increasingly popular among public and private developers.

Governmental bodies are particularly fond of them because everyone can use them, not just the 10 percent of the population who call themselves golfers.

"Anyone can hit a bucket of balls on the range or try a few putts. Practice centers reach a bigger audience than a municipal golf course," said Bill Kerman, an associate designer in Michael Hurdzan's course design office. Hurdzan will speak at Golf Course Expo on *The Value and Trends in Golf Learning Centers* at Nov. 9-10, in Orlando.

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FASTER PLAY AND PROFIT?

Electronic-distance measuring systems are poised to make a big impact on bottom lines. See story page 41.

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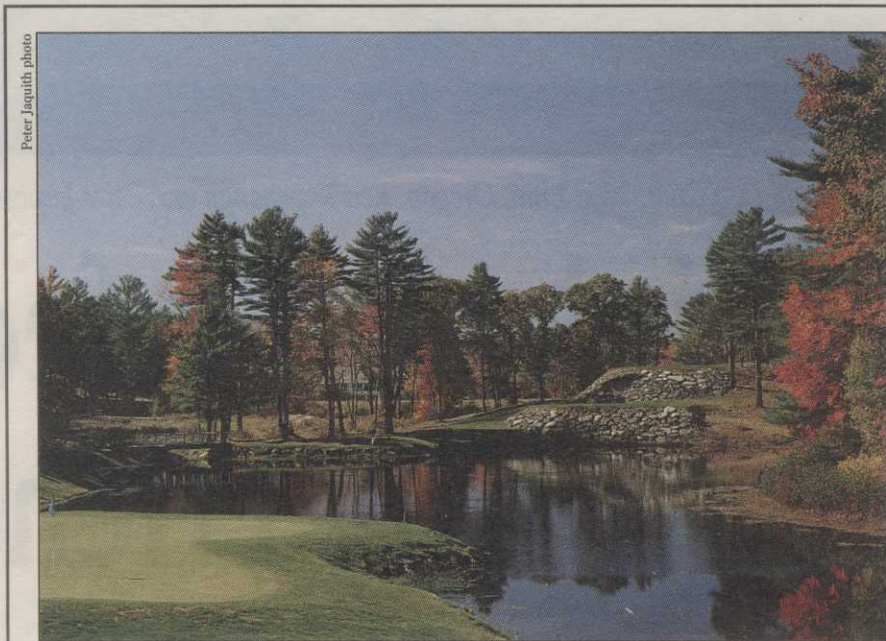
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Peter Jaquith photo

COMEBACK COURSE

The 5th hole at Ipswich (Mass.) Country Club hasn't always been so idyllic. A victim of the '80s real estate bust, Ipswich fell into disrepair and nearly went under before solid management turned things around. For story, see page 10.

Cactus forest preserved via transplantation

By JERRY ROSE

TUCSON, Ariz. — Startling vistas, colorful sunsets, giant cacti, splashes of green in the midst of desert. This is golf in the Southwest. Now, a Scotsdale developer, Raven Golf, has created what may

be a golf course construction prototype for preserving desert vegetation and animals.

"We really wanted to show ourselves as good citizens of the community and good stewards of the land," said spokesman Steve Adelson, speaking of the extraordinary lengths Raven Golf went to in protecting the integrity of the

moran Desert surroundings at The Raven Golf Club at Sabino Springs. "It's our sincere belief that great golf can and should co-exist with its environment. That is why

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A cactus is spared through preservation at Raven GC, Sabino Springs course, in Tucson, Ariz.

Super survey reveals concern and confusion

By MARY MEDONIS

An overwhelming majority of superintendents call themselves "very concerned" about the environment and nearly one-third feel government agencies provide inadequate disposal methods and other pertinent information, according to a survey.

A questionnaire sent to superintendents across the country to elicit their views on environmental matters garnered more than 40 responses. While they do not provide a random sampling statistically, they demonstrate varied opinions dealing with different state organizations, on a wide variety of golf course conditions.

There seems to be no
Continued on page 24

CMAA mulls changes

Continued from page 1

often more exclusive than private clubs. It is not surprising, therefore, that private club managers often look at these facilities as another potential employer.

"If our members tell us they want more offerings related to the resort industry, then that could happen," Singerling said.

CMAA members will make their feelings known regarding this and other issues during focus groups the association is holding at its Business Management Institute training sessions and at chapter meetings throughout the country. The eight-to-15-person focus groups are part of the strategic planning process begun in September. Many suggestions should emerge from the brainstorming sessions. These will be whittled down to six to eight initiatives members want the association to address over the next few years.

Just what those initiatives might be are anybody's guess. A similar process undertaken in 1992 resulted in a worldwide network through which private club managers can communicate by computer.

Recommendations from the current strategic planning process will be placed before the CMAA board of directors next July and the full membership at the 1997 national conference in Orlando.

Whatever happens it will affect the golf industry. Of the association's 5,000 members, 3,500 work at private clubs. Three-fourths of those clubs have golf courses.

CourseCo active in Far West

Continued from page 41

former high-level California bureaucrat.

CourseCo was formed in 1990 as an offshoot of EBITgolf Inc., which was formed two years earlier to lease and manage municipally owned Riverside Golf Course in Fresno. CourseCo is developing a master plan for the city for the accelerated reconstruction of Riverside. In 1990, the National Golf Foundation awarded the course its Public Golf Achievement Award in two categories — promotion of public golf and golf course maintenance.

CourseCo also manages the golf operations at Deep Cliff Golf Course in Cupertino and Mallard Lake Golf Course in Yuba City. CourseCo employs approximately 100 people at its four courses. The company has also provided specialized agronomic services at facilities it doesn't manage, such as Bodega Harbor Golf Links, Bakersfield Country Club, Sherwood Country Club in Thousand Oaks and Petaluma Golf and Country Club.

"We have a regional concentration in Northern California and the Northwest," Isaak said. "We're actively looking at Oregon and Washington."

"Maintaining quality as you grow is the challenge. We think our niche is somewhere between a Mom-and-Pop operation with its obvious limitations and the larger management companies with their long lines of distribution. Our growth will be constrained by our emphasis on maintaining quality."

"We're not looking at buying 15 or 20 courses and then taking ourselves public. We're looking at places where we can make a difference by improving a project."

That was the case at Riverside. CourseCo committed to

spending at least \$300,000 annually on course maintenance when it took over the operation in 1988. The course was in dire need of upgrading and CourseCo exceeded that amount by an average of \$60,000 annually over the next three years, Isaak said. CourseCo rebuilt many bunkers, added a 1/2-acre bentgrass nursery, installed an 8,000-square-foot practice green and completely rebuilt three other greens.

"Greens fees had been real cheap at Riverside and golfers were concerned about fee increases when we took over," the CourseCo executive said.

"But they saw how much we were investing in the course and began to support us."

That support allowed CourseCo to raise green fees 60 percent between 1989 and 1992 without any golfer opposition and with the unanimous support of the Fresno City Council.

Altogether, CourseCo has managed \$2.5 million in improvements to its facilities since 1992, including a complete clubhouse reconstruction, parking lot addition and tee reconstruction at Deep Cliff; a driving range and rebuilt miniature golf course at Mallard Lake; and a proposed state-of-the-art irrigation system at Mather.

Isaak was general manager from 1977 to 1980 of the Bodega Harbour Homeowners Association, where he completed and opened the golf course. While that experience opened his eyes to the golf industry, he spent most of the next decade in government and politics.

Among the posts Isaak held while in the employ of the state of California was director of the Office of Majority Consultants and Chief Administrative Officer.

Isaak's partners include fellow Stanford University graduates Mark Fredkin, a San Jose lawyer, and John Telischak, a real estate developer residing in Marin County as well as Director of Golf Course Maintenance and Construction Gary Rogers and Director of Club Operations Steven Schwartz.

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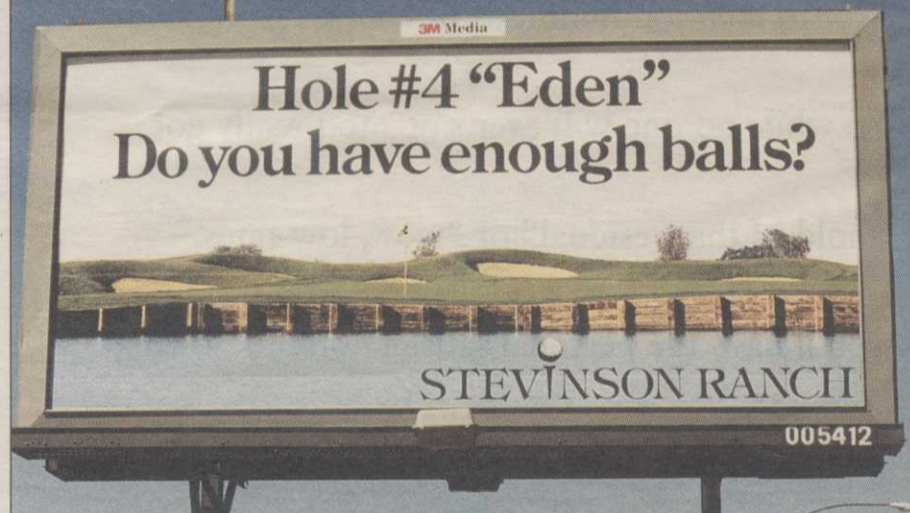
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R M R T A

MARKETING IDEA OF THE MONTH



This sign touting the opening of Stevinson Ranch has stirred some controversy in Central California.

Stevinson Ranch

Continued from page 41

versial. But it got us a lot of attention and some additional play. I don't have any regrets about using it."

The challenge and the beauty of this environmentally friendly 18-hole layout attracted a number of golfers during its first two weeks of operation. The John Harbottle design opened Sept. 30. The course averaged 170 rounds weekdays and more than 200 weekends at green fees ranging from \$35 weekdays to \$45 weekends.

"It's been very well received so far," Kelley said. "And people have lost a few balls. I'd say the average is three to four a round."

Part of the reason for that is the care Harbottle and Kelley took in designing the course.

"It was important to us that we preserve the natural environment of the wetlands," said Kelley, whose family has owned the surrounding property for more than 100 years. The wetlands actually resulted from a man-made earthen irriga-

tion canal constructed in 1905.

Kelley, whose partners include his brothers and former San Francisco Giants owner Bob Lurie, said the project was built along the lines suggested by the New York Audubon Society's Cooperative Sanctuary Program.

"Our first priority in developing this golf course was to respect the community and history of Merced County and its environment," said Harbottle.

The 18 holes were laid out over 450 acres, 150 of which are wetlands, Kelley said. While the course borders wetlands, it never enters the environmentally sensitive areas. "We agreed to a mitigation plan to create another 120 acres of wetlands to compensate for the areas where the course borders existing wetlands," Kelley said.

To further demonstrate its environmental sensitivity, Stevinson Ranch is instituting a caddie program to encourage golfers to walk rather than ride.

"We're losing a lot of cart revenue, but it's worth it environmentally. Plus, I'm a traditionalist and like the idea of caddies," Kelley said.