

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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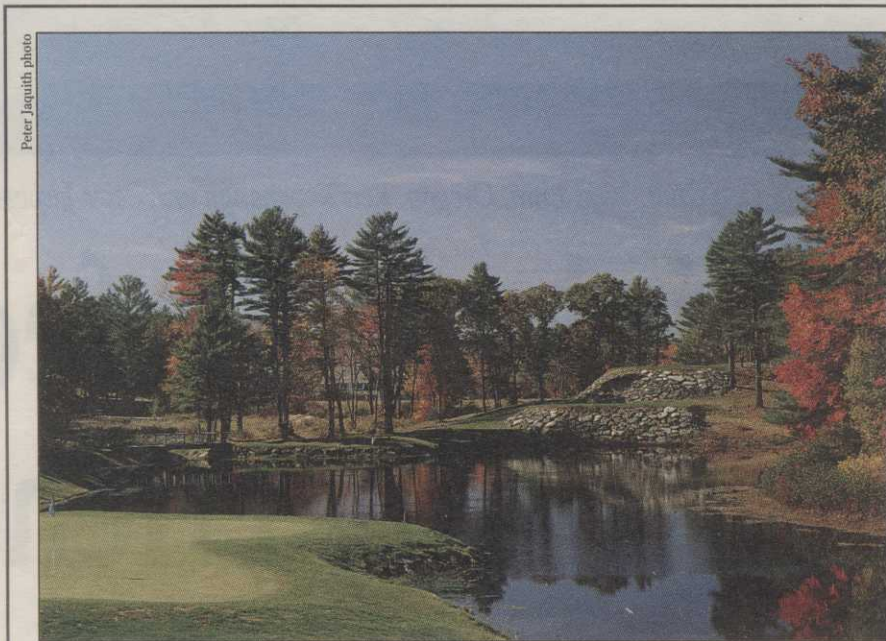
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Peter Jaquith photo

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

Publics don't have learning center monopoly

By PETER BLAIS

HILTON HEAD ISLAND, S.C. — While public practice facilities are improving, it could be some time before they catch up with the new practice center under construction at Belfair.

The private club, located five miles from the bridge to Hilton Head Island, will soon boast a 30-acre practice center that will be at the disposal of the 36-hole complex's 770 members. The first 18 Tom Fazio-designed holes are scheduled to open in November and the practice area in March.

Developer David Everett has been in the real estate business since 1973. The former University of Georgia golfer was associated with golf resorts in Florida and Texas before his most recent effort as marketing director at Colleton River Plantation near Hilton Head. There he helped develop a nine-acre practice facility (most in the Hilton Head area are no more than six acres) and par-3 course that together are considered one of the finest practice centers in the country.

"More people are taking up golf late in life," said Everett. "They are fascinated with practicing and getting better at the game." They will have that chance at Belfair's practice facility where, Everett said, "there isn't a shot on the golf course you can't practice."

Start with a pair of practice tees, one 175 yards and the other 160 yards wide. Awnings are available to protect students from the sun. The teeing areas open onto a 375-yard-long fairway and target greens. The four greens in the middle of the range area are surrounded by bunkers, lending realism to drives and approach shots launched from the teeing area.

A chipping green with an adjoining sand bunker allows players to practice sand shots. Trees border the opposite side of

the chipping green, where golfers can chip out from under leafy overhangs.

During the summer, small, biting insects — commonly known as no-see-ums — infest Hilton Head. Not to worry at Belfair, however. Electrical wiring running under the tee area allows fans to be plugged in that blow the bugs away.

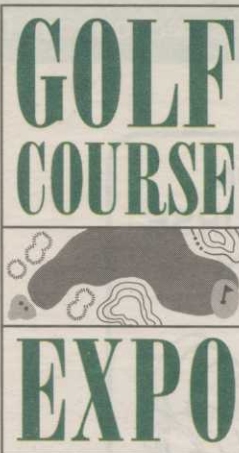
At the opposite end of the practice range is the learning center. Within the 2,000-square-foot building is a library with instructional videos. It also houses an 18-by-24-foot hitting area — heated in winter and fan-cooled in summer — with video cameras for detailed analysis. Golfers can either hit into a net or raise an overhead door to send shots toward an outdoor green. An adjoining classroom for additional instruction seats 30.

A separate hitting station features the AStar Golf Learning System. The interactive video and analysis device allows the instructor to automatically capture and immediately replay a student's swing. Swings are recorded from four different angles and can be analyzed using such features as on-screen graphics; frame-by-frame viewing; and split-screen comparisons of the same swing from different angles or compared to a widely known pro's swing. The video library can store up to 200 swings. A video and audio analysis of a student's swing can be placed on a VCR tape for students to analyze at their leisure.

A portable AStar unit can also be wheeled out onto the practice range for further work. Students can take the unit out on their own and charge it to their credit card.

Flanking the building are two teaching greens, a large sloped and contoured putting green, a short-game practice area with two greens that simulate actual holes on the course, a lagoon and fairways for shots up to 100 yards. Fazio, along with Scott Davenport and Jack Lumpkin of the nearby Golf Digest Learning Center at Sea Island, designed the practice center.

"We thought this would be a big marketing plus in the Hilton Head area," said Everett.



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Hurdzan speaks

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Hurdzan has designed several practice centers in the past few years. One of the most successful has been the Links at Winton Woods near Cincinnati. Opened in June 1993 by the Hamilton County Park District, the \$1.6 million facility includes the nine-hole, executive-length Meadowlinks course and a circular driving range that is divided into three distinct sections.

The first section includes a 49-station teeing area with artificial mats. Thirty-nine are covered and heated.

The second section is the instructional area. It consists of 25 hitting stations with artificial turf, fronted by a bentgrass teeing area. A chipping/pitching green and a separate putting green are also available for teaching short-game techniques.

The third section features a 1 1/2-acre bentgrass hitting area. Mounds allow players to practice shots from awkward lies off natural turf. A fairway bunker also permits long sand shots. Separate chipping/pitching and putting greens are nearby.

Located across the street from The Mill Course at Winton Woods (an 18-hole regulation-length layout), the practice center "Itis coming along well financially and has been very well received by golfers," said Manager of Golf Tom Kendrick. "One of the areas we weren't serving well was the entry-level golfer. We needed something to attract the new golfer who might not feel comfortable on a regulation-length course. The practice center met that need."

When building a new course, a municipality or other government agency is more likely to put in a practice center than a private developer, Kerman said. It takes five to 15 acres to build a practice facility. A municipality doesn't usually have to decide whether that land could be put to a more profitable use. But that is often the number-one concern for a private developer.

"For a private developer, it usually comes down to the most profitable use of the property — a practice range or more housing," Kerman said.

But private developers do build practice centers. A good example is Westwood Plateau in Coquitlam, B.C., Canada. In the mountains 45 minutes from Vancouver, businessman Hassan Khosrowshahi developed the Westwood Plateau Golf Academy, 18-hole Westwood Plateau Golf & Country Club (which has been nominated for *Golf Digest's* best new public course in Canada), and a 5,000-lot subdivision.

Westwood Golf Academy boasts a nine-hole executive course, a three-hole par-3 track, two putting greens, 60-stall driving range and a teaching center. The teaching center has eight stalls and two AStar training systems, a state-of-the-art video analysis tool that sells for \$20,000 per unit, according to Westwood Director of Marketing Brad Hewart.

The golf academy is located next to an electrical substation, land that would have been difficult to sell for house lots. It serves as a buffer between the 18-hole course and residential subdivision, Hewart said.

The academy opened in April 1994, 14 months before the regulation-length golf course. The academy represented a small portion of the \$22 million (Canadian) price tag for the entire facility, Hewart said. But it allowed Westwood to begin turning a profit prior to the regulation-length course coming on line.

"We've exceeded our revenue projections every month in 1995," he added.

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