

UPGRADE AT PALMETTO



The Robert Trent Jones Course at Palmetto Dunes, one of the oldest courses on Hilton Head Island, S.C., has reopened after an extensive renovation. While golfers won't notice much of a difference cosmetically in the course, Director of Golf Chip Pellerin of Greenwood Development Corp. said the cornerstone of the renovation is a wall-to-wall, computerized, state-of-the-art irrigation system covering the layout from tee to green. Four tee boxes were expanded, new bulkheading was built on the par-3 8th hole, and the locker rooms were refurbished as well. Over the past two years, Director of Golf Maintenance John Betts has supervised renovations at the George Fazio and Arthur Hills courses at Palmetto Dunes.

Signature design

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chitect over another, according to Larry Hirsh, president of Golf Property Analysts.

"But what people should realize," Hirsh said, "is that this information must be used in conjunction with a site-specific study that looks at the appraisal issues peculiar to that area."

In other words, while hiring a particular signature architect may be economically worthwhile in one area it may not be in another locale. Hirsh and MBA student James Owen surveyed golf markets in Austin, Texas, Hilton Head Island, S.C., Chicago and Palm Springs, Calif. The signature architects identified in the study were Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Pete Dye, Tom Fazio, Arthur Hills, Robert Trent Jones, Robert Trent Jones II and Rees Jones.

A brief summary shows that:

- Initiation/equity fees at private clubs designed by signature architects ranged from 44 to 112 percent higher than non-signature competition.
- Monthly dues ranged from 33 to 66 percent higher than non-signature courses.
- Fees at daily-fees ranged from 23 to 111 percent higher than non-signature facilities.

Annual play at private, non-signature courses was generally higher than signature facilities, except on Hilton Head. And no trend was apparent in the number of rounds played between signature and non-signature daily-fee operations.

Aside from the higher fee generally charged by signature architects, Hirsh said, "In the four markets we've studied, there

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— Larry Hirsh

seems to be a benefit to hiring a signature architect."

GPA and Owen are still analyzing

the data to hopefully measure the added value (if any) of engaging a signature architect. Other issues they hope to analyze will include the effect of signature architects on surrounding development prices and absorption, and the long-term effect of the signature architect to the financial bottom line of the property.

"We've also had requests to stratify the information," Hirsh said. "In other words, what would be the effect of hiring a signature architect on a course costing between x and y dollars compared to a course between y and z dollars?"

IN BRIEF...

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — Citing a bloated local golf market and an unacceptable financial risk, a private consultant recently advised the Springfield Park Board not to buy The Rail Golf Course, home of the LPGA's State Farm Rail Classic for many years. As a result, the 18-hole course is expected to go back to the open market. Leonard Sapp, the owner of the course who initially offered it to the city for \$3 million in an act characterized as a gift, later lowered his price to \$2 million. Still, the park board voted down the idea. Sapp is expected to go forward with his plan to sell the course but will open it for play this year.

PORTSMOUTH, R.I. — It looks like plans to build an 18-hole, professional-caliber golf course in Portsmouth may be history. Town council members recently opposed the idea at a meeting and a spokesman for the Senior Tour Players Development Inc. said he doubts the plan can get off the ground. The Boston-based company had proposed building an 18-hole layout on land at the town-owned Glen Farm park overlooking the Sakonnet River. The hope was that the course would attract a Senior PGA Tour event. PGA golfer Brad Faxon, who's from Barrington, R.I., was involved in designing a preliminary course plan.

MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. — The Dove, a semi-private par-three 18-hole golf course, is under construction along S.C.

707 and is scheduled to open Aug. 15. According to owner and designer Ed Cook, the 18-hole course will feature full-sized tees and greens and holes ranging from 75 to 130 yards in length. The Dove represents Cook's first venture into the golf business on his own after working with The Links Group for the past two years.

HILTON HEAD ISLAND, S.C. — The pastoral setting of the 230-acre Roller family horse farm near Bluffton is being transformed into Old Carolina Golf Links, an 18-hole public golf course designed by Clyde Johnston Designs Inc. Two holes have been completed by Landscapes Unlimited of Lincoln, Neb. Work has also been done to create some of the 14 lagoons planned for the course. A Nov. 1 opening is scheduled. Future plans call for 60 homesites, according to the developers, David Staley and Tom Jacoby.

MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. — Winyah Bay Golf Club, one of the first golf courses built in this rich golf mecca, has been revived by George Marlowe and his family. The nine-hole course had been closed for almost a year from 1994-95 and was on its way to ruin and disrepair. But Marlowe bought the course in July 1995 for \$1.2 million. Winyah Bay reopened last October and there are now tentative plans to expand the course into a full, 18-hole layout. It's truly a family affair at Winyah Bay. George Marlowe's son, Wade, is the head golf professional. His younger son, Ross, is the course superintendent, and his wife, Amelia, works in the pro shop.

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