

BRIEFS



IRVINE, WESTERN GOLF TEAM UP

IRVINE, Calif. — The Irvine Co. has selected Western Golf Properties to manage Oak Creek Golf Club here. Oak Creek is scheduled to open for public play in September. Western Golf also manages The Irvine Co.'s Pelican Hill Golf Club, another Tom Fazio design in nearby Newport Beach.

CASPER TO OVERSEE MD LAYOUT

MIDDLETOWN, Del. — Back Creek Golf Club has selected Billy Casper Golf Management (BCGM) to provide complete turnkey management services. BCGM will oversee construction and later operate the course. Construction began recently with a summer 1997 opening anticipated. Steve Newgent JSN Golf Enterprises is the builder and David Horn of Architerra PC the designer.

MARTTY SIGNS ON AT LAKEWOOD

NEW ORLEANS — Lakewood Country Club has named Martty Golf Management (MGM) to manage the semiprivate golf facility. Lakewood has hosted the New Orleans Open for the past 16 years. MGM's mission is to create the club's philosophy, develop a business/marketing plan and reorganize the operations.



Thomas Martty

GREY TO HEAD KEMPER CHICAGO EFFORT

NORTHBROOK, Ill. — Kemper Sports Management has named Tom Grey director of marketing for Kemper Golf Management Chicago (KGMC), operator of Chicago's eight park district golf facilities. Grey will take over a schedule of events that reached 6,000 Chicago residents last year and be responsible for managing marketing activities at the eight facilities. Grey most recently served as assistant golf professional at Kemper-run Royal Melbourne.

FAHEY TABBED BY MATRIX

CRANBURY, N.J. — Matrix Hospitality has hired Richard Fahey as general manager of Ashbourne Country Club in Cheltenham, Pa. Fahey is a 25-year veteran of the hospitality industry with nine years of golf club experience. Ashbourne was built in 1922 on the Stetson hat family estate. Matrix took over the facility a year ago.



Richard Fahey



Heron Point Golf Links in Ancaster, Ontario, Canada,

ClubLink offers upscale private courses, large public profits

By PETER BLAIS

TORONTO — Since becoming a publicly traded company a little over two years ago, ClubLink Corporation has evolved into one of the leading course owners/managers in Canada.

ClubLink operates five, high-end private golf facilities in southern Ontario. In June it will open a sixth, The Lake Joseph Club located two hours north of the city. "And we'll continue to look at new opportunities as they arise," promised Marketing Services Director Richelle Arnott Nemeth.

To date, ClubLink has concentrated on quality private courses catering to Toronto-area residents. In addition to Lake Joseph, ClubLink's facilities include:

- 27-hole Cherry Downs Golf & Country Club (G&CC) in Pickering acquired in 1993;

- 18-hole Emerald Hills G&CC in Stouffville acquired in 1993;
- 18-hole Heron Point Golf Club in Ancaster acquired in 1993;
- 18-hole Greystone Golf Club in Milton acquired in 1994;
- 18-hole King Valley Golf Club in King City acquired in 1994.

King Valley and Greystone rank among the top 20 courses in Ontario with flagship King Valley rated the fourth-best course in Canada by SCORE magazine. But Lake Joseph may pass them all.

The 18-hole golf course and nine-hole golf academy designed by Canadian architect Thomas McBroom is the centerpiece of The Lake Joseph Club. The property totals 420 acres with 3,000 feet of lakefront. ClubLink acquired the property in October 1994 for \$2 million from a Canadian insurance company

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MARKETING IDEA OF THE MONTH

Taking to the air waves enhanced PGA club's reception

By PETER BLAIS

Officials at The PGA Golf Club at The Reserve say the 500 seeds they sowed during the last weekend of December are already yielding a bumper crop of additional rounds.

The PGA Golf Club held a pre-opening "Public Plays Free" preview weekend Dec. 30-31, giving away almost 500 rounds to Southeast Florida golfers.

"We've seen a lot of those people come back already," said head pro Bill Ciofoletti. "Many of them have brought friends and relatives. I think we'll eventually capture thousands of additional rounds because of that one free weekend."

The PGA Golf Club is the first public golf facility owned and operated by the PGA of America. But developers knew it would take more than the PGA name to draw golfers to another daily-fee facility in an area already well stocked with public courses. In fact, the PGA feared many golfers would simply assume that a PGA-owned course was private.

So last fall the PGA hired marketing specialist Elaine Fitzgerald of Fitzgerald Productions Inc. to devise a way to attract



The PGA Golf Club at The Reserve

public golfers to its two new Tom Fazio-designed layouts and spread the word that the PGA was in the daily-fee business.

The first 18 holes were scheduled to open Jan. 1, although the staff was in

LEGAL CORNER

Beware the insurer seeking reimbursement

By NANCY SMITH

When sports facilities are sued, one of the biggest expenses can be paying for the defense. Even if the case has no merit, a defense attorney can run up a big bill proving just that. Whether it is a country club or sports arena, a successful sports operation can be seen as a deep pocket to recovery.

When the rainy day of litigation arrives, the silver lining in the storm clouds may be an insurance company willing to pay the defense attorney — regardless of whether any judgment on liability is ultimately paid by the insurer. But as sports tycoon Jerry Buss recently learned, the insurance company may come asking for reimbursement for all attorneys' fees.

Buss owns the Los Angeles Lakers and Los Angeles Kings. He and his teams are the primary tenants at the Forum sports arena. When Buss had a falling out with his advertising agency, the dispute ended up in Los Angeles County court. Buss was surprised when his insurance company came back to him at the end of the suit and asked for reimbursement of more than \$1 million it paid Buss' lawyers.

It all started with the ad agency's suit for breach of contract and other claims stemming from Buss' termination of the agency's exclusive rights to handle advertising for the teams and arena. Attorney

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place and the first course ready to go by late December. The PGA had toyed with the idea of giving away some rounds to the public prior to Jan. 1 to thank the local populace for its support. The question

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Radio spots

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was how to distribute those rounds. Enter Fitzgerald.

Fitzgerald hit on the idea of providing those rounds to a dozen local radio stations. Each station received 10 letters with PGA Golf Club letterhead. The letter entitled the bearer to bring a foursome, free of charge, to The PGA Golf Club the weekend of Dec. 30-31.

The stations, which covered Florida's east coast from Miami to Vero Beach, hyped the opening and distributed the free rounds through a variety of radio contests. While competing stations rarely promote the same event through give-aways, they agreed to do so in this case because the PGA allowed them the freedom to devise their own contests for distributing the rounds, Fitzgerald said.

Some used simple formats such as "Be the fifth caller and win." Others provided some fact about the course (such as its location) prior to the give-away and required winning callers to know that information before receiving the free rounds.

"Most of the stations gave away one foursome every morning," Fitzgerald recalled. "They would hype it during morning drive time right up until the contest. Then they would hype the next day's contest periodically throughout the day. What we ended up with was basically two weeks of free ads on 12 different stations. We could never have afforded that much advertising time."

Course costs were minor. Since the club wasn't planning to open until Jan. 1 for tax reasons, the Dec. 30-31 promotion didn't require it to give away rounds that it would normally have charged for. Each golfer also received a free hat and PGA logo golf ball with the words "First Ball" on the cover.

Staffing was the only major expense, Ciofoletti said.

"It gave us the opportunity to go live with our new staff in a non-paying situation," Ciofoletti said. "It was sort of a dress rehearsal for the real thing. Seeing how well the staff did that weekend gave us a more comfortable feeling when we officially opened for business."

But most importantly, according to PGA of America Senior Director of Operations Marty Kavanaugh, the promotion let people in Southeast Florida know that the PGA of America was in the affordable (\$49 including cart) public golf business.

"We wanted to send a message that the PGA had opened an affordable, championship golf course," Kavanaugh said. "There was a perception that the PGA wasn't interested in public golf. But our mission is to make golf affordable to everyone. This promotion helped deliver that message."

National Golf Foundation offers customized research service

JUPITER, Fla. — The National Golf Foundation (NGF) has introduced a new customized research service that allows members to get information faxed or mailed to them by the end of the next business day.

Called "NGF InfoSearch," the new electronic service offers access to hundreds of trade magazine articles and news items each month. National Golf Foundation library staffers prepare abstracts of these articles and items on an ongoing basis and they are stored under one of more

than 1,000 topical headings.

According to the NGF, its library houses the largest single collection of information on the United States Golf Industry and the business of golf in the world today. It contains more than 18,000 trade magazine and journal articles, research studies, market reports and other pieces of related printed material which the National Golf Foundation has been accumulating over the past three years.

"It's like having your own personal library of golf industry literature ... com-

plete with a professional staff, but without the hassle or expense of maintaining it yourself," said Charles Mayberry, the National Golf Foundation's Director of Library Services, who's been responsible for developing the service.

The NGF's InfoSearch service is a forerunner of bigger developments expected later this year, including an on-line electronic network for the golf industry.

For more information about InfoSearch, National Golf Foundation members can call 1-800-773-6006.

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