

## New course owners set S.C. links on road to recovery

BLYTHEWOOD, S.C. — The former Crickentree Golf Club is recovering after years of neglect and the effects of bankruptcy.

The new owner is Links & Land Group of Florence, S.C., which also operates the Country Club of South Carolina. Links & Land took over the former Crickentree Golf Club in March for \$2 million and is in the midst of a \$500,000-\$700,000 renovation project that's expected to take the next four to five years.

The name of the 7-year-old facility has been changed to the Golf Club of South Carolina at Crickentree. The club's 18-hole course was designed by Ken Killian. Mike Holland, an original

member and former PGA Tour player who became head pro at Crickentree for 1993-94, has been hired as the club's executive vice president.

Links & Land has led successful renovations in the past. The Country Club of South Carolina was reportedly in worse condition than Crickentree when it took over there in 1988. Today, the Country Club of South Carolina is home to the Nike Tour's South Carolina Classic, U.S. Open qualifying and the second stage of PGA Tour qualifying. Links & Land said it expects the course to be in prime condition by early fall. Improvements to the clubhouse and grill are also underway.

## TPC has S. Car. in uproar

MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. — Myrtle Beach Golf Holiday plans to build two Tournament Players Club (TPC) golf courses and the proposal is threatening to break up the organization.

Golf Holiday — an advertising cooperative made up of 96 hotels and 86 golf courses in and around Myrtle Beach — wants to build two 18-hole courses in a 50-50 partnership with the TPC on about 450 acres of land owned by Canal Industries. More than two-thirds of Golf Holiday's 182

members voted recently to proceed with plans.

But a substantial number of Golf Holiday members have criticized the plan. They say the organization has no business getting into the golf business and developing golf courses that would compete against its members.

Brad Blair, executive vice president of The Legends Group which includes six Grand Strand golf courses, told *The Sun News* of Myrtle Beach, "Golf Holiday should do what it does best, and that's promote the golf industry in the same context they have in the past."

Blair helped write a five-page memo detailing 42 concerns that many Golf Holiday members have with the TPC project. Blair, like others, said the organization should focus on marketing and advertising Grand Strand golf packages.

Golf Holiday and the TPC would reportedly have to borrow \$6 million to build the first TPC course, which would open in 1998. The PGA Tour is negotiating with golf course architect Tom Fazio to design the first course, which would be in the "stadium" style and feature spectator mounds and other amenities for tournament play. The first course would become the permanent host of the Senior Tour Championship, which is now held at The Dunes Golf and Beach Club.

A second course would be built within six years after the first course opens. There are also plans for an upscale residential development that would be an official TPC neighborhood.

Non-profit Golf Holiday would have to restructure its organization to run a for-profit golf course and would borrow another \$2.5 million as seed money for the TPC. Several members unhappy with the plan said Golf Holiday shouldn't be putting itself at risk by borrowing money and operating a business that might not be successful.

The Legends Group and several other premium golf courses have threatened to pull out of Golf Holiday because of past differences. Some course owners complained two years ago that Golf Holiday was keeping greens fees artificially low by advertising cheap golf packages. Golf Holiday also spent about \$1 million over the last two years to cover losses in the Senior Tour Championship tournament, which it co-sponsors. That money, said some golf course owners, should have been used to advertise and promote vacation packages.

Blair and other owners have questioned whether the TPC courses will be as successful as Golf Holiday claims. "If this is such a good idea," said one owner, "then (the TPC courses) ought to be able to secure the financing without going to Golf Holiday."

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