

BRIEFS



KSL FAIRWAYS ADDS 2 COURSES

KSL Fairways has acquired two Wisconsin courses, Mequon Country Club and Lake Windsor Golf Club, bringing the Manassas, Va.-based firm's total ownership to 25, 18-hole courses at 22 sites. Mequon is a private, 27-hole club located 13 miles north of Milwaukee. The company plans \$1 million in improvements to the facility. Lake Windsor is a 27-hole, daily-fee facility located eight miles northeast of Madison.

LEGG MASON PROMOTES WELLS

BALTIMORE — Legg Mason Realty Group has promoted David Wells to vice president. Wells leads LMRG's recreational consulting practice, specializing in golf course properties. He performs market and financial analysis, development consulting and management/operational audits, brokers properties and works with other Legg Mason subsidiaries in raising debt and equity for recreational real-estate projects.



David Wells

SMITH TO HEAD BIGHORN

PALM DESERT, Calif. — Warren Smith was recently named general manager of Bighorn, an exclusive golf club and community in south Palm Desert. Smith will oversee all daily operations at the club as well as sales and marketing activities for the master-planned community. Smith formerly served as senior vice president of country club operations at Palm Desert-based Sunrise Company where he was involved in the development and management of Indian Ridge, Palm Valley and Monterey Country Club. He also consulted for KSL Recreation at PGA West and LaQuinta Resort and Club.



Warren Smith

HIRSH ELECTED INTO CRE

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Laurence Hirsh, president of Golf Property Analysts, was elected to membership in the Counselors of Real Estate (CRE). Holders of the CRE designation are recognized for superior real-estate, problem-solving ability in specialized areas. Hirsh specializes in the valuation, litigation support, feasibility analysis, ad valorem tax-assessment analysis and general analysis with a unique expertise in golf courses and recreational and leisure properties.

MARKETING IDEA OF THE MONTH

Llamas enhance the walk and the pocketbook

By MARK LESLIE

CANNON FALLS, Minn. — Welcome to Elmdale Hills Golf Course. Meet Hank and Pueblo, your caddies for the day. A gimmick? Perhaps. But a true drawing card, and that is the important factor here.

You see, Hank and Pueblo are llamas. And, in addition to carrying golf bags, their gifts are their ability to grab media attention and attract golfers to this new course trying to establish itself some 40 miles south of Minneapolis.

"We've gotten a lot of media attention," said Diane Brage, who with husband Bruce opened Elmdale Hills last July 1. "It got our name out there. Quite a few from the city have read about them, or seen them on TV and come out."

Continued on page 51



Talamore Golf Club (left) in Southern Pines, N.C., is one of a growing number of courses using llamas to carry bags and attract golfers. In photo below, a handler leads a llama around a green at Elmdale Hills Golf Course in Cannon Falls, Minn.

MAN(AGER) ON THE STREET

Personal service called key to survival

This marks the first in what we plan as a regular man-on-the-street type question-and-answer feature with the heads of some of the country's leading course management companies. This month's question is: "Assuming that rounds and participation levels will remain relatively flat over the next 10 years, how will you compete for market share in your areas of business?"

Joe Guerra, executive vice president of American Golf Corporation

... Through virtual marketing or one-on-one marketing. AGC is developing marketing programs that will allow us to treat customers less generically. We are finding substantial opportunity for growth

by tailoring our marketing to each customer's playing habits, whereas in the past we have been guilty of offering these unique and separate customer groups a generic menu of products and services. For instance, the needs and wants of the avid core golfer are very different from those of the casual golfer and we are now able to develop and market a wider variety of products and services to each customer type.

... By leveraging to the benefit of AGC's portfolio of golf courses the technology and other marketing and sales tools which have proved successful in other service organizations. This is already occurring at AGC. As AGC looks to the next century, we

are positioning ourselves to provide the ultimate playing experience for the customer while at the same time maximizing revenue on behalf of our landlords and clients. Some examples include AGC's proprietary central reservation system, yield management systems and exclusive service excellence training programs.

Joe Black, president of Western Golf Properties

We will compete in the future, just as we do today, with superior conditioned golf courses and extremely high levels of service. We will simply try to create a better golf experience than our competitors.

Bob Husband, president of Cobblestone Golf Group

First I do not agree that rounds and participation levels will remain flat over

Continued on page 50

LEGAL CORNER

Employer's right to trade secrets examined

By NANCY SMITH

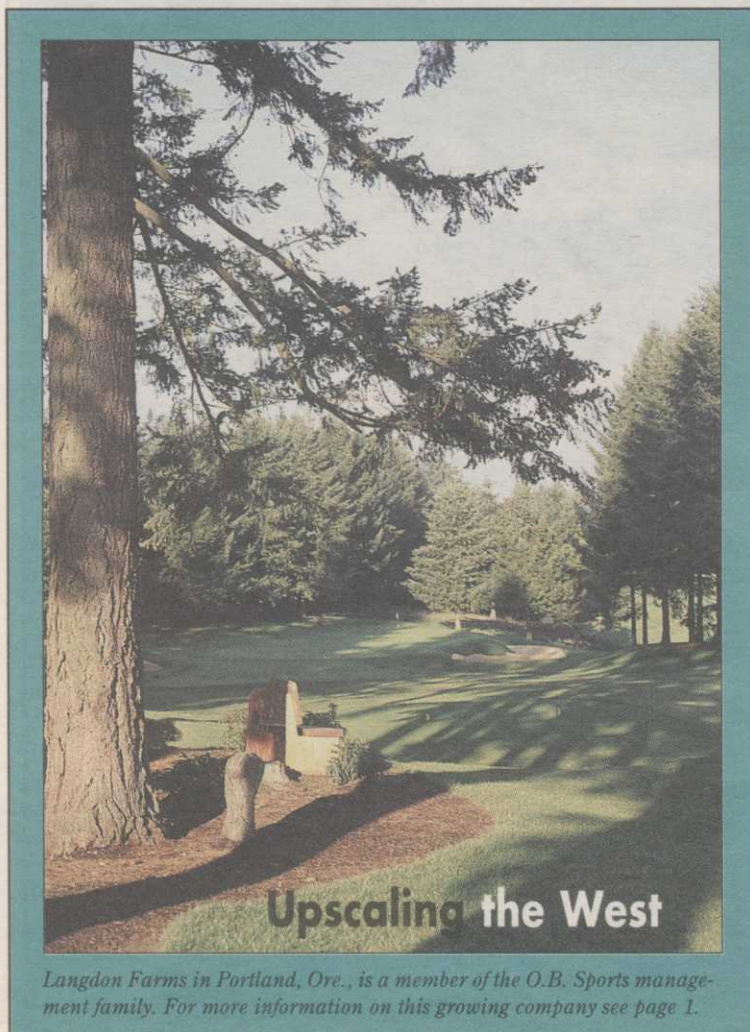
If a country club manager left to join the cross-town club, board members and co-workers might give "good-luck" wishes for the new post. But if that manager took a copy of the list of members, could that be unfair competition or just good ol' American enterprise.

Unauthorized use of a list of members and potential draws questions of trade secrets — and just how far a business can limit the acts of a former employee in a free country.

Some cautious employers ask employees agreements regarding information learned on the job. Some such agreements even make employees promise not to compete with the employer after other employment is obtained. But such agreements may not be worth the paper they are written on if they violate the basic tenets of fundamental individual freedoms and the right to openly compete in the marketplace.

Whether an employee can be kept from using information learned on the job turns largely on the nature of the information. Client or member lists may

Continued on page 48



Upscaling the West

Langdon Farms in Portland, Ore., is a member of the O.B. Sports management family. For more information on this growing company see page 1.

Nancy Smith is an attorney working in Pasadena, Calif., and a regular contributor to Golf Course News. She can be reached at 818-585-9907.

## Llamas

Continued from page 47

From this nine-hole track to the high-profile, highly ranked Talamore Golf Club in Southern Pines, N.C., which opened in 1991, llamas are a proven winner — but only if used correctly, according to Talamore owner Bob Levy. “A couple of other courses have tried it, but they failed,” he said. “I don’t think it will work unless you do your homework and do it professionally and properly.” Properly, he said, is to train llamas to know what to expect from golfers “and not get spooked.” The breeder Levy dealt with spent a month training them and perfecting the saddlebags to carry the golf bags; and when Talamore’s llamas caddie, a trained handler accompanies them. But the time and investment has been well worth the effort, Levy said.

“We didn’t do it as a publicity stunt, but we got an awful lot of publicity when we first did it,” he said. “CNN carried a human-interest story for an entire weekend. We were in *People*, *Life*, *Time*... all over the world, all the local news stations. And it all just happened. We never went after any press at all — no PR agency, no press kit, nothing. The llamas showed up and that was it.”

Indeed, it was a story on Talamore’s llamas in Smithsonian Institution Magazine that caught the Brages’ eye and planted the idea for Elmdale Hills’ tallest caddies.

And, likewise, newspapers and Minneapolis television stations have broadcast human-interest spots on Hank and Pueblo.

“They’re a big hit. People love them,” Levy said. “We charge a lot [\$100 per person plus greens fee]. We could have charged less and they would have been used more, but we didn’t want it to be a circus. This is a great way to walk the golf course.”

At Elmdale Hills the llamas are available Mondays and Tuesdays and cost \$25, Diane Brage said, because they are “slower days and we hope to bring more people in on those days.”

On the other hand, “if a group comes in and wants to use them on a different day, they can do so,” she said. “And if somebody really wants one on another day and we’re not busy, they can take them out.”

Levy said using handlers as Talamore does resolves the speed-of-play problem. The only thing that slows play, he said, is “when people on another fairway see the llamas and stop playing to watch.”

“It definitely has drawn people here,” Brage said. “Oh, we’ve got power carts and pull carts. But people have lots of fun with the llamas and take their pictures.”

Also, many have bought gift certificates for friends to use the llamas. “I sold one yesterday for Father’s Day,” she said.

Meanwhile, the llamas have become a trademark at these two distinctly different golf facilities.

“Home of the Llama Caddies” is prominently displayed on brochures or other materials the Brages send out.

At Talamore, “our logo is a silhouette of a llama,” Levy said. “It’s present in a subtle way — and with merchandise. We did our own custom over-sized driver: ‘The Llama mama.’ They sold out. We’re coming out with another new design now.”

•••

As for other concerns:

- No, Hank and Pueblo do not damage the turf. They have soft, padded feet that leave no mark.

- They are “very low-maintenance

animals,” Ms. Brage said. They eat one-third of a bale of hay a day and water.

“Quite simple: Somewhere between a cat and a sheep,” Levy said.

- Those tales of llamas spitting at people are fairy tales. “They can get temperamental toward each other but not people,” Ms. Brage said.

- Their living quarters? At Elmdale Hills, Hank and Pueblo occupy a pen next to the course’s parking lot.

And at Talamore, “they overlook the 18th hole. They are on top-notch real-estate — the best,” Levy said. “And well deserved.”

## Training llamas a full-time business

STAMFORD, Vt. — When Talamore Golf Club owner Bob Levy approached Lars Garrison about using llamas as caddies, the Vermont farmer tackled the challenge with abandon.

“Lars spent a month perfecting this saddlebag and training them,” Levy said.

The end result is a saddlebag with side packs especially designed to carry a golf bag on each side and with holders for golf balls, tees and a six-

pack. Training the apprentice llamas concluded with two revelations for all golfers who plan to use them as caddies: 1) don’t surprise them from behind; and 2) don’t have baubles atop your golf club covers.

Garrison said he sells a minimum of two llamas because “they are very social animals and need their own kind around them.” A trained llama generally costs \$1,500 to \$2,000, he said.

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Geoffrey R. Blind  
Golf Course Superintendent  
Hillendale Country Club  
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