

Public-access Bethpage on short list for U.S. Open

PLAINVIEW, N.Y. — The Black Course at Bethpage State Park on Long Island, a public layout continually considered among the best courses in the country, is on a short list of potential host courses for the 2001 U.S. Open.

U.S. Golf Association and New York State Parks Commission officials toured the course in late March along with golf course architect Rees Jones, who has done detail and renovation work on several U.S. Open sites.

USG Executive Director told *Newsday* the USGA would be considering several factors before deciding whether the Black Course would be recommended to the USGA's executive committee in June, including the cost of bringing the course up to U.S. Open standards. The USGA would be responsible for the cost of the course improvements. New York state park officials have reportedly said they are interested in hosting the tournament provided the USGA paid for course improvements.

If officials from the state and the USGA can reach agreement, it would be only the fifth time since the Open was first played in 1895 that it would be held at a public course. It would be the first time

the Open would be held at a public course not affiliated with a luxury resort, like Pebble Beach. The other courses that have expressed an interest in hosting the 2001 U.S. Open are all private courses.

The Black Course is one of five layouts at Bethpage State Park. If the Open were to be held at the Black Course, the park would probably have to be closed for weeks and the Black Course itself shut down for longer, possibly many months.

Fay reportedly initiated the idea of having the Open on an

accessible, public course other than luxury spots like Pebble Beach. He told *Newsday*, "It's such an expansive facility, and the strength of the golf course makes it such an appealing site." He said the park's closeness to Manhattan, its large parking areas and adjoining courses where hospitality tents could be located are all pluses.

New York Parks Commissioner Bernadette Castro said, "We see public golf as the future of golf, and the exposure we would get would be tremendous."

Miss. casino to include 36 holes?

ROBINSONVILLE, Miss. — Two new 18-hole golf courses are part of the plan for the massive, new Grand Casino Tunica complex near the Mississippi River.

The 340,000-square-foot casino — which sits on the edge of an oxbow lake created by the Mississippi River — will be the largest dockside casino in the world when it opens June 24.

The complex, which will

offer four separate gambling halls, is only one facet of the development Grand Casino Inc. has planned for the 2,200 acres it owns between Old U.S. 61 and the Mississippi River. Company officials eventually hope to have two courses, outlet store, theme park and townhouses. They said course construction could start in a year or two, depending on the success of the casino and hotel complex.

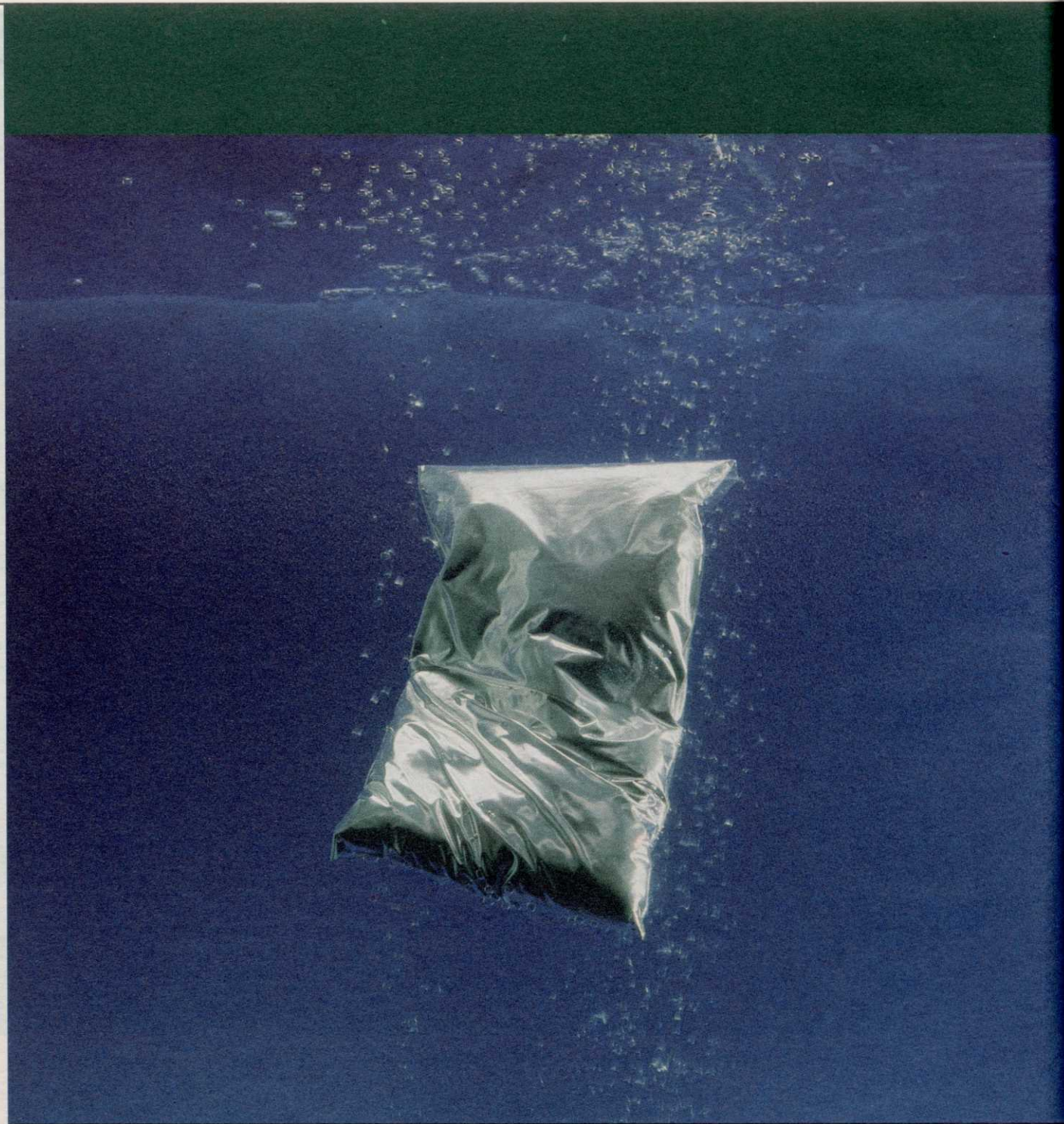
Consultant says county courses need profit motive

BELLEVILLE, N.J. — A consultant hired to study the three Essex County golf courses has recommended creating a private, not-for-profit corporation to manage the facilities and keep them profitable and attractive.

After conducting a four-month study of the county's three public courses — Weequahic in Newark, Hendricks Field in Belleville and Brendan Byrne in West Orange — Linnie Cook, executive director of the Baltimore Municipal Golf Corporation, recommended Essex use Baltimore's golf organization as a model to turn Essex's golf facilities into profitable ventures.

The private, not-for-profit golf corporation would be run with an executive director with supervision from a volunteer board of directors appointed by a county executive and freeholders. With a private, not-for-profit designation, all revenue generated by the golf courses would be used toward making improvements to courses instead of being placed into the county's general fund and used as revenue to balance the county budget.

The proposal will be considered by freeholders for the 1997 season. The plan could not be implemented this year because the 1996 budget has already been compiled. Cook told freeholders it could take about eight months to set up a private, not-for-profit corporation.



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