

## BRIEFS



## IGM STRIKES NEW DEAL

LAKE PLACID, Fla. — International Golf Management, Inc. (IGM) has taken over professional golf course maintenance services for Leisure Lakes Golf Course here. IGM will provide course maintenance and landscape management. Leisure Lakes is located in the Leisure Lakes Resort along the shoreline of Lake June. The resort is owned by Avatar Properties.

## HUEBER TO BUILD COURSE

LOS ANGELES — David Hueber, a widely known golf industry executive and president of Foothills Golf Development Group LLC, will develop and operate an 18-hole public course 15 miles from downtown Los Angeles.



David Hueber

Red Tail Golf & Equestrian Center will feature an 18-hole course and 8,000-square-foot clubhouse on land leased from L.A. International Golf Club Inc., which unsuccessfully

tried to develop a private club on the 352-acre site. Hueber has served as an executive with the PGA Tour, president and chief executive officer (CEO) of the National Golf Foundation, and CEO of the Ben Hogan Co.

## BRASSIE REPORTS IMPROVED FINANCIALS

TAMPA, Fla. — Brassie Golf Corp. reported a 4-percent jump in total operating revenues to \$2.32 million and an increase in net income to \$0.01 per share during the second quarter of this year, up from \$2.23 million and a \$0.29 loss per share, respectively, for the same quarter a year earlier. For the first six months of the year, the management and course design company reported a \$697,435 decrease in total operating revenues, which it traced to the sale of three courses.

## CLUBCORP ACQUIRES TIMARRON

SOUTHLAKE, Texas — Club Corporation of America has acquired Timarron Country Club from Mobil Land Development Corp. The 18-hole, Byron Nelson-designed semi-private course will eventually go private with the completed sale of available full golf memberships. "Timarron will provide an opportunity for CCA to pioneer the concept of turning a high-end public golf facility into a private country club," said CCA executive Randy Williams.

## Fore Star's style works well in U.S. Southwest

By PETER BLAIS

LUBBOCK, Texas — Visit 36-hole Meadowbrook Golf Course here and you're likely to see Fore Star Golf President Steve Yonke parking golf cars, busing tables, serving drinks or working behind the pro shop cash register.

"This is a people business," said Yonke, who doubles as Meadowbrook's general manager and head of the six-course management firm that stresses a hands-on management style. "I'm always talking to our customers. Some of their suggestions may be off the wall, but people generally give you good ideas about your operation."

"When we first took over here, we asked the customers what we could do to improve. They wanted us to do a better job handling the golf carts, put starters at both courses, and start a marshaling program. We did those things and the course



The third hole at Picacho Hills Country Club, a Fore Star Golf property in Las Cruces, N.M.

runs much more smoothly than it did."

Yonke gained this insight into the need to quiz customers while working at the course level. He joined Jim Colbert Golf in 1984 and managed several different operations before becoming Colbert's

quality manager. Prior to founding Fore Star in 1992, Yonke received the National Golf Foundation Public Golf Award for his efforts to promote and enhance the game.

Brothers Jeff and Gary Miller soon joined

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## Minimum wage hike to have little impact

By PETER BLAIS

The 90-cent increase in the minimum wage to \$4.75 per hour scheduled to take effect this month will have little impact on course maintenance operations, according to superintendents.

While some courses likely pay close to the minimum wage, those contacted by *Golf Course News* said they already pay laborers more than the new lower limit.

"Most courses in our area are well above the minimum," said Lee McLemore, head superintendent at Birmingham (Ala.) Country Club. "Our wages have gone up significantly the past few years to compete in a small labor pool where unemployment is running around 3.5 percent.

We're competing with other businesses, like McDonald's, for workers and they're already above \$5 per hour."

McLemore said he starts laborers at his private club, the oldest club in Birmingham, at \$6 to \$6.50 per hour. That's 25 percent more than the \$4.75 limit scheduled to take effect in October and the \$5.15 that becomes law Sept. 1, 1997.

"The best part of the [minimum wage] bill from our perspective was the change that now allows private clubs to start 401k retirement plans for employees," McLemore said. "I called our senators to encourage them to support the bill because of that. A 401k plan allows us to do

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## PERSONNEL PERSPECTIVES

## Trash talking your way to a cleaner course

By VINCE ALFONSO

Bobby had worked for me since he was a sophomore in high school. The soon-to-be graduated college senior was in his last season at our golf course. He was doing his usual good job.

I walked out the south door of our clubhouse and looked toward the range to see if I could spot a customer who had a phone call. As my eyes panned the range tee, I noticed the range garbage container was overflowing. I immediately called out to Bobby, who was moving some golf cars nearby.

I said "Bobby, would you please go out to the range and empty the trash container, and while you are there, would you run over to the outing tent and pick up the debris overlooked by last night's closing crew?" I explained in more detail about the debris and sent him on his way.

I watched Bobby drive his Yamahauler past the range trash

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Vince Alfonso Jr. is a former course owner, general manager, past president of the National Golf Course Owners Association and founder of Alfonso Creative Golf Enterprises, Inc., a course management consulting firm.



## PLAYER REMODELS KIAWAH COURSE

The second hole at Cougar Point Golf Course is part of a \$4 million renovation recently completed by Gary Player for Kiawah Island Resort owner Virginia Investment Trust (VIT). Cougar Point opened Sept. 8 on the site of the former Marsh Point course, also a Player design. VIT acquired Kiawah in a Resolution Trust Corp. auction of Landmark Land Co. properties in October, 1993. Since then, VIT has also purchased the Pete Dye-designed Ocean Course for \$27 million, started construction of a \$5 million clubhouse at Tom Fazio-designed Osprey Point, made improvements to the golf facilities and opened the new Business Center and Food Court. VIT has so far invested a total of nearly \$50 million in the resort.



## Red Hawk web page

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pany President and major shareholder George Badger said in late August. "We'll use photos of the groundbreaking this Friday [Aug. 23]. We can display the golf architect's drawings or sketched designs of some of the amenities.

"The information is accessible to brokerage and investment firms who deal

with potential investors. We can put SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission] filings, stock values and real-estate values, as well as photos of what is actually happening on the course or house lots right on the web page. It's a great marketing tool."

Red Hawk is GVI's flagship project. The St. George area is being marketed as a second Palm Springs, cooler in summer and hotter in winter than nearby Las Vegas, Badger said. The company president

expects Red Hawk to draw most of its members and homeowners from the Utah Front Range communities of Salt Lake City, Ogden, Provo and Logan as well as from the surrounding states of Montana, Idaho, Colorado and Wyoming. Public play will be allowed until the course reaches 300 members, according to the company.

"We're looking at four other projects that are within a couple of hours of St. George by air," Badger said.

## Minimum wage

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his starting pay scale from \$5.50 per hour to \$7 to \$7.50 per hour in order to attract better quality applicants and lower employee turnover.

"We get around 20 applicants for job openings now," Sloan estimated. "We were only getting two to three before. Our choices were much more limited. I'm glad the minimum wage is going up. The jobs we ask people to do on a golf course aren't the easiest in the world."

Across the border in Jackson, Miss., Country Club of Jackson superintendent Stephen Harrell said the minimum-wage increase would have little or no effect on courses in his area.

"If it had any, it would just be with the summertime help," he said. "But courses around here hire a lot of summer help from the Mississippi State University Cooperative program. Alabama courses pay them \$6.50 an hour plus room and board to work there. We have to pay them at least \$5.50 in order to compete. The last thing the members want to hear is the course is in bad shape because we don't have enough people to maintain it."

Even in the poorer sections of the Northeast, laborers generally make above minimum wage.

"I start new people at \$5 to \$5.50 an hour, depending on experience and references," said Jim Hodge, head superintendent at Val Halla Golf Club in Cumberland, Maine, and the state's representative to the September Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Chapter Relations Meeting. "If people return the following summer, they can generally expect a raise."

"I don't think we'll have to raise our starting wages 50 cents just because the minimum went up that amount, though. People like working here because they get to play some golf, work outside and are done for the day around 1 p.m. They like this a lot better than flipping burgers."

The issue was discussed at the GCSAA's annual Chapter Relations Meeting. GCSAA media spokesman Jeff Bollig said a recent survey noted that golf courses typically pay well above the minimum wage, i.e. an average \$6.49 for greens crew workers, \$7 for gardeners and \$8.56 for office assistants.

"We've gotten a lot of questions about it on our web site," Bollig said. "One of the concerns was that raising the minimum wage would have a trickle up effect that would cause golf courses to raise wages on the lower end. An increase in the minimum wage could do that in some cases."

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