

Tuscaloosa next stop on Robert Trent Jones Trail?

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Tuscaloosa County is still under consideration to be a link in the noted Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail, a string of 18 courses across the state designed by Robert Trent Jones, Sr., and open to the public.

David Bronner, chief of the Retirement Systems of Alabama (RSA) which funds construction of the courses, said the key question will be whether 500 acres of public or private land can be found on which to build a course. The RSA is also reportedly considering lo-

cations between Tuscaloosa and Birmingham, in Shelby County, and a location near Montgomery as sites to build three or four more Robert Trent Jones, Sr., courses.

The Robert Trent Jones Trail is the largest integrated golf course construction project in the world and has been a strong tourist draw for golfers to Alabama. The trail features 54-hole facilities in Birmingham, Mobile, Huntsville and Auburn and 36-hole facilities in Calhoun County, Greenville and Dothan.

Atlanta developers issue cautionary tale

By PETER BLAIS

SYDNEY, Australia — Anyone who thinks the 2000 Olympics here will be a boon for course operators and developers better think again, according to those who survived the recently completed Atlanta Summer Games.

"Golf was a minimal part of the Olympics for those visiting Atlanta," said Mike Waldron, executive director of the Georgia State Golf Association. "Those who hoped people would come in and spend



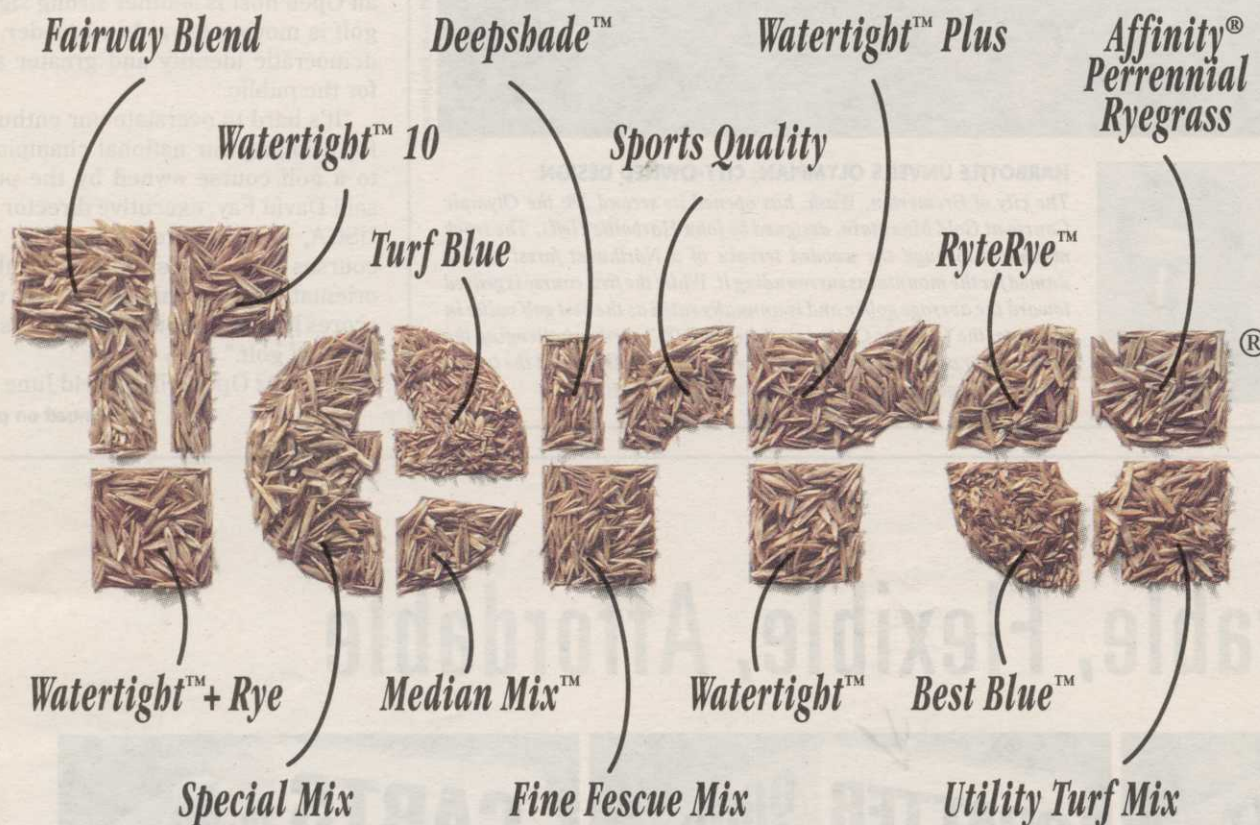
big bucks to play golf or buy memberships and homes around golf facilities quickly found out that it just wasn't going to happen.

"Two to three years before the Games, private clubs were talking about renting out their facilities to large corporations for \$100,000 a day and using the money for things like paying down their debt, putting a new roof on the clubhouse or rebuilding parts of the course. But what really happened was that visitors came in for three to four days at a time, spent all their time at the Games and never played golf. The private clubs that decided to stay open seven days a week during the Games found out it wasn't worth it. No one rented their club for the day. Even those that relaxed their public-play policies found they didn't have to."

Public courses also suffered during the Olympics. "Public play was down 30 percent during the Games," said Georgia PGA Executive Director John Bryan. "People came to the Olympics to watch the Olympics, not play golf. Say you had tickets for a 9 a.m. event. You had to catch a bus at 7 a.m. to be in your seat at the venue by 8:30. The event was over at 1 p.m., which meant you were back at the hotel around 3 p.m. If fatigue wasn't going to keep you off the golf course at that point, then the lack of daylight was."

The increased play at local courses that accompanied football's Super Bowl and baseball's World Series — both of which Atlanta hosted in recent years — fueled much of the golf industry's optimism sur-

Continued on page 35



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'Rebirth' of Miami muni set for Dec. 15

MIAMI — The old, worn-out municipal Melreese Golf Course is on its way to becoming the new and vastly improved Melreese Golf Course.

Melreese, which opened in 1962 and was considered one of the best public courses in the country for many years, is undergoing a \$3.1 million makeover and is scheduled to reopen Dec. 15. Another \$800,000 is going to a new clubhouse and other improvements.

The City of Miami, which owns the course, funded the project with money borrowed from the state. The loan will be paid back over 17 years by the management team in place, Bunkers of Miami Joint Venture, of which longtime Melreese golf professional Charlie DeLuca is the managing partner.

The revamped Melreese course will be a par-71 measuring 7,100 yards from the back tees.

DeLuca, who has been at the course since 1972, said the new greens fees at Melreese will be comparable to other top public courses in Dade County like The Links at Key Biscayne, the Golf Club of Miami and Biltmore, which are all around \$35 in peak season.

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