

ClubCorp establishes European beach head

As golf club management companies edge inexorably closer to Europe, having largely conquered the United States and been extremely active in Asia, many are anxiously wondering what the future holds. "Carpetbaggers" or "Salvation Army"? Thomas J. Henner, director of European Operations for International Group of ClubCorp, spoke with Trevor Ledger, International Bureau Chief of Golf Course News (GCN) International.

GCN: Where is ClubCorp International based in Europe?

Henner: Eighteen months ago we had the good fortune to purchase the Drift Golf Club in East Horsley, Surrey, England. We have based our European operation there but, with the recent position that ClubCorp has taken in the European Tour Course Group, this might be changing.

GCN: Are you purely a golf management company?

Henner: Golf management is one of the business relationships we consider. However the majority of our business is in either outright ownership or joint-venture partnerships structured in a variety of ways. The basis of our business is primarily private members' clubs, resorts which encompass golf, city and athletic clubs.

GCN: ClubCorp recently acquired the majority share in PGA European Tour Courses. Is this a step toward "cornering the market" of golf courses?

Henner: Considering that in the United States we host a variety of PGA Tour, LPGA Tour, Senior Tour and Nike Tour events at some of our properties, the relationship with European Tour Courses can provide a unique blend of specific areas of expertise from each of the major partners. As regards "cornering the market," our goal in Europe is to be involved with quality facilities in good locations with strong membership. We are not a wholesale buyer. Our real value, that which we bring to the table as a company, is the belief that we are in the membership business and our relationships with the members of the clubs is of primary importance to us. It's impossible to pay that kind of attention to detail if you are in the business of mass buying.

GCN: So where are you planning to expand next?

Henner: We're working on some projects in Switzerland and Italy and we have a new club that opened in May just outside of Frankfurt. (Winnerod Golf Park). Golf in Germany is an emerging market. It is still growing and there are still thousands of people who want to learn how to play golf. They are anxious to play and enthusiastic about doing so.

GCN: South Africa?

Henner: We have two management contracts in South Africa: one in Durban (Mount Edgecombe Country Club) and one in Pretoria (Silver Lakes Country Club). We are optimistic about South African opportunities and our initial mode of entrance was via management which has en-

abled us to get into the country, understand the culture and the customs and find out what opportunities exist for us.

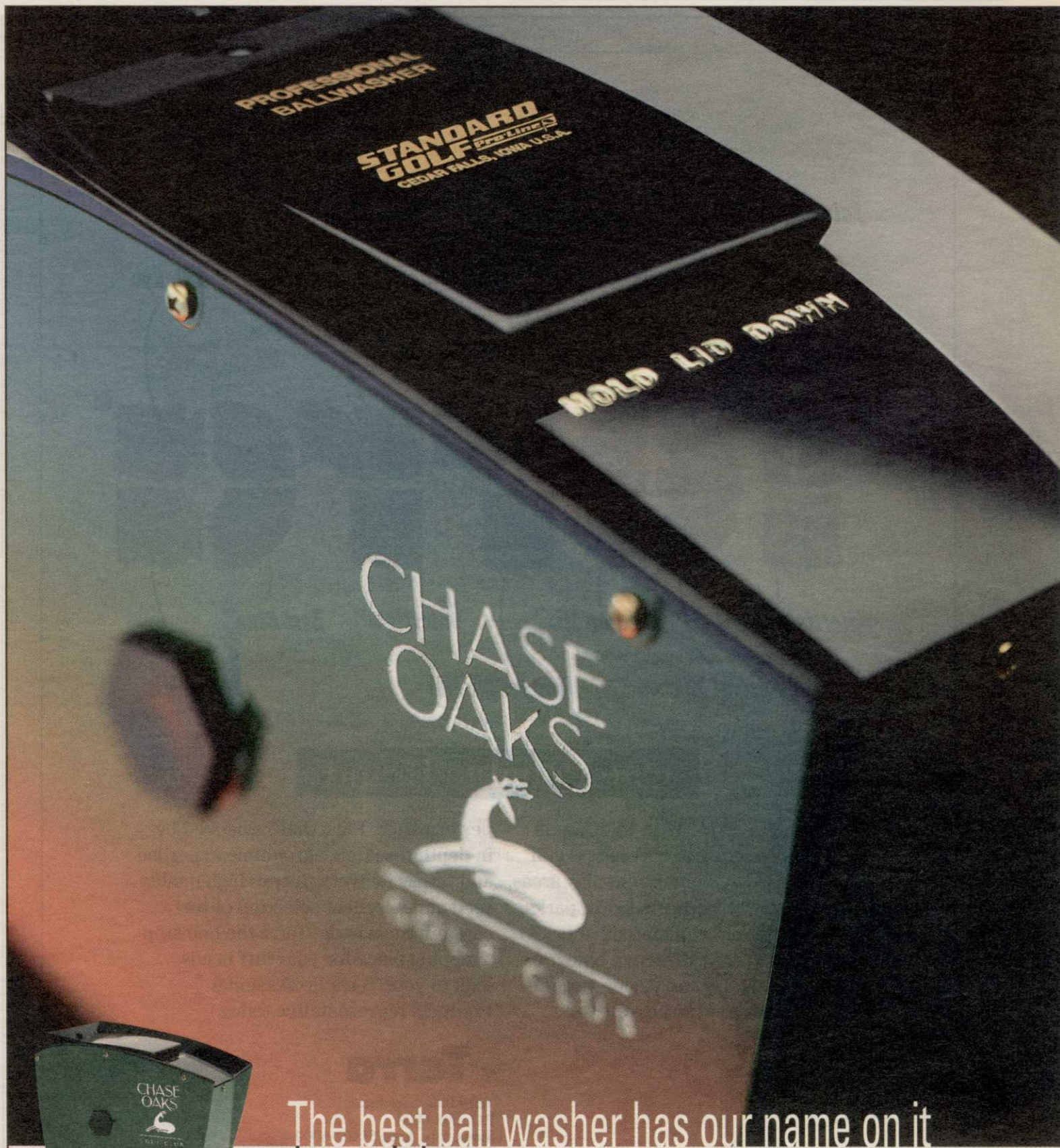
GCN: Multi-course management companies are well established in the United States. Do you see that as the way forward for Europe?

Henner: While we have ev-

ery intention of growing our base of business in Europe, we will still evaluate each club as an individual opportunity. I would question whether you can buy a lot of courses without compromising relationships (with staff and the membership) and deliver consistently high levels of service. To be effective we have to become involved in the local communities. That takes time.

GCN: You have an office in Singapore, what do you think is going to happen in Asia now?

Henner: Obviously it's going to be a while before things stabilize. We will maintain our office in Singapore as we have several quality clubs in the Far East and are developing two new clubs in the Philippines. It's been good to us and future opportunities will present themselves.



The best ball washer has our name on it and now it has yours.

Order nine or more Standard Golf ball washers and you'll receive **FREE** black or white laser engraving of your club logo. Head-to-head tests have shown that players prefer the Standard Golf ball washer because the crank action is easy to use, splatter-free and washes four balls at once. You'll appreciate its leak-free durability and easy maintenance. And be sure to compare prices. Standard Golf is still your best ball washer value, and now it's personalized for **FREE**.

STANDARD GOLF COMPANY

Cedar Falls, Iowa USA

Talk to your Standard Golf distributor today. Or call 1-319-266-2638 for more information.

CIRCLE #133