

Former major leaguer builds course

IRVINE, Calif. — Former major league baseball player Doug DeCinces has opened his new Strawberry Farms Golf Club, an 18-hole, daily-fee course. The course has been in the works for almost five years and is the newest in a growing list of top-end, daily-fee courses in Orange County.

The par-71, 6,700-yard layout was designed by golf course architect Jim Lipe, a senior designer for Jack Nicklaus' Golden Bear Inc. By contractual agreement, Lipe is allowed to design one course a year on his own and he enthusiastically pursued and got the Strawberry Farms project.

"I liked the project because of the challenges," Lipe recently told *The Orange County Register*. "This course allowed for several different options."

The front nine, which is owned by the county, is a wide-open layout that has wetlands and natural vegetation. The back nine, owned by the Irvine Ranch Water District, is built around the Sand Canyon Dam and is tight and challenging. The fairways of Strawberry Farms are Bermudagrass and the greens are bentgrass. The rough is a

mixture of rye and bluegrass.

Both the clubhouse and the cart barn reflect the farm feel of Strawberry Farms. DeCinces has said the goal of the project from the beginning was to have one of the county's finer courses that would be comparable to Pelican Hill in Newport Coast and Oak Creek in Irvine.

AGC signs on to manage two California munis

SAN LEANDRO, Calif. — The city has signed an agreement with American Golf Corporation (AGC) to assume operation of its two municipal golf courses — the 18-hole Tony Lema course and the nine-hole Marina course.

Under the agreement, AGC has pledged \$8.1 million in renovation and rents to the city. The firm plans to turn the two courses into profit-making ventures. American Golf will

assume management of everything from the pro shop to maintenance operations.

Renovations to the courses are expected to start this year, with an agenda that includes redesigning and rebuilding greens complexes, tees, fairways, cart paths, drainage and irrigation of the Lema course. At the Marina course, greens, tees and drainage will be rebuilt along with the construction of a double-deck driving range.

Warm fall may cause problems with leaves

MIDLAND, Mich. — The unusually warm fall weather in the northern Midwest left many leaves on trees far longer than usual, which has caused some concern with area course superintendents.

Trees in Michigan usually lose their leaves by the fourth week of October. But last fall, the process crept into late November.

Eric Kleinsorge, superintendent at the Midland Country Club, said late-falling leaves can clog drains and cause problems that lead to greens damage.

"The biggest problem we have to worry about is if the leaves fall late in the winter and we can't get them picked up before it snows," Kleinsorge said. "The leaves could plug up our drains and they wouldn't be able to get rid of the surface water that would collect."

Kleinsorge said trapped surface water, which can fall into a cycle of freezing and then thawing and then freezing, can lead to crown hydration, which kills turfgrass.

Another potential problem caused by piles of late-falling leaves is blockage of sunlight and trapping in moisture, which can lead to gray snow mold developing underneath the leaves.



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