

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

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## Accessible, sustainable golf gets its due



The newly renovated 6th hole at East Lake Golf Club will play host to one of Atlanta's most ambitious junior golf initiatives to date.

### • The First Tee takes giant step forward

By M. LEVANS

ST. AUGUSTINE, Fla. — The First Tee, launched in November in a national publicity wave headlined by George Bush and Earl Woods, has managed to pull together the golf industry's heaviest hitters in what is being called the most significant concerted initiative to create acces-

sible golf facilities for minority and junior golfers.

According to The World Golf Foundation, The First Tee's founding organization, the initial focus will be on developing financial support to acquire locations for the facilities. To supplement these acquisitions, The First Tee plans

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### • East Lake: Atlanta's inner-city gem

By PETER BLAIS

ATLANTA — It's too early to say exactly what the effects will be of the \$100 million East Lake Meadows project here. But the private/public partnership that resulted in the renovation of the historic East Lake Golf Club, construction of a new executive length golf course and

building of a 500-unit residential community looks like a boon for the Georgia capital's inner city.

The initial focus was the famous East Lake Golf Club, where golfing legend Bobby Jones learned to play the game. The club had deteriorated badly since the late 1960s when

Continued on page 60

## Reaction to ADA gauged

By BOB SPIWAK

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) appears to have consequences in the world of golf which go well beyond disabled golfers. Courses may be forced to change facilities as well as policies, such as the "Cart Path Rule."

To get a superintendent's take on ADA, *Golf Course News* spoke with Jerry Coldiron, superintendent of Lassing Pointe Golf Club in Boone County, Ky.

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#### TALKING STICK SPEAKS VOLUMES

Coore & Crenshaw's Talking Stick, two 18-hole courses built on Salt River-Pima-Maricopa Indian Community land, promises to bring a little Scotland to Scottsdale, Ariz. See story page 54.

#### MAINTENANCE

## Genetic engineering could drive seed costs up

By MARK LESLIE

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Remarkable advances in genetic engineering of turfgrass will bring new cultivars to the marketplace more quickly. But seed costs could go up markedly, particularly because different companies own patents on the various techniques and genes that drive the discoveries.

Future release of new turfgrass varieties will be punctuated by negotiations "to see who gets what out in the marketplace," said Dr. Virgil Meier, a plant breeder responsible for turfgrass development at O.M. Scott.

Meier explained that to  
Continued on page 34

# First Tee gains massive backing

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to provide, through the help of participating organizations and individuals, expertise and consulting advice, land-planning services, course design and other assistance that will help reduce the cost of the project.

Fifteen developments have been identified as meeting The First Tee criteria thus far, including renovation of Detroit's Belle Isle course made possible by a \$2 million donation by Ford Motor Co. and Visteon Automotive Systems.

The First Tee plans to have 100 courses in the program in the next two years.

To this point, financial commitments for these developments have been made by the PGA Tour (\$30 million), The United States Golf Association (USGA) (\$3 million over the next two years) and Augusta National Golf Club (\$5 million). Other organizations that plan to make financial commitments include PGA of America and the Ladies Professional Golf Association. Individual contributions are being accepted as well.

"You have USGA and PGA Tour, the two biggest names in golf cooperating," said Michael Hurdzan, of Columbus, Ohio-based Hurdzan Fry Golf Course Design Inc. "They're saying you have to do something to get people into this game. And I believe they're putting their money

## Casino Beach: 'We can make it work'

Continued from previous page

to convince The First Tee that he has the wherewithal to make the project happen.

"I want to do something for family golf," said Champion, "but I am a businessman. I'm going into this project and I expect to make a living doing it. I believe it's possible to do a good thing and make a profit."

It's this sort of project — accessible yet profitable — that Hurdzan, principal at Columbus, Ohio-based Hurdzan Fry Golf Course Design, believes will take golf into the future.

"The end result should be a course that can be built at a low cost and maintained at a low cost so the owner can charge a reasonable fee but still make a profit," said Hurdzan.

According to Hurdzan, building a course with the junior in mind takes him back to the basics of course design. "When you have beginners, you have to make sure it has some playability. The goal is building something that is agronomically solid, something the owner can maintain."

Hurdzan has supplied Champion with the routing for the project, which will be built on top of Champions existing nine-hole course.

For Champion, having Hurdzan on board offers substantial leverage as he approaches The First Tee for funding. His focus is simple — give the family a range of affordable golfing environments from which to choose.

"Dad's getting ready to go and play on a Saturday morning. Why can't he take his 6-year old?" said Champion. "The idea is to get the kids involved at 6- or 10-years old. Our idea of junior golfers is 13- and 14-year olds. That's too old. Soccer is

### RELATED STORIES, PAGE 58

where their mouth is and investing in the future of the game."

Service and expertise commitments have been made by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA), National Golf Foundation, American Junior Golf Association, Tiger Woods Foundation and National Minority Golf Foundation.

"The neatest thing about The First Tee is that all of us are in it together," said Judy Bell, president of the USGA. The USGA has provided The First Tee with a grant of \$1 million for 1998 and plans an additional \$2 million over the next two years, pending a USGA review of the program.

"We see this as a supplement to our current grant making," said Bell. "The goal is to start with the local champion who is getting the job done but needs some help."

The initiative appears to be gaining momentum, and supporters, by the day. On December 9, the ASGCA inked its formal commitment to The First Tee, offering "... our services in any way we



A typical First Tee layout could look like this map of a facility in Duval County, Florida. It is one of the first projects to receive The First Tee funding. The nine-hole layout measures 2,974 yards and plays to a par 25, with four par-3s, three par-4s and two par-5s.

can," according to Alice Dye, ASGCA president.

First Tee participants will be able to obtain ASGCA design assistance during the development of any one of the designated course models — which could be a 3-hole course, pitch-and-putt course, nine-hole course or 18-hole course.

Course architects Hurdzan and Denis Griffiths believe accessible facilities can also be profitable and sustainable. They both see The First Tee as a project that has been too long in coming.

"For years I've said that golf has to build this base," said Hurdzan. "I got my start in this business building very inexpensive golf courses. Those courses became profitable, but more importantly, they allowed people to come in and play at a very low fee."

Hurdzan currently has three low-cost courses on the boards, one with Fort Worth, Texas-based Steve Champion,

owner of Casino Beach Golf Inc.

"I've been on the soapbox for many years," said Griffiths, principal of Braselton, Ga.-based Denis Griffiths & Associates Inc. and most immediate past president of the ASCGA.

"Finally we're seeing the golf community saying there are many different methods to making golf accessible and also profitable for those who are running the facilities."

While the ASGCA has made its commitment, formal word from the GCSAA is next to come.

"Our involvement hasn't been determined specifically," said Jeff Bollig, senior manager of media/public relations for GCSAA. "It will probably be a chapter-based program where The First Tee courses exist. We may provide funds to maintain them or provide a member to work on the courses. We may even provide a publication to assist the managers of the courses."

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## East Lake targets inner city

Continued from page 1

a partnership consisting of several members of the Atlanta Athletic Club bought the East Lake No. 1 course with the idea of preserving the historic No. 1 venue. The less-famous No. 2 course was sold to another group of private developers, which developed the East Lake Meadows public housing project on the property.

While their intentions were good, the owners of East Lake operated the club with limited funds and the course suf-

fered. In 1993, the East Lake Community Foundation, a philanthropic organization, purchased East Lake No. 1 with the idea of making it the centerpiece to redevelop the entire East Lake community, according to Foundation Executive Director Greg Giornelli. The foundation spent \$25 million to acquire and renovate East Lake and its clubhouse. Architect Rees Jones oversaw the renovation and the No. 1 course reopened to rave reviews in August 1995.

East Lake will host the PGA Tour Cham-

ampionship in late 1998 and the U.S. Amateur Championship in 2001, according to Greg Muirhead, a designer in Rees Jones' office. Jones rebuilt the greens, tees and bunkers; relocated the 17th hole; changed the 4th and 16th holes to par-4s and the 5th and 10th holes to par-5s.

The private East Lake club has become intertwined with the restoration of the entire neighborhood, which includes the tearing down of the existing East Lake Meadows public housing project across the street from the golf club, and rebuilding it as a mixed-income residential community and recreation center. The new community will include a public, 18-hole, executive-length course named the Charlie Yates Golf Course after the Atlanta-born golfer and one-time British Amateur champion. Jones also designed the Yates course.

How did this get done?

The East Lake Community Foundation, led by Atlanta developer Tom Cousins, formed a partnership with the Atlanta Housing Authority and residents of the existing East Lake Meadows project to rebuild East Lake Meadows. The old 650-unit public housing project consisted of badly deteriorated, barracks-style apartments. Like many inner-city housing projects, the neighborhood was plagued by a high crime rate and tremendous poverty. For example, three years ago, Giornelli said, the average earned income for an East Lake Meadows' family was \$1,000 per year. Of the 450 families living in East Lake, there were just 16 two-parent families as of two years ago.

"It was 100 percent African-American and totally segregated from the surrounding area," Giornelli said. "There were not literal walls around it. But people who didn't live there did not go into the community."

As of mid-December, 70 percent of the existing community had been torn down. The remaining 30 percent was scheduled to be completely gone by the end of 1998. In its place, the new community will consist of 500 housing units — garden apartment, townhouses and duplexes. Half those units will be set aside for families on public assistance and the other 250 will be available to anyone who cares to rent there. There is no visual or quality difference between the public and private units.

"Within the context of a rental community, it is as nice as anything that exists in Atlanta," Giornelli said.

The housing authority paid to build the public housing units and the foundation financed the market-rate units. The old East Lake Meadows community sat on 60 acres. The foundation purchased additional acreage and the city contributed some additional acreage giving the new community 175 acres.

"Interestingly, the footprint of this new community is being built exactly on the old East Lake No. 2 course," Giornelli said. In addition to the 500 housing units, elementary school, YMCA, park, ball fields and tennis facility, there is the new 18-hole Charlie Yates course and practice range.

The community is being built in two phases. Phase I includes 200 housing units, the first nine holes of the Yates layout and practice range. The first nine will be sprigged in the spring and should be ready by late summer. Phase II, which includes the remaining 300 residences

and final nine holes, should start in late 1998 and be completed by mid-2000. The cost of the entire project will be upwards of \$100 million.

The private East Lake club, Giornelli said, is an economic engine that helps drive the rest of the project and will help pay off the \$75 million spent outside the private club. The private East Lake club generates revenue in two ways. First, as the golf club makes money, excess profits go to neighborhood projects. Second, memberships are sold only to corporations, which are asked to contribute \$200,000 to the East Lake Community Foundation when they pay their \$50,000 to join the club.

"We are a year into the effort and we have 35 companies aboard," Giornelli said. "We expect to fill it out within the next two years and at that point we'll close it out. Once we get to 100, the whole thing works. The bottom line is that with 100 companies on board, each one contributing \$200,000, we'll have raised \$20 million to help fund the charitable side of what's going on."

Programs at East Lake are aimed at long-term benefits for kids, particularly education. A golf academy for neighborhood children runs five days a week for 3 1/2 hours per day after school. Enrichment, reading and computer classes are offered and run by Georgia State University's education department. Golf is also a component of the program. All 100 kids in the program receive golf instruction two days a week and the opportunity to play golf. The program has run out of the private East Lake club the past two years. In the future, the new Yates course will be the site of the junior golf academy, allowing the program to be expanded to include many more children.

"Every child from that neighborhood who is a part of the junior golf academy will be able to play that [Yates] course any time they want," Giornelli explained. "We want it to serve as an incentive. They'll have to know the rules of the game, pass an etiquette test, know how to repair ball marks and things like that. Hopefully it will act as an academic incentive so that you'll have to have certain grades in order to play."

A handful of neighborhood residents work at the golf courses, although job creation wasn't a major reason for renovating East Lake or building the Yates courses.

"East Lake is a caddies-only club, we don't allow golf carts" Giornelli pointed out. "From a jobs standpoint, that's the most significant we have. More than 300 kids have worked as caddies the past two years. As an after-school or summer job for a high school or college standpoint, you can't beat it. ... It's wonderful to have a successful business person and a 14- or 15-year-old inner city kid spend 4 1/2 hours together. That doesn't happen very often in our society."

East Lake is also part of the Evans Scholarship Program, run by the Western Golf Association, which provides full, four-year scholarships to caddies. The East Lake Community Foundation also provides college scholarships of its own.

"Mr. Cousins hopes that this project can be used as a model for other cities where they can go back and reinvigorate a neighborhood that has fallen on tough times," Muirhead said.

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