

## BRIEFS

**TROY, Mich.** — The city has narrowed to five its list of developers to create a master-planned, 18-hole course and residential community. The site consists of 170 acres owned by the city and 96 acres owned by the Troy school district. The finalists are: The Silverman Cos. of Farmington Hills; Robertson Bros., Co. of Bloomfield Hills; Troy Golf L.L.C. of Southfield; Meadowbrook Golf Group of Lombard, Ill.; and Links Design Team of West Bloomfield Township.

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**GENOA, Nev.** — Sierra Nevada Golf Club, a John Harbottle and Johnny Miller co-design, is scheduled to open here this month. Situated on a historic cattle ranch 25 minutes from South Lake Tahoe, the 18-hole, championship layout is carved into the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range. American Golf Corp. is managing the Old West-themed facility.

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**SCOTTSDALE, Ariz.** — Granite Golf Group, Inc. has signed an agreement to lease Persimmon Ridge Golf Club in Louisville, Ky. Designed by Arthur Hills, the course opened in 1989. The agreement was completed in conjunction with Golf Trust of America, Inc.

## NGF study finds rounds, golfers on the upswing

**JUPITER, Fla.** — More first-time golfers took up the sport in 1997, than in the past seven years combined, according to recently published research from the National Golf Foundation.

The study found that golf participation jumped more than 50 percent for beginning golfers, and 34 percent for junior golfers aged 12 to 17.

"The fact that the 1997 increases were fueled by junior and beginning golfers is an excellent sign for future growth," said Joseph Beditz, NGF president and chief executive officer.

Beditz credits much of last year's jump in participation to increased public interest in golf created by Tiger Woods, Karrie Webb and other pros, as well as compelling advertising programs launched by corporations marketing products through golf.

The American Golfer Survey, which was launched in January, is a monthly study of U.S. golfers aged 12 and above. The survey was distributed to 60,000 households with questions ranging from number of rounds played to golf spending, including product and service preferences.

Research also revealed a 30-percent increase in the number of moderate golfers (those who play eight to 24 rounds a year) and a 15-percent jump in total rounds played. Occasional golfers—those who play one to

seven rounds a year—dropped 9 percent.

Although 1997 has many of the signs of being a watershed year for golf participation in the United States, Beditz is quick to add that it's too soon to tell whether it's the start of a new period of growth.

"Any thoughts I may have about 1997 being a breakout year are tempered by 1990," he said, noting that 1990 was the year the numbers of golfers and rounds played jumped 15 percent and 7 percent respectively. However, the numbers fell off the following year by almost an equal amount and remained there until last year.

Factors such as weather and how often the nation's 10.6 million occasional golf-

ers frequent the courses will determine if golf is ready to resume the steady climb it enjoyed in the late 1980s, said Beditz.

"The fact that we saw a 30-percent increase in moderate golfers tells us that a significant number of occasionals played more than their normal number of rounds last year, and thereby reclassified themselves as moderate golfers," he said.

The outlook for continuing increases in golfers, Beditz said, will depend on how many occasional golfers and how many of last year's beginners stay in the game. Historically, some 2 million players — most of them very infrequent or first-time golfers — drop out of the game each year.

### 1997 Golf Participation rates

Indicator	Total in millions	% incr. 96-97
All golfers	26.5	7
Total rounds played	547	15
Beginning golfers	3	51
Junior golfers (age 12-17)	2.4	34
Avid golfers (25+ rounds/year)	5.6	6
Moderate golfers (8-24 rounds/yr)	7.9	30
Occasional golfers (1-7 rounds/yr)	10.6	-9

Source: National Golf Foundation

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