

BRIEFS



**UNITED GROUP ACQUIRES SERENOA GC**

NEW YORK—United Golf Group, a private course owner, has acquired Serenoa Golf Club, an 18-hole semi-private course in Sarasota, Fla., for \$7.1 million. United Golf Chief Executive Officer Mark Mashburn said: "The Serenoa course fits in well with our long-term goal of acquiring a portfolio of quality courses throughout the country." United Golf is a course ownership company based in New York. United Golf's management includes personnel with a combined 50 years of experience with course acquisition and management as well as individuals with extensive experience in the capital markets. For more information on United Golf Group, contact 212-317-0300.

**GOLF TRUST REPORTS FINANCIALS**

CHARLESTON, S.C. — Golf Trust of America (GTA), Inc., a self-administered real-estate investment trust, reported first-quarter Funds from Operations (FFO) of \$6.8 million or 54 cents per share, on revenues of \$8.9 million compared to FFO of \$3.3 million, or 41 cents per share, on revenues of \$3.8 million for the prior year's first quarter. The 32-percent increase in FFO is principally due to acquisitions during the year. In the first quarter of 1998, GTA purchased six courses for a total investment of \$100 million. As of March 31, the company had an interest in a total of 28 courses.

**NGP REPORTS FFO GROWTH**

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — National Golf Properties Inc. reported funds from operations (FFO) of \$12.8 million in the quarter ended March 31, a 10-percent increase from \$11.7 million in the same quarter a year earlier. On a per-share basis, NGP reported FFO of 61 cents per share compared to 56 cents a year earlier. NGP declared distributions to stockholders of 43 cents for the quarter ended March 31.

**CARLTON JOINS MASTERS TEAM**

ORLANDO, Fla.—Masters Golf Corp. has hired Wendy Carlton as its marketing coordinator. Carlton will provide marketing support as well as marketing and membership generation services for Masters-managed clubs. She joins the Masters team after a career with TeamStaff and Arabian Nights where she gained extensive experience in marketing and client relations.



The new Robert Trent Jones Sr.-designed course at Playa Grande in the Dominican Republic.

**New destination: Dominican Republic**

By PETER BLAIS

RIO SAN JUAN, Dominican Republic — WANTED: Top-notch superintendent to manage an 18-hole piece of paradise on the northeast coast of this Caribbean island nation.

The country's national bank, Banco Central, recently opened an 18-hole, Robert Trent Jones Sr.-designed course along the windswept cliffs of Playa Grande, an hour east of Puerto Plata International Airport.

Wishing to preserve its majestic, \$8 million investment, bank officials recently announced they are seeking an experienced superintendent to manage Playa Grande's Bermudagrass fairways, tiff dwarf greens and devilish Jones-designed bunkers.

Banco Central built the course in the hopes of enticing a major developer to buy both the course and surrounding acreage, where six major hotels and numerous vacation homes are planned.

One seemingly logical developer would be Allegro Resorts, which owns a 300-

room hotel bordering the course — Caribbean Village Playa Grande. Allegro guests currently purchase the bulk of the rounds. However, Allegro is in the hotel business — operating 30 resorts worldwide under the Allegro, Caribbean Village and Jack Tar resort banners.

"We are resort operators, not developers," said Benny Guavera, president of Allegro's management services division.

Allegro would prefer to stay with its strength, resort operations, and leave development of the six remaining resort sites and residential housing lots to a major real-estate developer, Guavera explained. The risk for Allegro, is that other resorts developed on the surrounding property would also want to send their guests to the Playa Grande course, which includes 13 holes overlooking the Atlantic and three holes requiring drives across the pounding surf.

Allegro's Caribbean Village hopes to eventually add another 200 rooms, bringing it to 500. The other six planned re-

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**GUEST ANALYSIS**

**One photo is worth...a thousand bucks**

By WARREN MARR

Let's get a few stark realities out of the way: First, with 400 new courses opening each year, competition among facilities becomes more heated with each passing day. Accordingly, marketing a course has taken on an importance no one could have envisioned just 10 years ago.

One of the most important marketing tools a golf course has is the course itself — or, at the very least, color course photographs around which owners can shape advertising, public relations and media campaigns.

Considering the importance of photography and its considerable expense, there is more to getting good marketing images than simply hiring a photographer. The complete process involves planning, accepting the probability of adjusting your play schedule, and perhaps even renting a cherry picker. As a course photographer, I've come to realize there are certain steps a course owner can take to get the most from their photographic investment.

To maximize a photographer's performance, the most important thing an owner can do is properly prepare the course for the shoot. To each of my clients, I routinely send a checklist well in advance of my arrival. Some of these items may seem obvious, but you'd be surprised what a difference they can make.

It's also extremely helpful to allow photographers enough time to familiarize themselves with the course. Light is the key factor; morning and evening light are generally the best, but they fall differently on every course and hole. Shadows are dramatic, but putting surfaces need to be well lit. If skilled photographers are given enough time to scout the layout, they can establish a sound game plan.

Communication is important. Owners should prepare a list of holes they would like to feature; make sure the photographer understands your priorities. Also, understand that an experienced photographer can usually shoot four to six holes per day - two or three in the morning and two or three in the evening, depending on whether Mother Nature is cooperating and how crowded the course is. Owner

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PERSONNEL CORNER

**Ottis, Aretha & junior golfers**

By VINCE ALFONSO

Ottis Redding wrote the song and The Queen of Soul, Aretha Franklin had one of her biggest hits with it. You guessed it, "R-E-S-P-E-C-T." The lyrics of that song focus our attention on getting respect. I want to talk to you about giving respect.

I spent from 1964 to 1977, dividing my time between a career in the music business and working with Vince, Sr. at Bella Vista Country Club in Memphis, Tenn.. As I reflect on those years, I can easily compare my love of music and the respect I have

for the talents of Mr. Redding and Ms. Franklin with my love and the respect I have for junior golfers. I want to use that familiar refrain of



Vince Alfonso

Mr. Redding's, Re-Re-Re-Respect to draw your attention and that of your staff to what it means to give Re-Re-Re-Respect to junior golfers, rather than trying so hard to get it from them.

My dad, Vince Sr., and my Uncle Mario showed me respect as a junior golfer by taking time, real time, to teach me the game. And they didn't just teach me how to hold a club and then say, 'Take a whack at it Bud. Let's see what you can do.'

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Marr photo of Pasatiempo in Santa Barbara.