

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.

Dominican

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sorts would likely have a similar number of rooms. That means roughly 3,500 guests could eventually be chasing the 200-odd rounds available daily at Playa Grande. Banco Central realizes the dilemma and is reportedly already considering building at least one more course to accommodate the additional guests.

But it's hard to imagine a new course vying with the existing, 7,046-yard, Jones-designed layout. One seasoned golf writer who rates courses for a major U.S. consumer golf publication, said he gave Playa Grande the highest rating he has awarded any new course in the past 10 years.

The quality of the new layout shows the government is serious about making the Dominican Republic a popular golf destination. Known more as an exporter of professional baseball players than an importer of golfers, this island nation now boasts two world-class layouts among its 15-course supply. The country's other notable layout is Pete Dye-designed Casa de Campo on the Dominican's southwest shore, a four-hour drive from Playa Grande.

Given its tropical climate and friendly people, a few more courses like Playa Grande could make the Dominican Republic the Caribbean's major golf destination.

Alfonso

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would all do well to spend more time modeling respect by conducting ourselves in a respectful way toward our customers, especially our junior customers. I think we spend way too much time expecting respect. I really believe my Dad and my Uncle Mario had the right idea. They taught respect by example. They used to say you'll never get it, until you give it. However, as wise as I think my Dad and Uncle Mario are (Dad is 83 and Uncle Mario is 81), there is no doubt about it, the Bible says it best in Proverbs:22-6: "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old, he will not depart from it."

I think it's time we focus more of our energy on giving R-E-S-P-E-C-T rather than spending so much time and energy complaining about not getting it. What do you think?

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Vince Alfonso Jr. is a 40-year, golf-industry veteran, president of Alfonso Creative Enterprises Inc., and owner/PGA professional at Kimberling Golf Course near Branson, Mo. He can be reached at 417-739-4370.

GOLF COURSE NEWS

AGC purchases England's St. Mellion International G&CC

CORNWALL, England — American Golf (UK) Ltd. has purchased St. Mellion International Golf and Country Club in Cornwall from Martin and Hermon Bond. The purchase represents the 12th acquisition for American Golf-UK, which has tripled in size in the last four years. More importantly, the St. Mellion acquisition establishes American Golf in the premium class

destination golf market here in Britain. A further four to seven acquisitions are expected in 1998 and early 1999.

American Golf, American Golf-UK's parent company, based in Santa Monica, Calif., is the world's largest operator of private golf clubs, resorts, and public courses with 275 locations in the United States and Britain.

Aside from two championship 18-hole

courses, to include the Jack Nicklaus course opened in 1988, St. Mellion International has hotel, conference/catering, pool and leisure facilities, holiday accommodation and timeshare operations. Significant capital investment will be made to enhance St. Mellion's current amenities and additional development opportunities exist to enlarge the facility and amenities.

QUELANT™-Ca

Calcium & Amino Acids

CALCIUM DEFICIENCY CORRECTOR

Addition of calcium to the soil by traditional means is not usually efficient or effective in treating the calcium deficiency of turfgrass. Once applied, the common forms of liming materials can rapidly change to compounds that are insoluble in water and not readily available to the plant. Continuous applications over long time periods are necessary to effect even modest improvements in calcium uptake.

Quelant™-Ca is a newly available amino acid chelated calcium product that corrects calcium deficiencies in turfgrass upon application. Quelant™-Ca provides readily available calcium chelated with amino acids so that it is easily absorbed by the leaves and/or the roots of the plant regardless of most soil and water conditions. The unique formulation of amino acids used for chelation was



developed not only to facilitate absorption by the leaves and roots, but to increase mobility of the calcium within the plant as well.

Quelant™-Ca is normally applied as a foliar spray and may also be applied through fertigation. Either way, it is tank-mix compatible with herbicides, soluble fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides and plant growth regulators. It will even help improve the efficiency of most of these treatments by increasing their absorption and translocation within the plant.

Best of all, Quelant™-Ca is economical to use and it protects the environment.

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