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INSIDE

GCSAA Show Wrap-Up

Time to catch up on the news you may have missed during the hustle and bustle of the big show 39

Asian Notebook: China

China's golf market appears to be steady and strong amidst the current economic turmoil 12



GOLF STRATEGIES LANDS AIRPORT 18
Neil Crafter and Paul Mogford of Golf Strategies on site in January examining plans for Zhuhai Aerotropolis Country Club with representatives of Gold Bond Enterprises and Zhuahi Airport Group Corp. See story page 55.

COURSE MAINTENANCE

- GCSAA elects new officers 4
- Floridians struggle for nematode solution 17
- Goeder named Canada's top super 21

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

- New courses springing up in Europe 3
- Flat pipes save fat bucks 45
- International update: The world stays busy 55-58

COURSE MANAGEMENT

- Family Golf adds half-dozen facilities 11
- Liability still a sticky issue 61
- Survey confirms Tiger's impact 62

SUPPLIER BUSINESS

- Scotts busy into genetic engineering 71
- Eco Soil buys Midwest supplier 72
- New products abound post GCSAA Show 73-74

Player makes drastic cuts in Singapore office

By PETER BLAIS

SINGAPORE — Gary Player Enterprises has drastically scaled back its Singapore group office in response to the slowdown in the Asian economy.

"We've operated a group office in Singapore for the past six years," said Player Director of Design Phil Jacobs. The firm had employed as many as six people at its Malaysian office covering the various golf-related businesses carrying the Player banner.

"We never had a design office there. We always did that from our Johannesburg office and here [Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, USA]. We've cut back on the group office staff, but we'll still have someone there to answer the phone."

Jacobs said Player began reducing its Singapore office last August and completed its cutback in December. "We started to ratchet things down in July and August with the collapse of Thailand's currency. Things just spread like wildfire after that," he said.

Player still has two golf course projects underway in Japan.

Four Indonesian projects have been put on hold, although Graha Helvitia Golf & Country Club in Medan was completed just before the Thai collapse.

Jacobs expects work to be completed on the 27-hole Ria Bintan project on

Continued on page 60

The First Tee hits roadblock in Richmond

By MARK LESLIE

RICHMOND, Va. — Acting on a mission to be the initial First Tee facility to open in the country, Richmond natives Fred Tattersall, Lester George and Robert Wrenn anticipate breaking ground in this area on a nine-hole golf course for youths by June and opening it by Memorial Day 1999.

All they need now is the land. They thought they had a deal nearly cut when, in a shocking decision on Feb.

23, city administrators opted not to accept Tattersall's offer of \$2 million — \$1.5 million to build the course and \$500,000 to operate the program for five years.

The city wanted Tattersall's Richmond First Tee Foundation to build the facility on a former landfill that now contains a driving range. But Tattersall, George and PGA Tour officials thought another 63-acre city-owned property was ideal because it neighbors schools and the

Continued on page 48

YOUTH QUAKE

Youth and minority golf movements are catching on all over North America. For more information, see related stories:

- PAGE 49 — Wadsworth bankrolls \$3.5M for inner-city juniors, handicapped
- PAGE 49 — Robbing from the rich to help the poor
- PAGE 51 — National Association of Junior Golfers ushering in 'Junior Golf Decade'



GOLF AHOY: The first 18 holes of Bandon Dunes in Bandon, Ore., a 54-hole, 2,000-acre development, will open for play in June of 1999. The 7,253-yard, par-72 oceanside layout was designed by Scot David Mclay Kidd. The 12th green is pictured above. See page 61.

Textron completes Ransomes acquisition

By M. LEVANS

PROVIDENCE, R.I./LONDON — The four-company race has been winnowed to three.

Textron Inc. has succeeded in its move to take

over Ransomes PLC, the UK based turf-care equipment manufacturer, for \$230 million for the entire issued capital stock of Ransomes.

As of 1 p.m. GMT on Tuesday, January 27, 91.9 percent of Ransomes shareholders voted to accept the Textron offer — 1.9 percent more than the 90 percent necessary to secure the deal.

According to reports in *The Times*, the offer had been on a "knife-edge" as

Continued on page 73

Meadowbrook Golf Group Acquires IGM and GVI

By PETER BLAIS

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. — National course operator Meadowbrook Golf Group Inc. has acquired International Golf Management (IGM) Inc. and Golf Ventures Inc. (GVI) in exchange for cash, common stock and convertible preferred stock in two separate merger and acquisition transactions.

IGM is a major provider of outsourced golf course maintenance services, with more than 35 courses under contract as of Dec. 31. IGM also operates two golf properties consisting of 54 holes under long-term leases. IGM had 1997 revenues of approximately \$15 million.

Continued on page 35



The First Tee

Continued from page 1

YMCA, The YMCA, YWCA, Girls and Boys Clubs and Police Athletic League, who are all supporting the project, agreed with Tattersall. But to no avail.

"It was a three-ring circus," Tattersall said of the meeting, at which his proposal never got to a vote.

So when the city administration backed off, the Richmond

First Tee Foundation quickly went to Plan B: They met with representatives of Chesterfield and Henrico counties whom, George said, are "very interested in working with us."

With an anxious eye toward the clock, they began looking at possible county sites for the facility on Feb. 27. Henrico County wraps around the east, north and west sides of Richmond, while Chesterfield is to the south.

To be open next Memorial Day, when schools close for the summer, George said he has "to put a spade in the ground in May. I have to be able to sprig or sod the Bermudagrass by Aug. 15. And I have to plant the bentgrass greens by Sept. 20."

Tattersall put into perspective the importance of being the first project to be developed. "Realistically," he said, "the PGA Tour the World Golf Foundation will

provide more celebrities and more public relations for the early sites. I haven't been told that directly, but people like Tiger Woods and [Honorary Chairman] President Bush will probably be more likely to go to the first site than the 100th."

"We've been dedicated to being not one of the first sites, but the first developed site," George said. "We know the First Tee program will adopt some old

courses and maybe refurbish them. We know there are some facilities that are suffering around the country at which the PGA Tour may step in and take over. But we wanted to be the first one specifically developed for First Tee, with First Tee guidelines, and we are committed to that goal."

Indeed, Tattersall has organized a Richmond First Tee Foundation board of directors that includes the Tour's Wrenn; Bill Goodwin, previous owner of the Hogan Co; Vinnie Giles, the lead agent for Pros Inc. who represents Tom Kite, Jason Leonard and Davis Love III; Bob Ukrop, who runs the area's largest grocery chain in the area; Bootie McGurn, the champion of the Richmond city golf tournament; and several local businessmen.

The First Tee Program has been organized by the World Golf Foundation to pull young people into the game. For Tattersall, a money market investment specialist, there are two reasons for involvement: his love for children and civic pride.

For George, a golf course architect who is donating his design fee, involvement in the nation's First Tee course is "a source of pride ... an opportunity to bring light on my city, my home, to do something for kids that could possibly be a foundation or building block for other programs."

For Wrenn, the PGA Tour golfer and color broadcast analyst, it means giving his time and design consultant fees to perform public relations and run clinics.

It does the project no harm that PGA Tour Commissioner Tim Finchem is a graduate of the University of Richmond. The Tour has committed to raising \$1 million apiece from 50 donors to provide seed money for First Tee sites. The Richmond group hopes to take advantage of those funds.

First Tee administrator J.D. Daniel had told Tattersall's group that it is "way out in front" of the other projects as being the first First Tee on line. The city's decision Feb. 23 may have put that position in jeopardy. But Tattersall and George still expect to be out front in the race.

"At this point, the city has no interest in helping us," Tattersall said, "but the counties have total interest."

"We will be successful," George declared. "Fred Tattersall and his board will make this happen. He has already raised the money. We have the support of the Ys and Police Athletic League. We have two counties very interested. And it is the right thing to do."

"We will have the pilot First Tee program."

Deputy City Administrator George Kolb, who led the campaign against the Richmond First Tee Foundation proposal, did not return phone calls made by GCN.

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