

BRIEFS



SUBURBAN CLUB GETS FACELIFT

PIKESVILLE, Md. — The A.W. Tillinghast-designed Suburban Club of Baltimore County is undergoing a \$1 million improvement plan supervised by golf course architect Brian Ault of Ault, Clark and Associates. Improvements include new drainage with a holding pond on the 11th hole, recontouring fairways and converting them from ryegrass to bentgrass, rebuilding or enlarging tees, tree planting, bunker improvements, and a supplemental golf car storage building. Projects will be carried out over the next five years.

SNEVA BUILDS SECOND COURSE

LAVONDALE, Ariz. — Former Indianapolis 500 winner Tom Sneva has announced his newest golf course project, Coldwater Springs Golf Club here. "The site presents a terrific opportunity," said golf course architect Forrest Richardson. "We are basically taking a flat canvas and transforming it into a golfing roller coaster." Sneva's first project, The 500 Club, is located in north Phoenix and opened in 1990. Richardson has routed the 18-hole, par-72 course as part of a master drainage and floodwater system for the community. The course is expected to open for play in the fall.

DIABLO CREEK GETTING REDO

CONCORD, Calif. — The city of Concord has selected Golf Dimensions to provide development management and construction management services for the \$2 million renovation of the city-owned Diablo Creek Golf Course. Robert Muir Graves & Damian Pascuzzo Limited will design the renovation of the daily-fee course, originally built in 1963 as the Concord Municipal Golf Course. The design phase is scheduled for completion in May, and the completion of the renovation work is anticipated by October.

TOLL BROTHERS BUSY BUILDING

HUNTINGDON VALLEY, Pa. — Toll Brothers, Inc. has formed a joint venture with Aera Energy LLC, California's largest oil producer, to initiate development of an 840-acre community in northern Orange County, which will include more than 2,100 lots and a 200-acre public golf course. Toll Brothers spokesman is in various stages of design, planning or construction for master-planned communities in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina, Florida and Michigan.

Flat pipe a money-saver in greens construction

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Operating on the philosophy that it is more profitable to reduce expenses through innovation than by cheapening the product, a growing number of golf course projects are installing or remodeling putting greens with a new drainage technique.

The key ingredient is a flat, perforated corrugated plastic pipe called AdvanEDGE, made by Advanced Drainage Systems, Inc. (ADS) here. Developed in 1988 as an edge drain to be installed vertically alongside highways, AdvanEDGE reportedly has about twice the soil contact area of 4-inch round pipe, and will collect and drain water almost twice as quickly.

In the early 1990s, football stadiums began laying the pipe horizontally under the playing turf and found that this accelerated water collection from heavy rainfalls. The concept has since spread to other recreational areas, and now golf courses.

Continued on page 46



One of the earlier Hurdzan-Fry greens showing ADS AdvanEDGE pipe installed horizontally on the sub-base.

Atlantic City takes aggressive golf tack



Stephen Kay-designed Blue Heron Pines is part of Atlantic City's package.

By JOHN TORSIELLO

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Atlantic City is known for its casinos, the Miss America Beauty Pageant and saltwater taffy. If the Greater Atlantic City Golf Association (GACGA) gets its way, the city and surrounding area will be known also for its golf courses.

The association is in the midst of an effort to attract golfers and grab a higher profile for its eight members: Sand Barrens, Harbor Pines, Blue Heron, Cape May National and Mays Landing golf clubs, Brigantine Golf Links, Great Bay Resort and Country Club, and Seaview Resort. The group is aggressively marketing stay-and-play packages, some in consort with casinos and hotels in the area. While a few casinos have bought into golf as a selling point, the owners of most of the city's gambling establishments have yet to embrace the game as a means to lengthen the time visitors stick around the city.

The reason? An old fear that anything which takes gamblers out of the gaming rooms is bad for business.

Despite the reluctance of some casino owners, GACGA

Continued on page 47

QA Ross Watson to keep foot in Asian door

INDOOROPILLY, Queensland, Australia — Ross Watson is a past president of the Society of Australian Golf Course Architects and one of GCNI's first sources for background on Australia and Asian course development. GCNI recently spent a few minutes with Watson to discuss the recent downsizing of his Malaysian office and how he sees his architecture business riding out the waves of the current economic storm. The smart money, said Watson, will be poised and ready when the inevitable recovery comes around.

Golf Course News: As an architect who has used Asia as a primary target, can you give us a snapshot of the Asian market from where you sit today?

Ross Watson: We've had an office in Malaysia for about 4 years or so. In fact, I lived there three years up until a year ago. Just a few weeks ago we downsized that operation significantly, obviously due to our read of the economic situation. Projects were, virtually, overnight, being put on hold or canceled. We made a major effort there building our niche in the market, and frankly we were looking forward to finally reaping some rewards. And then this happens. So, from where I sit, I see four years of hard work and not much to show for it at this point of time.

GCN: What did you have to do to achieve this downsizing?

RW: We went from six people, like a year ago to, say, one and a half now. We've got one local person that's full time just keeping the thing going — paying the bills, trying to collect money.

My partner or I may go up as necessary, probably a couple of weeks per month, just to finish off some projects we've been working on that have now virtually finished, so in that way we're fairly fortunate because even in this bad market and this bad economy, we'd probably be the only golf designers that are bringing on new projects in the Johor Bahru region right now. So what that means to us is that there will be no other golf courses coming on there in the next year or two so they'll only be able to talk about that one. And if things turn around, well, maybe that'll be good for us.

GCN: A lot of people in the industry are telling us to sit tight and wait for another two years and we're going to see things slowly get back on its feet. Is this your read?

RW: Whether it's two years or five years, I couldn't

Continued on page 54



Ross Watson

Q&A: Watson

Continued from page 45

possible put a finger on that. But you know, everybody you talk to says just wait for six to twelve months, then 12 months to a year. Some of them are rather pessimistic in saying it could be five. One needs a crystal ball, actually. The bottom line is that you're either going to set yourself up to give the market away

or you can position yourself so they you can be ready for when the market gets going again. That's what we'll try to do.

GCN: How do you plan to do that?

RW: Well, we do have an office there. We've just moved it across the road into a very small area. The local person that we've had on staff for four years continues to work for us... so we can finish those couple of projects

we've got going.

GCN: In the meantime, what's the situation in Australia? Has any of this trickled down?

RW: Australia has been pretty much in a semi-recession since the mid 80's when the Japanese came to Australia and created an artificial market when they saw all that money to spend. They saw Australia as an opportunity to come in and start golf resorts, and we had a real mini-boom —

a boom we'd never experienced before. When the bubble burst, that stopped. So Australia has been struggling along ever since. What's happened the last few years is a little more well-thought-out real estate development with the odd golf course here and there. And we've kept in touch with that and in fact, we're fairly well positioned back here in Australia now.

GCN: As of the end of 1997

you had a number of courses that were in planning or design stages. I would like to get the status of those projects. The Tee Trees Golf Course on the Gold Coast of Queensland?

RW: I had a meeting with them the other day. It should open sometime this year.

GCN: Chhnang Golf & Country Club north of Phnom Penh, Cambodia?

RW: It's subject to finance. It's not dead, it's not alive, it's sort of blah. I can't say much more than that. It was subject to a Malaysian developer. We've worked with him for years, and he was hopeful that he'd secure the actual finance for the project. I haven't heard anything in the last few weeks which means obviously they haven't gotten the financing placed but it's also not dead.

GCN: Belitung Indah Resort Golf Course, Belitung Island, Indonesia?

RW: Well, they don't even communicate with us. When they don't communicate, it means they don't want to lose face and they either owe you money or something like that so it basically means that that's on hold indefinitely. That's how I would put it.

GCN: Massai Golf Course, Johor Bahr, Malaysia?

RW: We started clearing and even started earth works, and they just paid us most of what they owed us and said let's forget it. It was a joint venture arrangement, and it appears that the joint venture is halted because of the current situation. We're just viewing that as a dead project unfortunately. It was a good project, too.

GCN: How do you see Asia riding this crisis out?

RW: Well, the biggest problem in a bull market situation is everybody is gunning for their shot. They tend to look at everything in the short term. Let's get in and get as much as we can while the going is good and who cares about the future. But I think that is finished. The smart operator will think about the future, and probably there'll be a bright future if and when the smart developer comes in and picks up some or all the developments that were badly planned and replan them. In fact we've got one project that probably will happen in another twelve months.

It's an existing 18-hole golf course that will be downsized to a 9-hole course but with triple tees and double greens and some sort of Mickey Mouse theme. The idea being they'll get some more salable real estate. And instead of selling membership, the golf course will be purely 100 percent for the residents of that particular estate. So I guess the answer is, in any of these situations, there are great opportunities. The smart developer will get in there and gear himself up for when the timing is right.

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