

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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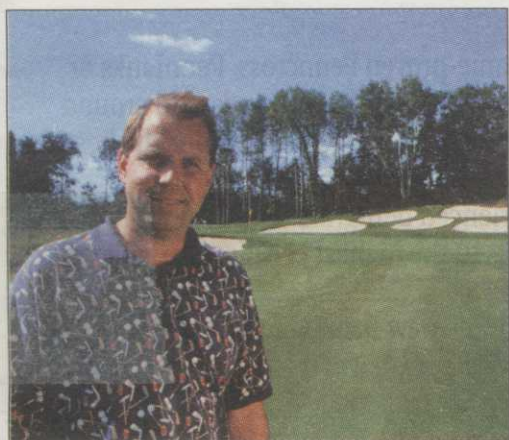
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With more than 900 courses under construction, the golf car market has never been busier 61

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ATOP TWO WORLDS

Scott Hoffman not only maintains four courses at the top-rated resort in Minnesota, he stepped into designers' shoes and laid out Golf Digest's 1997 3rd Best New Upscale Public Course in North America. See Super Focus, page 17.

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Rain Bird snags AGC exclusive

By M. LEVANS

AZUSA, Calif. — The directors of maintenance at American Golf Corp. (AGC) have changed its irrigation supplier with the recent signing of an exclusive three-year agreement with Rain Bird.

AGC estimates that it will use Rain Bird Products — from replacement sprinkler heads to the new Cirrus central control irrigation system — in 20 new course irrigation system installations this year. The arrangement could even-

tually trickle down to all 260 AGC courses.

According to AGC, it will continue a service contract with Toro, AGC's previous irrigation supplier, to maintain the existing equipment.

"There are perceptions that we go after the low bidder," said John Meyer, director of fleet management and national accounts at AGC. "That is not the case. We have 8 directors of maintenance. I look at them as the committee and say, 'Irrigation is coming up, who should get a proposal.' The only two names that come up are Rain Bird and Toro. Quality versus quality, you can't get any better in this industry."

Rain Bird won the tight battle, said AGC, with its commitment to extensive after-market service. Rain

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CCA banks on PGA ETC

From wire services

DALLAS — The International Group of ClubCorp has acquired a 23-percent interest in PGA European Tour Courses PLC (PGA ETC) from Thompson Investments, Ltd. The transaction is valued at more than \$10 million.

PGA ETC is a company that owns and invests in flagship, tournament golf venues in Europe. It is listed on the London Stock Exchange and trades under the symbol (PGA). ClubCorp will also have two seats on the board of directors of the company.

Thomson Invest-

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The Indian River Club: an environmental winner

Audubon cracks down

By MARK LESLIE

SELKIRK, N.Y. — Probation. Excommunication. These terms that embody enmity are now part of the lexicon at Audubon International (AI), long a bastion of teamwork and cooperation.

While the majority of the 66 golf courses in the 4-year-old Audubon Signature Program are committed to it and swear by its effectiveness, others have fallen off the bandwagon, or perhaps were never aboard, according to AI President Ron Dodson.

Lamenting the fact that he had to, first, "place on probation," then "excommunicate" one of the eight fully certified Audubon Signature facilities, Dodson said: "Our strongest program is only as strong as our weakest one, and we can't allow people to make our name look weak. We already

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Estate courses on the rebound

Certainly not your average backyard. The 2nd at Rich Harvest.

By MARK LESLIE

SUGAR GROVE, Ill. — Disappointed in Augusta National's famous par-3 12th hole at Amen Corner, Jerry Rich came home to his 2,000-acre estate and built what he calls a better one. Dis-

appointed in Augusta's 200-yard-long Magnolia Lane, he built a Magnolia Lane of his own. It meanders across two miles.

This is Rich Harvest Links. This is Jerry Rich's dream — a dream that grew from the idea of a

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modest couple of practice holes to a stunning facility that will open 18 championship-

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Rich's back 40 like no other's

Continued from page 1

length holes this summer. Eighteen holes kept in tournament condition by a professional staff. Eighteen holes that, because of the positioning of multiple tees, can be played as five different nine-hole rotations. Eighteen holes that this 4-handicap golfer designed to display what he calls "purposefully eclectic to show the Scottish, Pine Valley and Traditional looks."

And it's 18 holes that will not only be open to Rich and his guests, but to youths involved in the local Hook a Kid on Golf program.

"It's more than I ever expected," said Rich, 59, a physicist and mathematician who made a fortune by developing the first integrated terminal for Wall Street in the mid-1970s. "I originally thought it would be just a couple of holes where I could go out and enjoy myself. And we have created a real championship course here. It's one of the most exciting things I've ever done. I tackled it the same way I did my business."

"You feel like you're in Nevernever-



Rich Harvest Links' 4th hole is Jerry Rich's answer to Augusta National's 12th hole.

land," said golf course architect Greg Martin of Martin Design Partnership in St. Charles, whom Rich hired to help with the intricacies of the design-and-construction process. "It's a wonderful sense of place. Deer prance across the fairways, etc.

"He [Rich] knows quality and wants it to be the Augusta National of the North. I don't think, at this point, that he has

compromised that position at all."

Indeed, Rich decided to build some practice holes after a visit to Augusta National 11 years ago. Since then he has returned to that famous Georgian property eight or nine times.

"Everyone talks about their [Augusta's] 12th being such a famous par-3," he said. "I thought I could do better than that. So I built my 12th hole, which I think turned

out better than theirs." Rich's hole, the 4th on the white course, ranges from 166 to 185 yards. Its very small, narrow green is fronted by a lake and an 8-foot wall made from "holy boulders," huge slabs of limestone transported from Wisconsin Dells.

Saying his one disappointment at Augusta National was the shortness of Magnolia Lane, Rich felt, "If you have a Magnolia Lane, make it worthwhile."

The result: Guests at Rich Harvest Links park on the main farm at the entrance to the property and are driven to the plantation where the golf course is situated — a two-mile trek through the course and woods and "the beauty of the whole estate," Rich said. "By the time they get to the other end, they're drooling and raring to play golf."

Active in the Illinois PGA Foundation and a member of several country clubs, Rich has been interested in golf course design for 30 years, studying Donald Ross, Pete Dye and Alister Mackenzie and being particularly enamored with Dick Wilson. Although he majored in math and physics in college, he minored in earth sciences and enjoys the outdoors, wildlife and photography.

It was a short leap from the thought of

Continued on next page

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Rich's course

Continued from previous page hiring a professional golf course architect, to actually designing his golf himself (with an assist from Martin).

"I said to the last architect I interviewed, 'Why pay you a high fee and watch you have all the fun?'" Rich recalled.

Martin, who came aboard to help with the final seven holes and in April was designing a full-fledged practice center, agreed it was a joy.

"The facility was remarkable to begin with," he said. "The property is wonderful. Two branches of Welch's Creek run through it — one branch with a great golf name: Duffin's Drain. It contains hardwood forest, some low areas, some rolling terrain."

Rich did "a nice job integrating it all," Martin said. "And it's one of the best-kept courses in the Chicago area."

Its three styles run against Martin's design philosophy, but they accomplish Rich's goal.

"The challenge for me," said Martin, "was to stretch the design boundaries on each hole to give it a unique identity... My philosophy has been to unify a course with similar styles and treatments. This was in direct contrast to that. That's not to say it has a wild design style everywhere. But, clearly, we pushed the limits."

"Most golfers," Rich said, "don't ever have the opportunity to play a Pine Valley, or an Augusta National, or even a traditional course like Medinah. Here they have the ability to get that feel on 45 great holes on one golf course."

Does Rich Harvest Links give Augusta a good run?

"Yes," Rich responded. "They have a different situation. Their history is magnificent and they have kept it going. I think I have taken the next step, created the same feeling, yet incorporated all the greatness that golf is all about: its origins, the Scottish atmosphere, the Pine Valley look, and the old traditional look."

No corners were cut on the course or its structures while Rich designed six holes, then added three and then two more over the years. A local contractor built the first holes, but golf course builder Ryan Inc. Central of Janesville, Wis., built the rest. The course boasts bentgrass from tee to green. All 18 greens were built to U.S. Golf Association specifications, complete with choker layer. Two superintendents and their crews maintain the 220-acre golf course and the rest of the grounds.

A new pavilion has been built, featuring what Rich calls "a 21st-

century board room with the latest technology, three large-screen video projectors where any major corporation bring its board and have video conferencing with its offices around the world."

And Rich intends the old mansion on the plantation to serve as housing for visitors.

"I feel I have built my Augusta, so I will, starting this year, allow one or two foursomes to dine

here, stay here and do the things you would do when you go on a golfing holiday," he said. "My office staff will handle registrations. Valets will be with each foursome all day long and play with them if necessary, just as if I were there with them. For 11 years that's what I've done. I've played with every foursome."

Rich's original nine holes — the red, white and blue rotations — have been sloped and rated

for 10 years. Using the latest nine holes, golfers can play the gold and silver rotations that measure 7,300 yards and in early April were sloped at a difficult 143 and rated 75.7.

July 13 now looms as the major target date for Rich's "backyard course."

For five years he has hosted the Illinois Junior Golf Association's annual roundup. That will expand when Senior

PGA Tour star Bob Murphy, a friend of Rich's, brings nine other Seniors with him for a fund-raiser for the Hook a Kid on Golf program. Murphy, Walter Morgan, J.C. Snead, Larry Loretto, Tom Shaw, Hubert Green and others will play with 40 amateurs, "have a fun day and raise some money," Rich said.

As Martin pointed out: "This is not your typical backyard pitch-and-putt."

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