

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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INSIDE

Public Golf Forum Preview

If you're on the fence about attending this year's Forum, take a look at who'll be on hand 39-41

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Crisis in Canada puts clamps on course spending

By PETER BLAIS

TORONTO — The cry of the Loony — as Canadians call their one-dollar, bird-imprinted coin — has been a mournful sound for superintendents and suppliers of U.S.-manufactured course equipment as the plummeting Canadian dollar has made those items increasingly expensive for Canadian course managers.

By early August, the Canadian dollar had fallen to a record low, an equivalent of approximately 65 cents in U.S. currency. That represented a 15-percent decline from a year earlier and was forcing some superintendents to consider cutting back, or at the very least

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Maybe a first: Gary Player, Tom Fazio, Pete Dye, Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus all in one room at the same time for the project announcement in Palm Beach Gardens.

Developmental tidal wave hits Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

By PETER BLAIS

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. — Three major golf projects located within 15 minutes of one another are in the works in this southeast Florida community that is already home to many upscale private and public facilities.

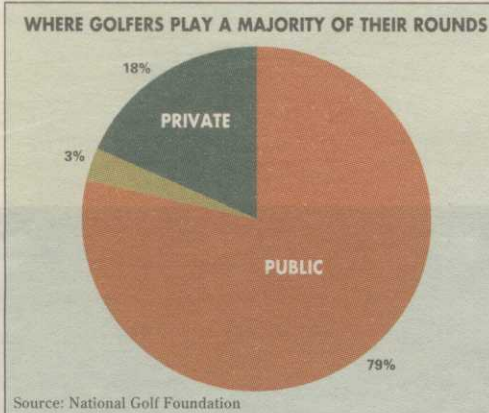
A Catholic priest, who wants to pair a golf course with a treatment center for troubled teens, hopes to close on a 500-acre parcel for the facility here this fall; *Golf Digest* magazine plans to build a home for its golf schools and a venue to entertain corporate cli-

ents; and Jack Nicklaus is designing what many people are calling his legacy near his South Florida home.

Father Leo Armbrust, who is the team chaplain for the NFL's Miami Dolphins and the Big East Miami Hurricanes football teams, is negotiating with the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to purchase the property, where he plans to build Renaissance Village.

Armbrust hopes to build a private course co-designed by Jack

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PUBLIC GOLF NUMBERS REMAIN STRONG

Twelve years ago, private golfers made up 20 percent of the golf population. By 1997, that percentage had dropped to just above 18 percent. Since 1986 public golfers grew by over 39 percent, from 15 million to 21 million in 1997.

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The British are coming

By TREVOR LEDGER & MARK LESLIE

Over 100 years ago the "fathers" of golf course design boarded steam packets and headed west over the Atlantic Ocean to share the "gospel" according to St. Andrews.

Now, following 60 years of one-way eastbound traffic (with the odd exception bucking the trend), a trickle of British design evangelists is lighting the fires of revival. Saddle your horse,

Continued on page 36

Public Golf Forum Maintenance Track: Long-sought solutions unveiled

By MARK LESLIE

PALM SPRINGS, Calif. — From unveiling the long-sought solution to *poa annua* and the initial results of the country's first "environmental test course," to illustrating the best practices for everyday operations, the upcoming Public Golf Forum promises practical help in its conference Maintenance sessions.

To be held at Rancho Las Palmas Marriott Resort here, Oct. 26-27, the *Golf*

Course News-sponsored national conference and expo is geared toward superintendents, general managers, owners and developers of public-access golf facilities.

Following keynote addresses by Dr. Michael Hurdzan on Monday and PGA Tour star Greg Norman on Tuesday, each

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HURDZAN/FRY: LIKE A ROLLING STONE

Heavy machinery is dwarfed by the boulder work at Olde Stonewall Golf Club outside Pittsburgh. The clubhouse and maintenance building bring the British countryside to mind. See story page 27.

The (Fundraising) World According to Father Leo

By PETER BLAIS

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. — Golf and the Church. An unlikely partnership? Not really, according to Leo Armbrust, a Catholic priest who is trying to couple a \$60 million teenage drug and alcohol rehabilitation campus with a world-class golf course here.

Father Leo, as he is affectionately known in the Greater Miami community where he also serves as the National Football League Miami Dolphins' team chaplain, took a few minutes recently to explain why marrying golf with programs to help troubled kids makes all the sense in the spiritual/practical world

and, particularly, how he has succeeded in raising \$20 million in 16 months for the project.

"The challenge," he said, "isn't to come up with new ways of helping people. There are already cutting-edge operations and procedures and philosophies out there that are doing tremendously good work. The challenge

today is coming up with creative ways of funding programs that help people.

"If I want to go to New York to meet Fortune 500 CEOs, I soon found out that every time I go, I have to get an entree from someone who knows them. I might be lucky to get 15, 20, or at best 30 minutes to sit down and talk

about what I'm doing. And usually, that's not enough time.

"So, instead of me standing outside an office in a mile-long line, I discovered how addictive golf is as a behavior. I know people with incredible IQs, who will stand outside in a terrific thunderstorm and try to hit a little white ball. All intelligence and reason goes out the window.

"So I decided if I was going to

Continued on next page

Tidal wave

Continued from page 1

Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Gary Player, Pete Dye and Tom Fazio. The five architects have donated their design services, said Armbrust.

"The hardest thing about this is putting the five of us together in a room and seeing if any of us come out," joked Nicklaus during the press conference announcing the project.

"I'm happy to be here and happy to find out what Jack knows about building golf courses," chided Palmer.

A half-dozen contractors have also offered free services to build the course. Profits from the private club will help operate the treatment center and also provide a training ground for the teenagers to learn golf course maintenance and landscaping skills.

"I have 70 percent of the golf course being built right now for nothing," Armbrust said.

Armbrust hopes to start construction by late 1999 and have the course ready for play by the end of the year 2000. He's already raised \$20 million toward the \$60 million project in the past 16 months.

"A lot of my friends who have given, violate the 14-club rule," Armbrust said. "They don't have more than 14 clubs in their bag. They belong to more than 14 clubs."

Last May, a Florida-based golf course maintenance company approached Armbrust and offered to do all the horizontal work for free. Armbrust's attorney estimated the value of that donation at \$2.5 million. What did the company want in return? Nothing.

According to Armbrust: "The company said 'We do \$350 million of business around the country and employ 4,000 people. We don't have a human resource pool. If you allow us, we'll build a facility to teach your kids landscape maintenance, agronomy and golf course maintenance. If we train them, we'll hire them.'"

The private, non-profit facility will provide therapy, education and vocational training for South Florida's troubled youth. It will have 250 kids in residence, aged 13 to 18. Another 300 to 500 slots will be available for day students.

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Nearby, construction could

Continued on next page

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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Tidal wave

Continued from previous page

begin in October on the Golf Digest Magazine community, which would eventually include two 18-hole championship courses, an 18-hole pitch-and-putt track, elaborate golf campus, 105,000 square feet of office space, 50,000 square feet of commercial property and 2,150 homes. The project is located on the north side of PGA Boulevard, directly across the street from the PGA of America headquarters.

Developer John Bills of JCB is teaming with *Golf Digest* on the ambitious 2,300-acre project, which will also include 10 corporate lodges, 100 golf cottages and hundreds of acres of open space. JCB Golf Ventures also developed nearby Ballen Isles Country Club, according to project director Jack Mathis. *Golf Digest* will be part owner and is lending its licensing name to the project.

"This will fulfill a need for *Golf Digest*, which has been looking for a place to hold corporate events and a base for its golf schools," Mathis said.

Tom Fazio is designing all three daily-fee courses and the practice center that will serve as headquarters for the *Golf Digest* golf schools.

"The 18-hole, pitch-and-putt course will be roughly 1,000 yards long, with holes ranging from 25 to 95 yards," Mathis said. "The holes will be lighted."

If all goes as planned, the golf component could be ready for play by November 1999, with a grand opening tentatively planned in conjunction with the January 2000 PGA Merchandise Show. Green fees will be commensurate with nearby upscale, daily-fee facilities, Mathis added.

•••

Then there is Jack Nicklaus, the designer/investor of a planned course that partner and former NFL running back Tucker Fredrickson calls "Jack's legacy."

Nicklaus, who makes his home minutes away in North Palm Beach, and 34 founding partners plan to begin construction in October on The Bear's Club, a premier private club located on 369 acres along the Palm Beach/Jupiter border. The new development is tucked between the existing Frenchman's Creek and Admiral's Cove golf communities.

"I've always dreamed of building a very fine private golf club in my own backyard," said Nicklaus, who will also be the club chairman.

The Bear's Club has been compared to Muirfield Village in Nicklaus' native Ohio. But unlike Muirfield, it will not be a high-profile facility nor will it host a major tournament. There will be a 12-room lodge, 12 golf cottages and 70 house lots. Plans are to limit members to 300.

The project, which like Renaissance Village is located on property owned by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, has received city approvals and is awaiting the go-ahead from the South Florida Water Management District, Fredrickson said.

Fredrickson, the former New York Giants running back, has worked in the securities and real-estate market and was involved in the construction of the Greg Norman-designed Medalist Golf Club that opened in 1995 in Hobe Sound.

"We're awaiting bids from a number of local contractors," Fredrickson said.

The World

Continued from previous page

go ahead and get corporate CEOs for more than 15 to 30 minutes, I could invite them and three of their friends down to play at this world championship golf course. Now I've got them for four hours, with no phone, no faxes and no interruptions. Where else can you get someone for four hours to do that? Not only that, I don't need the handsome brochure, fantastic slide show or great spiel. I got them where I want them.

"Today, you have to give people something back for their philanthropy. You have to make it a worthwhile and needed cause and it has to be tax-deductible. It has to be a win-win situation.

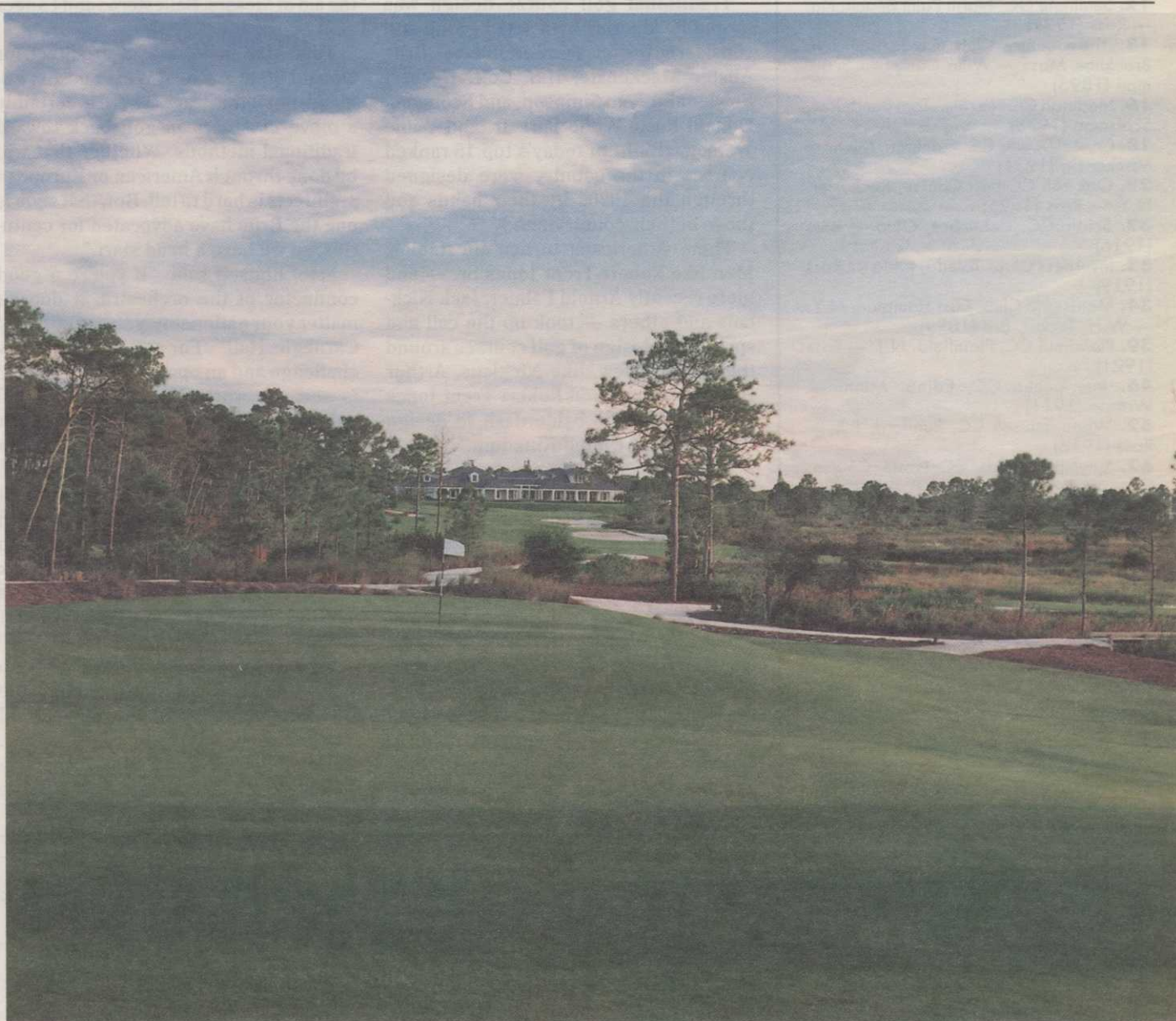
"[From the charitable facility's standpoint] Not only is it a way to market and advertise what you're doing, it's a way of enlisting high-profile corporations that get something back, and at the same time enjoying the prospect of having their company name on a hole or a building on a campus that is helping kids.

"Florida ranks 44th in the nation in child-care services and education. Last

year, we were 47th, ahead of Louisiana, Mississippi and the District of Columbia. And we will be the third-largest state in the nation, passing New York, by the year 2000. So, essentially, this problem is not going away.

"I'm all in favor of promoting golf today for kids. Kids are getting opportunities on courses they never had before. But somebody has to cut the grass. So, part of the project we are endeavoring to build will teach these kids golf course maintenance, agronomy, landscape maintenance and a lot of things related to the golf

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