

AUGUST

Walters strikes gold in St. Louis golf market

By PETER BLAIS

Dennis Walters is bullish on the St. Louis marketplace. "Twelve years ago it was probably on the endangered species list, according to the National Golf Foundation," said Walters, president of St. Louis-based Walters Golf Management. "Since then we've opened a number of new facilities. It's become a very competitive market."



Missouri Bluffs GC

Walters entered the golf business in 1962 when his father bought Bogey Hills Golf & Country Club, a Wayne Clark-designed layout in St. Charles, Mo. The course had laid dormant for 25 years. Walters, who was in high school at the time, did some redesign work with his dad (an optometrist), and the course reopened as a nine-hole layout later

Continued on page 30

NOVEMBER



Chestatee GC

Signet extending Southern reach

By PETER BLAIS

SALISBURY, N.C. — Signet Golf Associates has signed a management contract with Crescent Golf Club here, giving the Pinehurst, N.C.-based firm five properties in its growing portfolio. Signet will operate the John LaFoy-designed layout for owner Bill Kubly, president of Landscapes Unlimited, a major golf course construction firm.

"We hope we can do a good job for him," said Signet principal Peter Dejak, noting that Kubly has an ownership interest in a dozen courses nationwide. "It could mean some future business."

Dejak and partner Barry Emblar founded Pinehurst, N.C.-based Signet in March 1996. The two had worked for Legacy Golf Management, an Atlanta development firm previously located in

Continued on page 29

ClubCorp, AGC team for Cobblestone purchase

MARCH

By PETER BLAIS

DEL MAR, Calif. — Two major players in the golf course management industry — American Golf Corporation and ClubCorp Inc. — have joined together to acquire Del Mar-based Cobblestone Golf Group from the Meditrust Companies for \$393 million.

The new partnership, Golf Acquisitions LLC, closed on the 45-course acquisition last spring and divided the facilities between them.

Meditrust, a Massachusetts-based real estate investment trust (REIT), bought Cobblestone in late 1997 for \$241 million. Cobblestone nearly doubled in size under the Meditrust banner. But the REIT experienced some financial problems and decided to seek a buyer for the Cobblestone golf properties last fall. A half-dozen groups were reportedly interested in acquiring Cobblestone.

"It was such a large transaction, it made sense for the two largest firms in the industry to get together and purchase it jointly," said ClubCorp President and Chief Executive Officer

Robert Dedman Jr.

"We basically split the assets 50-50. There are probably 95 percent of the assets we'd both love to own. But there were some assets that fit better with their strategic plan and some that fit better with ours, based on our existing markets and the ability to cluster some of the Cobblestone assets with our existing properties."

Having AGC and ClubCorp team up on the purchase "just seemed common sensical," Dedman said. "It allowed us to be as competitive as we could from a price perspective. It was in both of our best interests to acquire these assets. From American Golf's perspective, it made as much sense for them as it did for us."

Santa Monica, Calif.-based American Golf took over 23 of the properties, including eight in Texas, six in California, four in Arizona, three in Virginia and two in Georgia. American Golf is negotiating to transfer substantially all these courses to its publicly traded affiliate.

Continued on page 30



ACQUISITIONS



MANAGEMENT NEWS IN 1999

The consolidation beat goes on in the golf course management industry. Management companies, individually and sometimes in unison, continued to buy up individual courses and/or other management firms in 1999. A prime example was the joint effort by American Golf Corp. (AGC) and ClubCorp to purchase the 45-course portfolio of Cobblestone Golf Group. AGC and ClubCorp put up \$393 million and then split the courses between them.

ClubCorp's name appeared numerous times in *GCN's* 1999 management pages as the Dallas-based firm launched joint efforts with other major management/development companies. Early this year, ClubCorp announced the development of its first course (located an hour north of Atlanta) in conjunction with Jack Nicklaus' Golden Bear International. It purchased a portion of the stock in ClubLink, a major Canadian course operator that acquired highly regarded Glen Abbey Golf Club in Toronto from the Royal Canadian Golf Association and later expanded its Montreal cluster by purchasing 50 percent of Quatre Domaines Golf Club. The United States Golf Association handed over responsibility for managing everything outside the ropes at its most prestigious tournament, the 1999 U.S. Open at Pinehurst, to a ClubCorp subsidiary, Pinehurst Championship Management.

While big players were making news, small- to mid-sized course management firms continued to do well. Among them, Wilson Golf Group of White Bear Lake, Minn.; Sports & Fitness Management of Missouri; Walters Golf Management of St. Louis; and Signet Golf Associates of Pinehurst, N.C.

USGA turns over U.S. Open mgt. reins to ClubCorp subsidiary

MAY



Corporate village at Pinehurst

GOLF COURSE NEWS

By PETER BLAIS

PINEHURST, N.C. — The United States Golf Association (USGA) has handed over responsibility for managing June's U.S. Open at Pinehurst No. 2 to an outside party—Pinehurst Championship Management (PCM).

PCM is the sports marketing division of ClubCorp, the Dallas-based firm that owns and operates Pinehurst. PCM will be responsible for everything from handling transportation issues to developing corporate partners.

The USGA will retain control over what occurs "inside the ropes," according to the USGA's Tim Moraghan, who oversees course preparation for Open events for the USGA Rules and Competition Committee.

"Outside the ropes," said PCM head Jon Wagner, "everything with regard to marketing, corporate hospitality sales,

operations, presentation, and volunteer coordination will be done by PCM. Inside the ropes, we will receive guidance from the USGA and do as they tell us."

Pinehurst is one of golf's shrines. It was famed architect Donald Ross' long-time home and has hosted many prestigious championships including the North and South Open (the nation's longest continuous-running golf championship), the 1936 PGA Championship, 1951 Ryder Cup and 1982 U.S. Amateur.

Pinehurst suffered from neglect in the late 1970s, but was restored to prominence by ClubCorp, which purchased the complex in 1984. ClubCorp restored Course No. 2 to its original condition and hosted the 1989 USGA's Women's Ama-

Continued on page 28

December 1999 27

Pinehurst

Continued from page 27

teur, the 1991 and 1992 Tour Championships and 1994 U.S. Senior Open.

Pinehurst was awarded the 1999 men's U.S. Open in 1993. Rather than hire one of the larger tournament management firms to oversee the Open — firms such as IMG, Advantage International and Executive Sports — ClubCorp opted to start its own tournament management company. To head up the new firm, ClubCorp selected Wagner, a former PGA Tour marketing and championship director, who had overseen the 1991 and 1992 TOUR Championships on Course No. 2.

Since its inception, PCM has managed golf championships at both ClubCorp and non-ClubCorp facilities, including the 1996 U.S. Women's open at Pine Needles Lodge and Resort in Southern Pines. The firm plans to manage at least one major championship a year and was recently chosen to manage the 2001 U.S. Women's Open Championship again at Pine Needles. By mid-April, PCM also expected to be named manager of the 2002 U.S. Senior Open at Caves Valley near Baltimore.

PCM realized the need for state involvement in hosting a major tournament like the U.S. Open. To make this a North Carolina event, PCM developed a President's Council consisting of 16 of the state's biggest company chairmen, including Gov. James Hunt and former Gov. James Martin. Through PCM's work with that committee, North Carolina agreed to expand state roadways (primarily US1) leading to Pinehurst.

Other aspects of the Open that PCM has dealt with have included:

- Attracting corporate sponsors — PCM recruited 50-plus sponsors, a record number that included many first-timers.
- Building The U.S. Open Hospitality Village — Construction began in late March. The village, which includes more than 300,000 square feet of covered canvas tenting, will sit along holes 1, 2 and 18 of Pinehurst No. 4, another Ross design that architect Tom Fazio is redesigning and will be renamed The Tribute. Construction of The Tribute will begin following the tournament. A Media Village is also planned.
- Preparation of Course No. 2 — The course will close almost three weeks prior to the Open. PCM recruited 60 volunteers, many of them superintendents at U.S. clubs, to help prepare the layout. There will also be close to 18,000 bleacher seats.
- Traffic issues — Coordinating traffic and the 50,000 daily spectators in and out on the one road leading to and from Pinehurst will involve shuttles operating from two remote parking facilities. ▶

Wilson becoming major force in Upper Midwest

By PETER BLAIS

WHITE BEAR LAKE, Minn. — Wilson Golf Group (WGG) has acquired Turtleback Golf Course in Rice Lake, Wis., giving the White Bear Lake-based management firm seven golf facilities in the Upper Midwest.

"We're trying to acquire a course per year," said Greg Stang, WGG's director of acquisitions.

WGG courses include four in Minnesota and two in Colorado. The Minnesota facilities are Oak Glen and Applewood Hills in Stillwater, Gem Lake Hills in White Bear Lake and North Links in North Mankato.

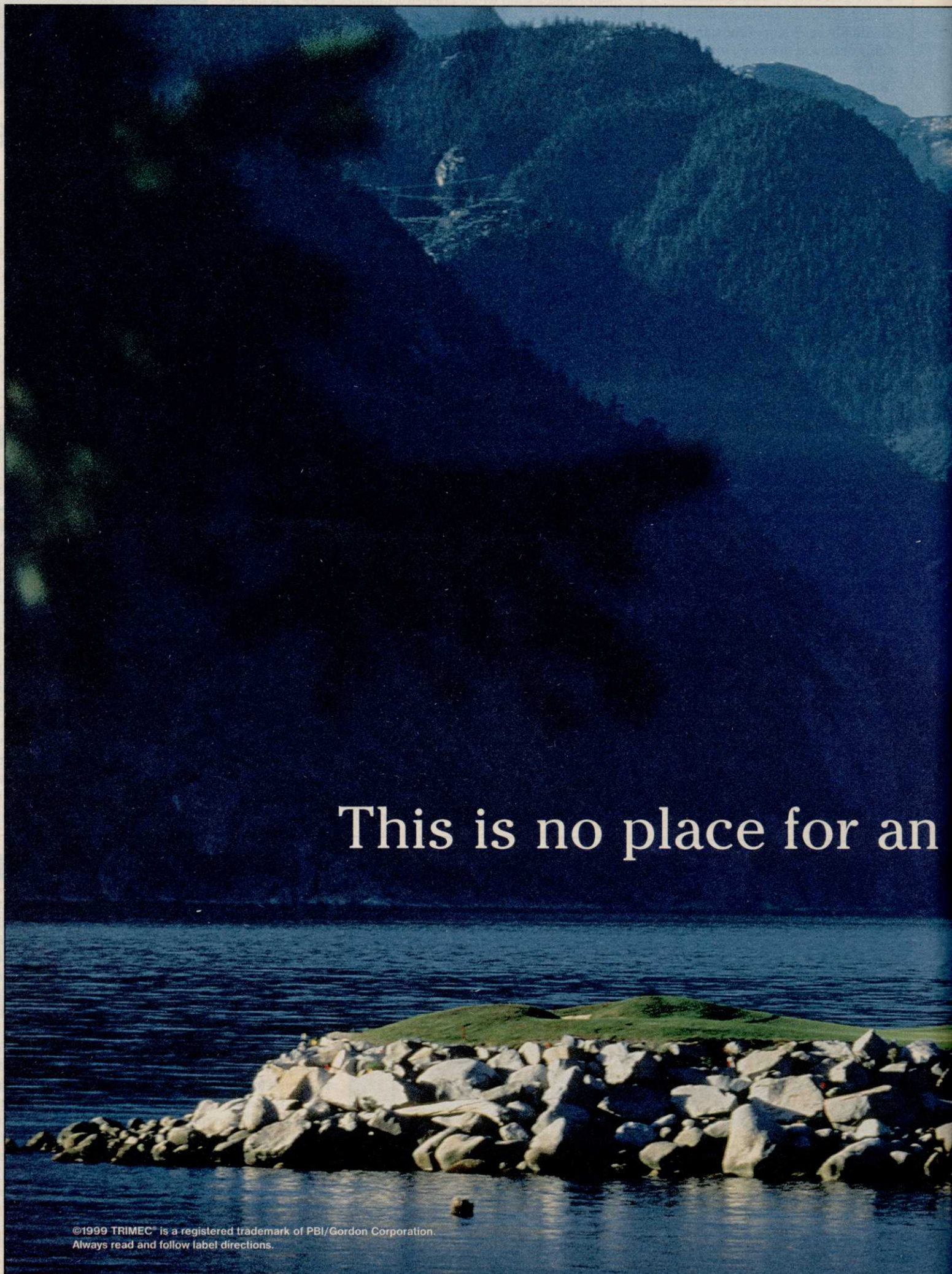


ACQUISITIONS

The Colorado tracks are 15 miles apart on the Western Slope — Adobe Creek in Fruita and Chipeta in Grand Junction. The company also owns a piece of land outside St. Paul that will see construction of course No. 8 within the next 18 months, Stang said.

With four Minnesota courses apiece, WGG, Continental Golf Group and American Golf Corp. are the largest course operators in that Upper Midwest state.

"There are a couple others [management firms] that have started up that have one or two on hand," the Wilson Golf Group executive said.



This is no place for an