

Colbert team gets first development off the ground

By MICHAEL LEVANS

KANSAS CITY, Mo./SPRING HILL, Kan. — Colbert-Burns & McDonnell (CBM), a unique partnership created as a one-stop-shop for affordable, accessible golf design, development and management, couldn't have asked for a more ideal start than Sycamore Ridge Golf Course in Spring Hill, Kan.

For a city of 2,300 people, CBM helped secure financing; Jim Colbert and Finger Dye Span (FDS) did the design; Burns & McDonnell handled permitting issues and are currently executing course construction; and when the course is open in 2000, CBM will manage the course.

"Spring Hill is a near-perfect example of what CBM was designed to do," said Jim Colbert, PGA Senior Tour player, founder of Jim Colbert Golf Design and Development and public golf advocate. "It starts with a city or a county that has bonding capabilities, access to ground and water and has the political know-how to get a golf course project done. We then take the golf development from A to Z, right to the management of day-to-day operations."

"Spring Hill's annual budget is \$2 million," said Larry Lundine, CBM's director for project development. "We executed a \$9.8-million bond issue. The proceeds from the course will go to pay off the certificates with no tax dollars utilized." CBM esti-



From left, Spring Hill, Kan., Mayor Don Mattox, Jim Colbert and Dave Ruf, Jr., chief executive officer of Burns & McDonnell break ground at Sycamore Ridge Golf Course.

mates it will cost \$7.5 million to purchase the land and build the course.

"Our golf courses aren't necessarily going to be downtown locations," said Colbert. "Chances are, they'll be in neighborhoods nearby where there's ground available."

This means that CBM could meet with success if it sticks to its public-access mission within striking distance to a large populace. However, keeping their work outside of Metro areas could keep CBM from any direct First Tee funding, a fact

of which Colbert, a stern First Tee believer, is well aware.

"Our projects may not qualify as The First Tee projects, but, through The First Tee, we'll be able to partner with parks and recreation departments to bus kids back and forth to the course," said Colbert. "We'll be involved one way or another."

Colbert said the one-stop selling point of the CBM arrangement has opened many eyes in cities and counties that didn't think a golf course project was possible.

CBM got off the ground in November 1996, when Colbert decided to get involved in relationship that could offer a community the whole "ball of wax." He decided to team his design and operation expertise with Kansas City-based Burns & McDonnell, an international engineering, architecture and consulting firm.

"You have Jim Colbert with 30 years of operating and developing public golf courses. You add that to Burns & McDonnell, a 1,100-person engineering and project management firm and you have CBM," said Larry Lundine, CBM's director of project development. "Historically, a city would have to do 15 or 20 RFPs, one for clubhouse architect, one for the environmental permitting, one for the civil engineer, one for the course design, another for the financing. We have all that in-house."

"For example, we have a number of projects in the environmental permitting stage right now. I walk down one floor and we have a team from our staff of environmental permitting people who I can talk to to get updates. So the right hand always knows what the left hand is doing."

But even with these in-house capabilities, CBM is finding that it's tough to cut the pre-construction red tape. "We originally thought it would take a year and a half to get one of these projects done because you start from ground-zero," said Colbert. "But it's taking close to two years."

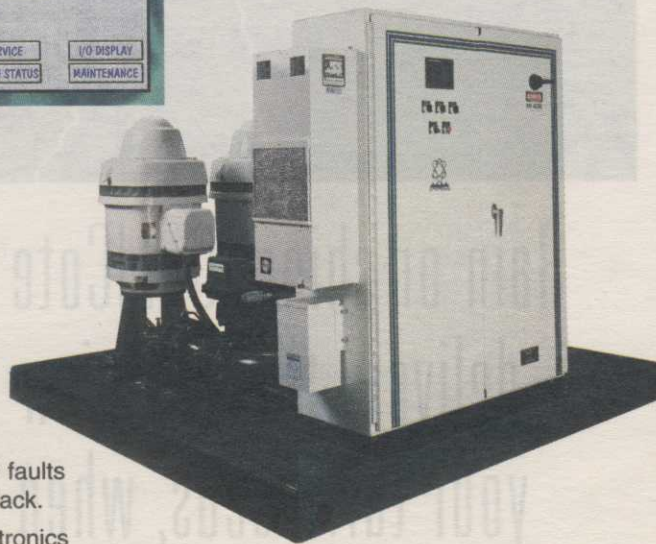
According to Lundine, CBM will be doing three to six projects in 1999.

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