

BRIEFS



OGRIN DESIGNING FIRST TRACK

HOUSTON, Texas — Community leaders and friends joined Jack Frey of Jack Frey Properties and PGA Tour professional David Ogrin to celebrate the groundbreaking for High Meadow Ranch Golf Club. The course, co-designed by Ogrin, sits on a rolling terrain of sandy soil and features more topographical differences than other courses in the area. This is the first golf course designed by Ogrin, a 15-year PGA Tour veteran and winner of the 1996 Texas Open Championship. He is co-designing the course with Nugent Golf Associates. The daily-fee golf club will feature an 18-hole course stretching to over 7,400 yards and routed in three loops of six over a unique rolling terrain highlighted by an abundance of native pine trees and dense hardwood vegetation.

HARBOTTLE GETS WIS. DESIGN

MADISON, Wis. — John F. Harbottle III is beginning a new golf course design at Hawk's Landing, a 520-acre upscale real-estate development near Madison. The 7,000-yard layout sits on about 200 acres of gently rolling farmland, winding through hardwood groves and around three large ponds. Haen Real Estate of Madison is developing the project. Construction will be completed by Oliphant Golf Construction, Inc., also of Madison. A late summer/fall construction start is planned. Other new Harbottle projects include a new 27-hole course on the Ralph Ranch in Livermore, Calif., and another 27-hole facility, Hira Country Club, near Nagoya, Japan.

\$14M PROJECT PLANNED IN FLA.

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, Fla. — Capital Golf Development Corp. has announced plans for a new golf club in Indian River County. The \$14 million project, Southern Dunes Golf Club, will feature a course designed by Kenneth Kavanaugh. Southern Dunes is located on the natural sand dune paralleling the Indian River Lagoon in Indian River County. Situated on more than 180 acres of land, the course provides 7,300 yards of golf from championship tees. It encompasses pine forests, water and sand dune topography. A special area of the course offers links-style golf. To accommodate golfers who enjoy walking, a caddie program will be in place. Construction is scheduled to begin in April. Course opening is set for January 2000.

Lowry 'builds' true island green



The island hole at Timber Lakes Golf Course presents a tough challenge to finish up the front nine

By MARK LESLIE

M T. OLIVE, Ill. — A real island green will face golfers when the new front nine of Timber Lakes Golf Course opens in May here, halfway between St. Louis and Springfield.

"Yes, the island green is unique," said Bill Lowry, owner of Professional Landscaping, Inc., who built the course and co-designed it with owner Mike Favre, "but it also has three peninsula greens, and I don't think you'll find that on any course, anywhere."

To play the peninsula greens, golfers will have to wait until fall, when the back nine opens. But the island green stands ready to test them as they come to the clubhouse to finish the front nine.

The 15,000-square-foot island was not always an island, Lowry said. It was a horseshoe-shaped peninsula with a 6- to 8-foot-wide "moat" until Lowry widened

the moat to 50 to 90 yards.

Lowry said the 6-acre lake was drained and then dug out in order to widen the moat. Water was 5 to 6 feet deep and now it is 30, he said.

Now the piece of land sits as an island, complete with trees and an 8,000-square-foot, three-level green for the 275- to 310-yard par-4 9th hole.

The approach shot from the landing area requires a 90-yard carry over the water. A 50-foot bridge takes golfers to and from the green, which can be seen from the clubhouse.

The back nine, Lowry said, is even more challenging than the front.

"The front nine is a 6 on a scale of 10 for difficulty. The back nine will be closer to an 8 or 9," he said. "The front nine is links style, while the back nine is carved out of the woods, uses natural terrain and of

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Golfers putt out on the 2nd hole on the Northwest Angle.

Northwest Angle: Golf like nowhere else

By TIMOTHY LYON

T he club scuffs the ground hard before impact and the ball bounces 20 yards down the recently mowed fairway. A soft curse registers more amazement than anger. George Risser readily acknowledges that his golf game could be better. In all honesty, if he handled his chainsaw and hunting rifle with the same proficiency that he wields a 5-iron, we'd probably be interviewing a one-armed man facing several involuntary manslaughter charges. Yet George Risser is "Mr. Golf" on the Northwest Angle, where his inability to putt or drive is overshadowed by the fact that he has established a legitimate nine-hole course in the middle of the most stubborn wilderness Minnesota has to offer.

Hacked from the popple groves and cedar swamps that choke the Angle, the course has the distinction of being the most northerly in the contiguous 48 states.

The tranquil air and groomed links belie the true character of what lays ahead. The fairways are narrow and lined with forest so dense that only those with a real affection for their Titleists make any effort to retrieve wayward slices. Tricky lake breezes push even fine shots into unplayable lies. And once you've survived the approach, the sand greens are another test. The course is an accurate reflection of the daily lives of the 60 or so Northwest Angle Country Club members.

"A dollar doesn't come easy up here," mused Risser as he confidently addressed another shot, "why should a par?"

Risser, a lifelong Angle resident who ran Pine Creek Pub Bar and Restaurant for 16 years and is in his 23rd year as postmaster, said the course was something he had always expected to do. The time, effort and money all lead back to George Risser. Locals helped with sweat

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IN THE WAKE OF SPLIT

Jones pickier; KLC eye diversity

By MARK LESLIE

PALO ALTO, Calif. — In the wake of his lead architects' departure, Robert Trent Jones Jr. said his golf course design firm will continue to work around the world, but on fewer projects.

Jones' statement came on the heels of an announcement that Don Knott, Gary Linn and Bruce Charlton have left the firm to form their own company, Knott, Linn, Charlton Design. The three had all worked for 18 years or longer with Jones in designing many of his 200 projects from Canada to China and from Fiji to Russia. A fourth member of the new partnership, Steve Schroeder, was RTJ II's vice president of operations.

"From my perspective, it gives me the chance to do more hands-on work on quality middle- to upper-end projects," Jones said. "We have had kind of a machine, grinding out a lot of golf courses because we had good people. I'd rather do six or eight projects a year that are very hands-on."

The change — for Jones as well as Knott, Linn and Charlton — is "a

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COMMENTARY

Golf's future bright

By DR. MICHAEL HURDZAN

I disagree, often, with people in the golf business who fail to see the big picture — or if they see it, refused to believe or to present a balanced view. Call it "the cup is half empty, half full" syndrome if you will. The fact is the damn cup is neither half empty or half full, rather it is both. Stick with me while I rebut an article from the sports section of the USA TODAY that appeared on Tuesday, January 19, 1999 titled "Glut of Layouts Forces Creative Marketing."

The essence of the story was a gloom and doom report about how the supply of golf courses has exceeded demand, and how operators have had to resort to marketing gimmicks to pull in customers. These are the views of the "half-empty" crowd.

But in a side bar chart it showed the rounds of golf for 1997 (the last year reported) had reached a record high of 544 million rounds, 14% higher than the previous year, and 18% higher than any year in the last century. This is how "half-full" folks see golf.

I unabashedly, am one of the world's great optimists (read half full), that believes that golf can grow at a reasonably high, sustainable rate if — if, we remember three

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