

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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Jones split

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metamorphosis," Jones said, adding, "We will ally on some projects when appropriate."

In calls to clients, Jones likened the change to a jazz band that has been together for a long time. "We have played together, and as artists we are looking to go off and do new things. But

every now and then, in the future, we might get together and have a jam session," Charlton paraphrased Jones as saying, adding, "That's a great analogy."

The possibility of future projects with Jones is true, said Linn. "We're serious about that. We will be open to discussion about joint ventures. I'm not certain the cord is ever going to be cut. I don't even like those words. The group certainly wants to do

'Whereas the Jones organization was looking for 18-hole, "international standard" golf courses, we hope to take on other types of projects.'

— Don Knott

work with the new [Jones] group, and hope to work with Bobby on a project-by-project basis."

Jones does not intend to replace the trio in his office, but may rely more heavily on current staffers,

particularly architect Ty Butler, who has been with the firm for nine years and, Jones said, "will be very instrumental."

"The more important guy who will be active is me," Jones added.

"Fewer books, fewer speeches and more hands-on architecture. I'm going to dedicate my time to what I love to do and what, as a manager, I had gotten away from."

In the meantime, Knott, Linn and Charlton will work with Jones on projects that have been started around the world.

Linn predicted completing Jones projects would consume most of 1999 for the new partnership, which is headquartered at 1134 Crane St., Suite 214, Menlo Park, Calif.

Meanwhile, he said, Knott, Linn Charlton Design's intent "is to be a major player in the U.S. market, where we have collectively done a lot of work. But we will be open to whatever the market dictates. We don't know what we're going to get [for jobs]. We're going out fresh."

"We want to establish our own identity," Linn added.

Knott, who at 52 is the elder partner in the new venture, said: "Our goal is to do fewer projects. All of us want to get the kind of clients and the kind of projects where we enjoy the process. It's not just the end product that you produce that is important; it's getting there. Golf architecture, like any profession, is a lifestyle and you want to enjoy the process from beginning to end. So you want to establish friendships with clients and others involved, and make it enjoyable and come out with a product everyone is proud of."

Plus, he anticipated involvement in a wide range of projects.

"Whereas the Jones organization was looking for 18-hole, 'international standard' golf courses, we hope to take on other types of projects," Knott said. "I like offbeat, interesting projects... I'd love to do nine-hole courses — or an executive course because there are no preconceived ideas about it."

Schroeder referred to the split as "sort of the natural evolution of the business," and pointed to Nicklaus Design as a similar circumstance, where major designers left to pursue their own firms.

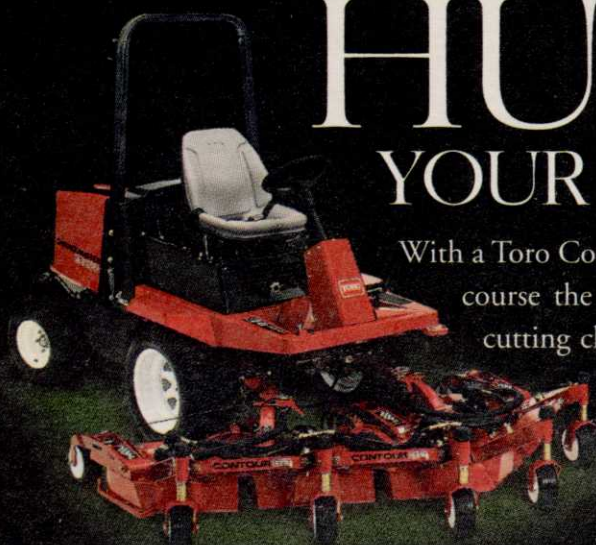
"Everybody here is very appreciative of the opportunity Bob has given us," Schroeder said. "We have enjoyed working for him. That's clear. But we think it's going to be fun to go into this new uncharted water and have the freedom to work on our own."

Jones referred to his own departure from his father's famous firm in 1972 and said the evolution to doing solo work took four years.

And, he added, "It could be an epiphany. It could be something wonderful, where I can spend time on wonderful projects that I want to do, we'll complete the work we are already involved with together this year, and by the new millennium I think you will get more than one announcement which will give you a clearer direction of my efforts."



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