

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

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INSIDE

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English, Irish, Scottish students intern in U.S., while Americans go abroad ..... 13

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### KEY WEST CHALLENGE

The Key West Golf Club (GC) float, above, graced the streets of this Florida Keys outpost during a recent parade. Key West GC's Rob Johnson, head superintendent at the southernmost golf course in the continental United States, is the subject of this month's Super Focus on page 18.

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### PERIODICAL



CAR AND UTILITY VEHICLE MANUFACTURERS WEIGH IN ON OIL SHORTAGE. SEE SPECIAL SECTION ON PAGES 38-41.

## BREAKING THE MOLD

### K-State opening Colbert Hills as crowning jewel

By MARK LESLIE  
MANHATTAN, Kan. — The hot buttons are all being pushed and on April 29, Kansas State University will unveil la piece de résistance: Colbert Hills Golf Course.

Colbert Hills is the crowning jewel on Kansas State's pioneering turfgrass management program, a curriculum that has been tailored to prepare students for club management as well as superintendent positions.

University officials be-



Kansas State University's Colbert Hills Golf Course.

lieve it also sets the standard in other areas:

- The 27-hole facility will include a nine-hole par-3 course that will serve as a "living laboratory" for researchers and students. Sitting in the Transition Zone, Colbert Hills "has all the cool-season and all the warm-season grasses," said Director of Golf Course Operations and

General Manager David Gourlay.

- The nine-hole track will also be the National Academy of the First Tee program, named after Tiger Woods' father Earl, a K-State alumnus.

- Colbert Hills is in the final stages of becoming a Silver Signature Audubon Course.

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### SUNY-Delhi program eyes 'whole team'

By MARK LESLIE

DELHI, N.Y. — Calling it "a blueprint" for other schools, State University of New York (SUNY) at Delhi is instituting a curriculum in which aspiring golf course superintendents, club managers and club professionals will be taught together under a new Department of Business Administration and Golf Course Management.

"What we hope to achieve in the 21st century is to get out of the box,"

Continued on page 12

### John Deere set to open new factory

By A. OVERBECK

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. — After nearly a decade of double-digit growth and continually outgrowing several manufacturing facilities, John Deere Vehicle Group is set to open a new \$30-million factory and headquarters here this summer. The 300,000-square-foot facility will house the manufacturing plant, a major design and engineering component and the sales and marketing team.

"The underlying reason for the facility is capacity

Continued on page 40



Large trees and classic bunkers are trademarks of Harding Park Golf Course.

### Harding Park faces new life, Tour

By DOUG SAUNDERS

SAN FRANCISCO — The city of San Francisco has tentatively reached an agreement with Arnold Palmer Golf Management to lease the aging Harding Park Golf Course for 35 years.

Under the agreement, Palmer Management will spend \$15 million to completely renovate the ignored jewel that is located along the shores of Lake Merced, just a stone's throw from the venerable Olympic Club. The goal is to bring the layout up to tournament standards in order to host the PGA Tour Champion-

ship in the fall of 2002.

Harding Park Golf Course was built in 1925 and is one of four public courses in San Francisco. Harding Park also includes a nine-hole executive course. The Fleming nine was named after its designer, Jack Fleming, who was a superintendent for the Department of Parks and Recreation and was a driving force in making the game of golf available to city residents.

During its 75-year history, Harding Park has hosted many amateur events, including the 1937 and 1957 USGA Public

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Freddy Bird photo

## Harding Park

Continued from page 1

Links Championships, and hosted the Lucky International, a PGA Tour event in the 1960s. Throughout its existence, Harding Park has always been affordable to play.

More than 160,000 rounds a year are played at Harding's 27 holes. San Francisco has seen play soar. This rise in play proved

to be a boon for the city as the additional funds raised through greens fees were siphoned off to pay for other city expenses. As a result, needed course maintenance reportedly was slowly ignored as squeezing in more tee times became tantamount.

Bumpy greens, scratchy, uneven tee boxes, and sorrowful fairway conditions were the inevitable result. When a regular maintenance

staff was on duty, it had to work around the heavy play.

The city faced the question of how to repair the course without raising the \$20 greens fees through the stratosphere. San Francisco native Sandy Tatum, a former president of the USGA, tackled the problem. Tatum had for years been an advocate for public golf and saw the situation at Harding as one that needed to be addressed.

"I was very concerned that years of neglect had left a great golf course design nearly unplayable," Tatum said. "It was obvious to me that it would take millions of dollars to allow Harding Park to reach its true potential, and the city was certainly not going to make that type of investment out of the city budget. This started me on a quest to put together a way to

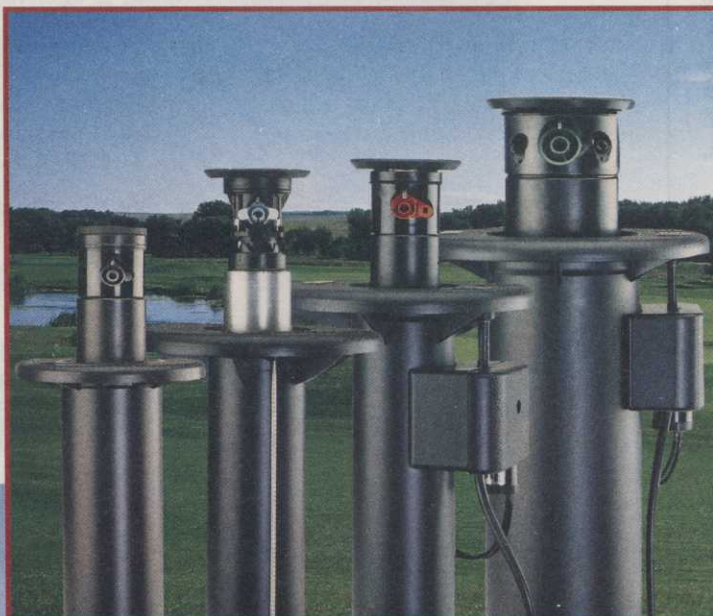


### It's Time to Take a Closer Look at Hunter Golf

## Retrofit or New Construction: Hunter Rotors are Ready for the Challenge

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attract outside help."

Tatum looked into ways to bring a prestigious event to Harding Park that could help defray the renovation expense. He approached members of the business community with the idea. Finding backing for the idea, he approached the PGA Tour about the prospect of bringing a regular stop to Harding Park.

"When I first talked to [PGA Tour Commissioner] Tim Finchem three years ago, he explained that getting a regular Tour stop wasn't feasible, but the Tour was interested in creating a West Coast venue that could be part of a regular rotation of the season-ending PGA Tour Championship," Tatum said. "After the success of the Tour Championship at the Olympic Club [here], the idea of Harding Park made sense to the PGA Tour."

The PGA Tour proposed to bring the Tour Championship to Harding Park every three years, beginning in 2002, and create a First Tee program that would introduce inner-city youths to the game of golf.

It was not until Tatum got verbal agreements from the Tour that he even began to approach the city with his ideas. He argued that hosting a Tour event would give Harding Park a strong reputation that would draw more non-resident play. He said 65 percent of the tee times could be held for resident play and the rest of the tee times could pay for the renovation costs if a long-term lease were signed with an outside management firm.

Although the city, the Tour, and interested management firms were all excited about the proposal, the golfing public immediately had reservations that needed to be overcome.

Residents can play at Harding Park for \$15 mid-week and seniors could play for \$7. The fears among the loyal players at Harding were that they would be cut out of their affordable golf. At public hearings last fall, comments were evenly divided between those who felt they would lose affordable golf and those who yearned to see this classic layout brought back to top-notch shape.

In addition to the increase in greens fees, there was a fear that the Fleming nine would be altered or eliminated. Rumors be-

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## Harding Park

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gan to replace facts.

"Some of the most vocal opposition claimed that we would make the course too tough for the average player as a way to drive city golfers away from Harding," Tatum said. "This idea was one of many false claims that people opposed to the renovation came up with. But I felt all along that these detractors did not speak for the majority of golfers in the city."

Four firms — BSL Co., American Golf Corp., Kemper Sports Management and Arnold Palmer Golf Management — were finalists asked to submit bids and Palmer was awarded a tentative lease in January.

Its proposal projected \$15 million for course renovations. Included in this amount is a new irrigation system, completely rebuilt greens, new tees, and new vegetation on the fairways. The layout would stay the same, with some holes being lengthened. In addition to the course renovations, a new clubhouse would be built and additional parking and logistic areas for holding the Tour Championship would be created.

Palmer Golf agreed to pay \$1.7 million in annual rent to the city. Having the PGA Tour Championship at Harding every three years would generate \$500,000 for the course and an estimated \$20 million to the regional economy.

"This type of a project is what Arnold Palmer Golf is really all about — working to preserve and enhance public golf," said Peter Nanula, director of operations at Palmer Golf here. "The creation of the First Tee program, the opportunity to bring the PGA Tour back to San Francisco, and the chance to give to golfers in this city a first-rate facility at low rates is a great challenge. We look forward to beginning work on the course sometime in the fall."

Contrary to the rumors, the plans also include completely renovating the Fleming nine and keeping it in its configuration. The driving range will also be improved and with the Fleming course will create excellent facilities for the First Tee Program that will reach out to inner-city youths. The fee structure will be on a sliding scale and will guarantee 65.1 percent of tee times for city residents at \$27 on weekends. Out-of-town players will be the engine that pays for the renovations, with greens fees for non-residents standing at \$125 on weekends.

Palmer Golf Management was a logical choice by the city to become the leaser at Harding Park after its successful transition of the Presidio Course from a private to public facility and

after managing the pro shops at both Lincoln Park and Harding Park for the past two years.

Palmer Golf Management also included a \$100,000 training program that will infuse the Harding Park maintenance staff, who are all city employees, into the maintenance program in the future. The renovation work would be completed by private contractors under the company's supervision.

*'I was very concerned that years of neglect had left a great golf course design nearly unplayable.'*

— Sandy Tatum

"We had an excellent compilation of numbers at Harding to formulate our tee-time and greens-fee structure in order to accommodate the city residents

as best as possible," said Nanula. "With the greens fees for city residents only increasing by \$5 to \$7, we think that they will be very impressed when the course

repairs are completed."

Studies to secure environmental permits to begin work have been ongoing for the past year. All indications from preliminary biological studies are that there is little impact on neighboring Lake Merced. Plans are for all permits to be secured by late summer. Harding Park would then be closed for nine to 12 months to complete the work. ▶

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