

BRIEFS

BARBARON BUILDING TWO BY LAGREE

INVERNESS, Fla. — Barbaron Inc. has been selected to build two Florida golf courses designed by Terry LaGree. The first, Skyview Golf Club, in Citrus Hills, is a nine-hole addition to the existing nine completed by Barbaron in 1998. When finished, the full 18-hole championship course will boast some of the highest green elevations in the state. The second layout, Glen Lakes Golf Club, in Weeki Wachee, will be a new 18-hole championship course. Both projects are expected to be completed next spring.

PALMER OPENS 11TH N.C. LAYOUT

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla. — Palmer Course Design Company, based here, has opened its 11th course in North Carolina and is working on number 12. Company president and CEO Arnold Palmer played nine holes at Brier Creek Country Club when it opened in late September. Brier Creek, developed by Toll Brothers Inc., is a luxury golf course community set on 140 acres along the Noose River Basin in Raleigh; it features spectacular woodlands and wetlands. The 18-hole, 6,945-yard, par-72 layout was designed by Kory Williams, an architect with the Palmer Group. "Brier Creek was designed with the classic, traditional golf courses in mind," he said. "Use the existing terrain and a good, fair but challenging round of golf will follow."

MATTHEWS & NELHIEBEL HIT CANADA

EAST LANSING, Mich. — Golf course architects Matthews & Nelhiebel are headed across the border to expand the semi-private Sutton Creek Golf and Country Club, in Essex, Ontario. Sutton Creek will be the first Canadian project for the firm, which has designed more than 25 courses in Michigan. "We're working on an 18-hole master plan for Sutton Creek that emphasizes strategy and visual impact," said Howard Nauboris, who is heading up the design work under the direction of Bruce Matthews, ASGCA. "The proposed bunkers will be larger and more numerous, adding challenge to the layout. We will be adding additional tee surfaces for flexibility of length and challenge for all skill levels."

Ex-pro Brad Bell opens third course at Coyote Moon

By DOUG SAUNDERS

TRUCKEE, Calif. — Coyote Moon Golf Course, which recently opened in this town in the High Sierras, is the third golf course designed by Brad Bell of Sacramento, Calif. The 18-hole layout is rare in this state as it is a stand-alone project, built strictly for golf, not to sell building lots.

Although the course is located on a ridge 200 feet above Route 80, the main east-west interstate, it feels like it's miles away from anywhere. The layout winds through piney forests and sweeps over valleys, ravines and lakes. The only sounds heard come from birds, the streams, and the wind through the woods.

Golfers are teased to play shots into greens protected by huge rock outcroppings, hit to pins 80 feet below over creeks, and nail drives over tantalizingly long lakes. Throughout the course the challenge of shaping shots to negotiate nature's purest challenges adds to the sheer pleasure of playing on such a unique piece of property.

SIX YEARS IN THE MAKING

It took more than six years and a firm commitment for Bell and his partner Chris



The par-3 13th hole at Coyote Moon in Truckee, Calif.

Steel to complete Coyote Moon.

Steele, whose true profession is high-rise construction, got into the golf course construction business in 1994. Commercial construction had slowed, and Steele — who is not a golfer — had learned of a

golf course shortage in the Sacramento area. He knew he could secure land and financing, but he also needed to secure people who understood golf to make his foray into the field successful.

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An aerial view of Thistle Golf Club on the Myrtle Beach's Grand Strand

Thistle Golf Club adds new nine and provides service with a twist

By JAY FINEGAN

SUNSET BEACH, N.C. — Already recognized along the Myrtle Beach Grand Strand for outstanding course design, conditioning and service, Thistle Golf Club has added another nine holes to the layout, bringing the total to 27. The original 18 went operational in 1999, becoming the 101st golf course to open in the Myrtle Beach area.

The new nine — the South Course — which opened in late summer, nicely compliments the West and North courses. All three were designed by Tim Cate and feature a Scottish links-type feel. "The whole complex is just a

really good, very solid golf course," said Dan Oschmann, head professional and director of golf at the facility.

For the first two nine-hole layouts, Cate was instructed to create a design that is "ferocious, yet fair." Golfers who've had the chance to play the first 18 agree that the architect met the objectives, with wide, rolling fairways, five sets of tees, and large green complexes that permit bump-and-run approaches on most holes.

NEW NINE MORE CHALLENGING

The new South Course possesses a similar look and feel, but plays a bit longer, at 3,351 yards from the Thistle

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Red Sky Ranch to pair Fazio and Norman designs

By JAY FINEGAN

WOLCOTT, Colo. — Vail Resorts Development Company (VRDC) has broken ground on the first of two championship courses here in Wolcott, near Interstate 70 west of Vail and just outside White River National Forest.

The 780-acre project, known as Red Sky Ranch, will unfold over rolling Rocky Mountain terrain flush with sagebrush, juniper, aspen and dramatic rock outcroppings. Plans call for some 500 acres to be left in their natural state. The views of the Gore Range to the east and Castle Peak to the west promise to give the complex a stunning visual dimension.

The first of the two 18-hole tracks, a Tom Fazio design, will feature an 800-foot elevation change over the par-72 track. This is a monster layout, measuring 7,305 yards from the back pegs. The front and back nines will return to the Resort Clubhouse, a 20,000-square-foot ranch-style structure that will also house a golf academy. A 40-acre practice facility will sit nearby.

The second course, designed by Greg Norman, is awaiting approval by Eagle County zoning authorities. Christine Richards, a VRDC spokeswoman, said county officials were expected to rule on the project in early October. "We hope to have all of our approvals done this fall," she said.

The Norman layout will be another 18-hole championship course. It will feature a private Members' Clubhouse, another western-style building. The New York firm of Robert Lamb Hart is designing both clubhouses.

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Red Sky Ranch

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Construction is under way on the Fazio course, which is scheduled to open in the summer of 2002. Work on the Norman course is planned to begin next spring – pending approval – with play starting in the summer of 2003.

ALTERNATE PLAY DAYS

With golf rising in importance for summer tourism at mountain resorts, Vail Resorts began laying the groundwork for the project in 1998, when it obtained a

special-use permit for the first of the courses. It was clear that the area suffered from a golf shortage.

According to Richards, VRDC has a substantial investment in winter recreational amenities but has only part-time claims on nearby Beaver Creek Golf Course. "We only have time there in the afternoon," she said. "The Hyatt [hotel] owns a block of time in the morning along with Beaver Creek members, so there is only a limited time for resort guests to play."

Under the working plan for Red Sky Ranch, members and resort guests will

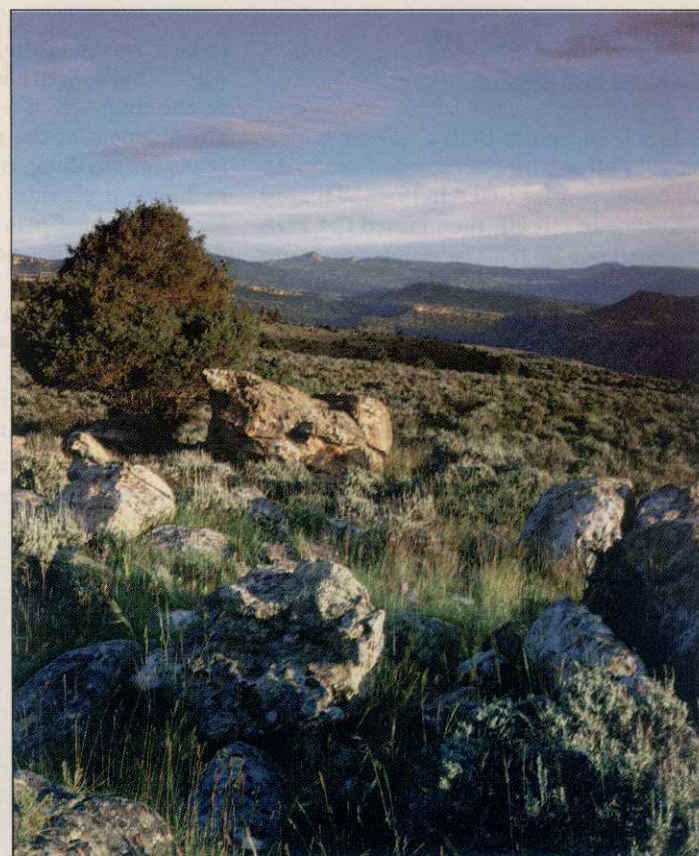
play the two courses on alternate days. "There will be about 400 club members, and those folks will play one day on the Fazio course while the guests play on the Norman course," Richards said. "Every other day it will flip-flop, so guests will have an opportunity to play both courses."

Vail Resorts owns numerous lodges in the area, at Bachelor Gulch, Arrowhead, Vail, and Beaver Creek. "We also have properties in Breckenridge and Keystone," Richards said. "I'm not sure if those folks will be able to come over and play, but I don't believe so."

WILDLIFE CORRIDOR PROTECTED

The project also entails an upscale residential component, with 52 "estate" home sites averaging one to two acres, and 27 "cluster" home sites. Richards said the house designs will follow a low-slung western theme, hugging the land to minimize their visibility.

Plans call for approximately 70 percent of the 780-acre site to remain as open space. Any areas disturbed during con-



Site of the future courses at Red Sky Ranch

struction will be revegetated to match the terrain following construction, and home sites will be strictly limited to a designated building envelope. "There's a lot of sage and juniper out there that we've nurseried - saving it for the landscaping," said Richards.

A significant wildlife corridor through the premises will connect with other designated wildlife reservations in the area. The entire property will be owned and operated by Vail Resorts. ■

Thistle

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(back) tees, and 2,211 yards from the front. It's also a good deal more challenging. The par-35 layout requires more "forced carries" than the original 18, and offers several risk-reward situations.

The longest hole is a 545-yard par-5, but one of the most imposing is the par-3 ninth. From the back pegs, this hole plays 214 yards across a small lake. The Redan-style green sits high above a stone wall with two deep pot bunkers standing guard up front. From this vantage point, the course's highest elevation, almost the entire 27-hole complex can be seen.

The greens are L-93 bentgrass throughout and the surrounding hillsides are planted in heather and wildflowers. All 27 holes are holding up "phenomenally well," said Oschmann, who gives credit to superintendent John Pridgen, who was on the scene through the grow-in period.

As with the first two nines, the South Course had its opening delayed to let the course mature. "It seemed established even before we opened," Oschmann said. "I've heard players say that the new nine blends in beautifully and doesn't look like an addition. It looks like it's been part of the rotation the whole time."

12-MINUTE TEE TIME INTERVALS

Thistle's owner – Bel-Aire Golf Properties – and director Oschmann place a premium on friendliness and good service. Every golfer is given complimen-

tary range balls, a yardage book and a bag tag. Moreover, Thistle is one of the few courses on the Strand where players are provided generous, 12-minute intervals between tee times.

"We try to do things a little differently here," Oschmann said. "We spread out the starting times for the sake of our customers. It gives you a hole to yourself. Groups can't go up to the first tee until the group in front has reached the green and started putting. That generally works out to about 12 minutes."

"We don't stack them up from the start, the way a lot of courses do," Oschmann added. "We send them to the starter only five minutes before their tee time. It's not like we pile them up in carts and say, 'Go line up.' We don't even put them on carts until two or three minutes before they tee off."

"Sometimes it backs up, according to players' skill levels," he said, "but we consider ourselves a resort golf course and in the busy season we run about four hours, fifteen minutes per 18. That's very reasonable."

As a resort club, Thistle does a lot of business through hotels, contracts and golf packages. But it's also a daily-fee facility, with walk-up greens fees of \$59 and discounted rates for local players.

Until a clubhouse is built – groundbreaking will take place this month – Thistle's pro shop and grill are operating from a 3,000-square-foot temporary shelter. "It's basically three single-wide trailers put together, like a sell-center," Oschmann said. ■

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