

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

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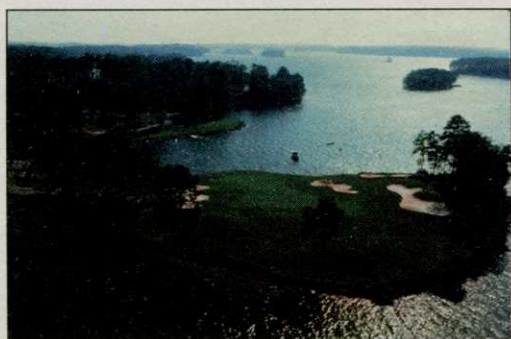
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#### DEALING WITH CONSOLIDATION

Anthony Williams has been director of golf operations at Renaissance PineIsle Resort in Georgia (the par-3, 250 yard, 15th hole is pictured above) for 14 years. During his tenure he has worked under three different owners, six general managers and three directors of golf. For tips on how to survive ownership changes, see his story on page 7.

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#### PERIODICAL

## Survey finds course values softening

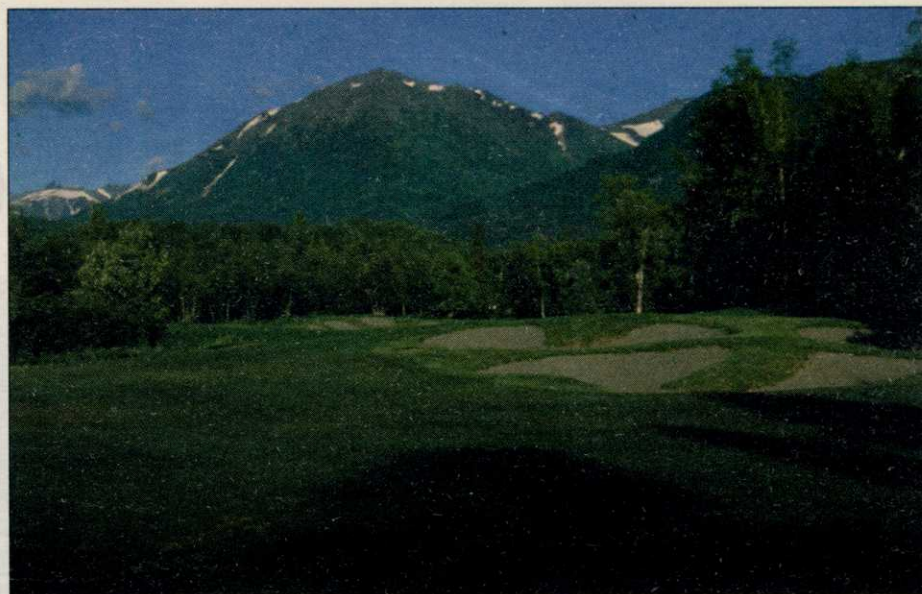
By JAY FINEGAN

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Golf course values are stable or declining. The northern states are the new land of opportunity for companies looking to buy golf properties. And private clubs have pulled even with daily-fee facilities as desirable targets in the course acquisition market.

Those are among the findings of a survey by Golf Property Analysts (GPA) here, which polled course management companies, investors and financial institutions involved in funding golf course real-estate transactions.

According to Laurence A. ("Larry") Hirsh, whose Hirsh Valuation Group owns GPA, the survey signals that the

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The 600-yard 18th hole at Robin Nelson's Moose Run in Alaska

## Wild Alaska: Robin Nelson opens course at aptly named Moose Run

By JAY FINEGAN

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — They call Alaska "the last frontier," and the motto seemed right on the money to golf architect Robin Nelson. He recently unveiled his newest creation, the Creek Course at Moose Run, and he's still talking about the bears, wolves, lynx, moose and other critters who took a keen interest in the new layout during construction.

Alaska is by far our largest state, and this is a course to match — 7,324 yards from the back tees, 5,183 from the reds, with two holes running to 600 yards or more, and a slope rating near the top of the charts, at 142. The cart paths alone stretch over five miles and cross two suspension bridges where the course traverses Ship Creek. All fairways are separated by at least 300 feet of towering trees and dense brush — there's no possibility of slicing a drive into an adjacent

fairway. The par-72, 18-hole design features dramatic elevation changes and stunning mountain views all around.

"The Creek Course is hardly your basic golf course," Nelson said. "Every time you come around a corner, there's a different look and feel to the course and its aesthetics. And there are many strategic options as to how to play each hole."

The course is situated on the sprawling Army base at Fort Richardson, next to the old Hill Course at Moose Run, built in 1951. The entire 36-hole complex, owned and operated by the military, is open for public play.

"The people in charge up here are real golf fanatics," Nelson said, referring to the base's top brass and senior civilian officials. "Four years ago they started soliciting bids for a second course. They had 700 acres and we were supposed to

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## Despite vandalism and fire, superintendent Szklinski prepares Southern Hills CC for next U.S. Open

By JOHN TORSIELLO

TULSA, Okla. — Golf fans attending next year's U.S. Open at Southern Hills Country Club here will likely marvel at the impeccable and challenging beauty of the Perry Maxwell-designed layout. But few will know of the effort and sacrifice made by golf course superintendent John Szklinski, his staff and the membership at Southern Hills, which made the staging of the prestigious event at the Midwestern venue possible.

The Open is back at Southern Hills after a 42-year hiatus. In 1958, playing in sweltering heat, club-throwing Tommy Bolt won his only Open title here, besting a young South African named Gary Player by four strokes. Bolt's skillful use of his driver on Southern Hills' tree-lined fairways, fringed by gnarly and deep rough, was the deciding factor.



The 13th hole at Southern Hills Country Club

Getting a golf course in shape to host a U.S. Open is a daunting enough task. But the staff and members

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## XS Inc. to extend ag model to turf market

By ANDREW OVERBECK

RALEIGH, N.C. — Following the successful launch of its agricultural-input e-commerce venture, XS Inc., based here, is primed to expand into the turf and ornamental marketplace with XSTurf.com, which is set to be introduced by the end of the year.

The company's two-year-old flagship, XSAg.com, has quickly become a market leader, ranking at the top of Promar International's Aug. 3 ranking of agriculture specific e-commerce websites. XSAg brings buyers and sellers together to trade chemicals, seeds and equipment parts.

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## Moose Run

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choose the best part of the area, design a course, and build it within the budget. Eleven companies applied, and we won.”

### BEAR REPELLENT BACKFIRES

Nobody thinks of Alaska as a mecca for golf, and it's not. This new course brings the state's total to 19. But the season runs from May until late September

or early October, Nelson said, and in June and July you can play around the clock. “This is the land of the midnight sun,” he said, “and in the summer they'll start foursomes off at eight o'clock at night. This course will easily see 35,000 or 40,000 rounds a year.”

Wildlife added a special dimension to the construction phase. “The whole area is environmentally sensitive,” Nelson said. “The

area we chose is in a woodland with a riparian stream that comes down to form an alluvial fan. It's a big habitat for bears, wolves, foxes, moose – all kinds of animals.

“Everybody who worked on the course carried a can of bear repellent in the event of attack,” he said. “It is actually pepper spray. You've got to make sure to spray it on the bear and not on yourself. There was one guy from the ‘lower 48’ who didn't know

any better. He thought it was like insect repellent and sprayed it all over himself – and man, he just went wild, because it affects your nervous system. It really works on bears, too.”

Moose proved to be the most destructive beasts, especially on the fourth green, which sits way out in a remote corner of the site. “That green was completely destroyed when a couple of moose rutted there,” Nelson



Moose Run's 17th hole

said. “They love to do their mating rituals on putting greens for some reason, and that green hasn't fully come back yet.”

The animals haven't left the area, but nonetheless Army officials have declared the course safe for play.

### NO SAFE SLICES

Nelson said he didn't design the Creek Course to be unusually difficult. The extreme slope rating of 142, he said, has mostly to do with the 100 yards of nearly impenetrable forest between holes.

“Beyond the proper maintained rough, where you get into the jungle, the ball goes in there and it's gone,” he said. “Eventually the Army is going to have to clean that out – it's just incredibly overgrown. I talked to a guy on the slope committee, who said

*‘This is the land of the midnight sun. In the summer they'll start foursomes off at eight o'clock at night.’*

— Robin Nelson

they'd come back in a year and do another review. The rating will probably go down after that. It wasn't designed to be that hard. It's just that if you hit a bad slice, it's all over.”

Why the huge space between fairways? “The job specified 300 feet of natural area between them, mostly because of wildlife habitat,” Nelson said. “The animals like the forest edges and they love to hide between the fairways.”

The course's length should not pose an undue problem for golfers, he said. “The 11th hole is about 640 yards from the gold tees, and 18 is close to 600,” he said. “But you can almost get there in two, because these are big downhill shots. You can hit it 300 yards off the tee, so it works well.”

Nelson has been involved in designing more than 100 courses worldwide, including numerous layouts in Asia and the South Pacific. He recently moved his headquarters from Hawaii to Mill Valley, Calif., near San Francisco. ■

GOLF COURSE NEWS



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