

Honours Golf adds Limestone Springs to its growing fold

By ANDREW OVERBECK

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — After a successful 2000, Honours Golf is continuing to buy courses in 2001 with the acquisition of Limestone Springs Golf Club.

The course, located north of Birmingham in Oneonta, is an 18-hole semi-private layout designed by Jerry Pate. Honours Golf also purchased 600 acres surrounding the course for future real estate development.

"The course has been open for a year and a half," said CEO Bob Barrett. "It was a family-owned real estate and golf deal and the family eventually realized that they had gotten into an industry that they did not know anything about."

Barrett teamed up with a group of local investors to handle the real estate portion of the deal. "The other investors will operate the real estate component and we will run the golf course," he said. "It was the only way to make the transaction work."

LIMESTONE SPRINGS

Limestone Springs is the second Birmingham-area course in Honour Golf's portfolio and is in keeping with Barrett's strategy to own and operate high-end clubs.

"We need to brand ourselves as the marquee brand in the Southeast," he said. "We will continue to grow the company

on in the market," he continued.

So far, the company has financed all of its acquisitions internally. "Our plan is to have a 50/50 debt-to-equity ratio on each of our projects," said Barrett. "We don't want to get ourselves leveraged to the point where we cannot deal with downturns in the economy."

EXPANDED REACH AND SERVICES

While Barrett aims to become the premier course management firm in the Southeast, his goal is to eventually expand nationwide. "We will expand beyond the

Southeast," he said. "Initially, it was important to stay close to home and have our arms around things, and develop our management team."

THREE COURSES A YEAR

The company will also be rolling out a fee-based management service this year. "We think we can offer a lot to the market, and we have the people in place to do management contracts," Barrett said. "I don't see us going into lower-tier courses though. If anything, we will move into the private club sector."

Honours Golf is gearing up for a busy 2001 but Barrett doesn't see the company growing any faster than two to three courses a year. "If the right opportunity came along, we might buy a company. But right now we want to focus on quality, not quantity."



View of Limestone Springs GC, in Oneonta, Ala.

Marriott Golf assumes management of Faldo's Shadow Ridge

PALM DESERT, Calif. — Marriott Golf, the nation's largest resort golf management company, has been brought in to manage the newly opened 18-hole, 6,932-yard Shadow Ridge Golf Club here in Palm Desert. The resort

essentially two-bedroom time-share condos starting at about \$20,000 for one week per year.

"We're very excited to be involved with Nick Faldo's first championship design in the United States," said Claye

Atcheson, vice president for operations at Marriott Golf. "Shadow Ridge is a premier golfing facility with top quality service and amenities."

INSPIRED BY AUSTRALIAN COURSES

Faldo, a three-time winner of both the Masters and the British Open, said he aspired to something special for his first American project. "I wanted a golf course which not only looks



Shadow Ridge, above, is Marriott Golf's 26th facility.

is the 26th facility in the Marriott Golf portfolio and the third in California. The new course is also the 101st layout in the greater Palm Desert-Palm Springs area.

Designed by World Golf Hall of Fame member Nick Faldo — his first golf course in the United States — Shadow Ridge is a par-71 championship layout set against the stunning backdrop of the snow-capped Santa Rosa Mountains.

Faldo's international experience and knowledge of strategic design are evident at Shadow Ridge, and will complement a 950-luxury villa Marriott Vacation Club International property,

different from all other desert courses, but which plays differently as well," he said. "I sought to design a course that not only tests a player's skill, but also his imagination and character. I wanted to take resort golf to another level."

"If there is a particular inspiration, then I would say that we set out to effect a flavor of the great sand-belt courses of Australia, notably Kingston Heath and Royal Melbourne," Faldo continued. "Our fairways are typically generous but our bunkering style is impressively bold. The greens have plenty of subtle undulations and they

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Honours Golf Courses:

HIGHLAND GOLF — BIRMINGHAM, ALA.

KELLY PLANTATION — DESTIN, FLA.

ROCK CREEK — FAIRHOPE, ALA.

PENINSULA GOLF & RACQUET CLUB —

GULF SHORES, ALA.

THE SLAMMER & THE SQUIRE — WORLD

GOLF VILLAGE, ST. AUGUSTINE, FLA.

THE KING & THE BEAR — WORLD GOLF

VILLAGE, ST. AUGUSTINE, FLA.

LIMESTONE SPRINGS — ONEONTA, ALA.

but we have to stay consistent with the branding strategy."

GROWING TO 30 COURSES

The burgeoning company now has seven courses in its portfolio and aims to grow to 30 courses in the next ten years.

"The plan is to develop or acquire three courses a year," said Barrett. "A very strong part of our business will be developing high quality golf projects. It is a very cost-effective way to do it and we can control the quality of the project."

"However, it is difficult to find quality development projects out there right now, so a lot will be dictated by what is going

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Diamond Players Club

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and Wekiva GC, a 6,640-yard track here in Longwood, DPC's headquarters.

According to Stottlemire, the new division will operate nationwide, seeking acquisition and management targets and providing services ranging from design and construction of new layouts to managing all golf and clubhouse operations at existing private or daily-fee facilities.

BURDETTE AND MARTELL

Burdette and Martell both have deep experience in the course management arena.

Certified in golf operations and course maintenance, Burdette has directed land acquisition and development projects. He is a member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) and a retired Class A member of the PGA of America. A former vice president of agronomy and new construction for Granite Golf, he served as senior superintendent at Grand Cypress Resort and as golf professional at Pinehurst.

Martell, formerly director of marketing for Granite Golf, specializes in the development and execution of comprehensive golf course business plans and marketing strategies.

STRATEGIC GROWTH

According to White, the company plans to develop top-caliber golf properties in major league sports cities throughout the country. "We are a branded, sports-minded group," said White. "Tampa and Orlando are our anchors, and we will grow from there."

Any city with a franchise from the National Football League, the National Basketball Association or Major League Baseball appears to be fair game. "The primary focus is to get to 30 or 35 courses, and 50 at the outside,"

White said. "Strategically, that might take five to 10 years, but our overall goal is to have a golf presence in every major league city."

White added that DPC's preference is to build courses rather than buy existing clubs. He hopes to forge partnerships with developers to help fund the projects. "The financial partnerships will vary by relationship," he said. "Certainly there are some big builders doing creative arrangements. If they buy into the concept, there could be joint ventures under negotiable terms. It would allow us an entry into that market and develop a form of collateral for us."

SPORTS ATMOSPHERE

Accentuating the company's sports theme, it has trademarked its Box Seat Sports Bar and Grille. "We'll have one of these at each of our properties," White said. "They have sports memorabilia, including World Series trophies. Seven satellite feeds and 20 television monitors will show golf tournaments live around the world as well as any other sports you might want to watch."

White sees an opportunity for the company in tournament play. "A lot of athletes have charitable causes," he said. "One of our niches is charity tournaments, where we'll bring celebrity players out and hold auctions."

"The whole company has been well thought out," White added. "Right now it's just a matter of growing the concept."

DPC was formed four years ago by Stottlemire and Florida PGA professional Gregg Gagliardi, the company's CEO. A number of current and former pro athletes are partners in DPC, including pitching greats Mel Stottlemire Sr. and "Sudden Sam" McDowell. Steve Jones, a former U.S. Open winner now on the PGA Tour, is also on board. ■

Myrtle Beach top golf resort worldwide

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thrill to come out on top, against Scotland and Ireland, the Algarve, and so on."

Since its inception in 1998, IAGTO has attracted nearly 300 operators and suppliers from 50 different countries. It is now recognized as the global trade association for the golf tourism industry.

"Every day, people from all over the world rave about how pleasant the merchants and the golf pros treat visitors," said Sharp. "Myrtle Beach is not just a golf destination but a family destination that offers something for everyone."

Myrtle Beach Golf Holiday is a marketing organization comprised of 88 accommodations and 96 golf course members.

Broadly recognized as the most successful golf-marketing cooperative in the world, Myrtle Beach Golf Holiday also operates several golf events, including the DuPont CoolMax World Amateur Handicap Championship, the Myrtle Beach Summer Family Golf Tournaments, and the Veterans Golf Classic.

MyrtlebeachTravel.com and MyrtlebeachGolf.com are the official travel and golf online publications of Myrtle Beach. Both publications are affiliated with TravelGolf.com, golf's most highly read chain of online golf and tourism publications.

TravelGolf.com includes such sites as GolfCalifornia.com; GolfFlorida.com; EuropeGolf.com; ScotlandGolf.com; and BadGolfMonthly.com.

The Myrtle Beach area has 115 golf courses. ■

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Marriott Golf and Shadow Ridge Golf Club

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reward and encourage a variety of approach shots. Miss the putting surfaces here and your ball will invariably roll into a tightly mown collection area - requiring a deft touch to recover - or into a greenside bunker."

Shadow Ridge Golf Club will also feature a Faldo Golf Institute by Marriott, the third such school in the company's portfolio, along with Marriott's Grande Vista in Orlando, Fla., and the Marriott Seaview Resort in Absecon, N.J.

FALDO GOLF INSTITUTE ON SITE

Set to open in early 2001, the Faldo Golf Institute by Marriott will feature one of the largest, most unique practice facilities in the world. Faldo-certified teaching professionals will be on staff, offering programs for the novice golfer up to the accomplished player.

Faldo, known as one of the greatest players in

the game and a true student of the golf swing, has developed a curriculum for the Institute, which will embody his personal philosophy and teaching techniques.

"I'm confident that Marriott's Shadow Ridge will inspire golfers of all levels to improve their game," he said. "Most of all, my hope is that everyone who plays the course will be enchanted and thrilled by a unique golfing experience."

Marriott Golf currently manages 26 courses in the United States, Central America, Europe and the Middle East through its two arms: Marriott Resort Golf and Marriott Golf Management Services. Each year more than one million rounds of golf are played on Marriott courses.

Marriott Golf is a division of Marriott International, a leading worldwide hospitality company with over 2,000 operating units in the United States and 57 other countries and territories. ■

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