

KemperSports bows out of Harding Park redevelopment

By JAY FINEGAN

NORTHBROOK, Ill. — KemperSports Management has terminated discussions with the City of San Francisco regarding the redevelopment of Harding Park Golf Course. In short, KemperSports told the city “thanks, but no thanks.”

“We were flattered that San

Francisco considered KemperSports for this project,” said Steven H. Lesnik, KemperSports’ CEO. “We informed the city that, in our judgment, the required high-cost private capital and low resident green fee rates would result in the project not being feasible under current market conditions. We believe that

lower-cost financial alternatives may make this project viable.

“The inspired idea first brought forth by Sandy Tatum and Ken Venturi of restoring Harding Park to its former glory and bringing the PGA Tour Championship to San Francisco, all while still providing access and affordable rates to the residents, may still be at-

tainable,” Lesnik continued. “It would be great to see the project pursued in the future with different requirements and expectations,” he added. “If it is, we hope to be considered again as a potential partner.”

FOLLOWING PALMER GOLF’S LEAD

KemperSports was second to Arnold Palmer Golf Management

in their bid to refurbish the dilapidated track.

After investing close to \$1 million and spending more than a

year struggling to get renovations under way, Palmer recently pulled out of its contract with the city’s parks and recreation department. It also terminated its management of the city’s Lincoln Park and Golden Gate golf courses.

Citing economic risks, stringent environmental standards and the inability to manage unionized city gardeners, Palmer Golf president and CEO Tim Tierney decided it was in the company’s best interest to leave the Harding Park project behind.

To recover the upfront cost of the renovation — an estimated \$15 million — and the yearly lease charge of \$2 million, Palmer Golf planned to charge non-residents higher green fees. Under a plan mandated by the city, residents would be charged \$25 and non-residents upwards of \$100.

Further complicating matters, 65 percent of Harding Park’s 86,000 annual tee times had to be reserved for resident golfers.

FIGHT OVER ROUNDUP

Environmental pressures from local activists and city regulations also spurred Palmer Golf’s departure. The company fought a long battle to get the use of Roundup approved to kill off the old turf, but ultimately faced more debilitating fights over San Francisco’s intense environmental code.

Harding Park is scheduled to host the 2003 PGA Tour Championship, and the city had hoped to begin renovation work next fall. With the withdrawal of Palmer Golf and now KemperSports, it’s unclear how the city plans to proceed.



Steven H. Lesnik

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Girls week at NGCOA courses

CHARLESTON, S.C. — The National Golf Course Owners Association, in conjunction with *Golf Digest Woman*, is sponsoring the second annual “Take Your Daughter to the Course Week” June 18 to 24. More than 200 courses and 2,000 girls took part in last year’s event.

The initiative is part of the NGCOA’s effort to grow the game of golf through the “Get Linked, Play Golf” player development campaign. Participating courses can structure their program to fit their particular market.

Promotional ideas include free clinics and play for girls, discounts for the adults who bring them, fashion shows and other creative options. NCGOA will provide

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