

## Townsend Capt'l buys Hamilton Farm for \$51 million

By ANDREW OVERBECK

BEDMINSTER, N.J. — Dennis Townsend, a self-described "golf nut," has purchased the ultra-exclusive Hamilton Farm Golf Club with the vision of building it into one of the top five-star country clubs in the nation. Townsend's real estate and investment firm, Townsend Capital, bought the property from cash-strapped Lucent Technologies for \$51 million.

Lucent poured more than \$40 million into the development of the facility, which sits on the former grounds of the James Cox Brady Estate. The club features two Hurdzan, Fry-designed 18-hole courses, The Highlands and The Hickory. The Highlands is a 7,100 yard, par-72 layout and The Hickory is a 3,080 yard short course. Both layouts opened in early June.

"I wanted to get involved because this is already a very special place," said Townsend, "and I see the opportunity to make it even more special. To be associated with what I think could be considered in the same category as Augusta National and Pine Valley is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

Townsend believes that the course will eventually play host to the U.S. Open or Ryder Cup. "The course is already getting these comparisons and it is a new course," he said. "Like fine wine, the course will continue to improve with age."

The club will offer five-star amenities. The Brady mansion has 10 suites, fine dining and will eventually have a spa and workout facility. The course will also be staffed by professional caddies that Townsend is planning to recruit from Scotland and Ireland. Hamilton Farm will accept a limited number of memberships that will start at about \$250,000.

### TRADITIONAL DESIGN

According to architect Dana Fry, Hamilton Farm is worthy of its exclusivity.

"I have worked in this business since 1983 when I started with Tom Fazio," said Fry, "and I have never worked on a better project than Hamilton Farm."

The courses ramble throughout the extensive estate past old guesthouses and dairy barns. Sitting in the middle of the property is the U.S. Equestrian Center.

"The panoramic views are unbelievable," Fry said. "And it has one of the great entrance drives in all of golf." The one-mile wooded drive winds through hills and the horse track and along the first and second holes and ends at the restored Brady mansion.

Hurdzan, Fry designed

Hamilton Farm to look as though it had been there for years.

"When we get a great site where the topography fits so well, we want to move as little earth as possible. We want to make things look like they have always been there," said Fry.

To pull this off, Fry applied traditional touches, combining the styles of Stanley Thompson

and Alister Mackenzie. "It is very traditional, old-style golf," he added. "The tees are square and rectangular and the bunkers have radical high flash sand with wild fescue noses coming in the back."

### HANDWORK REQUIRED

Such touches required extensive handwork to construct,

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The sixth hole features rectangular tees and a green framed by an old "Bull Barn."



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## GCSAA cancels celebration

LAWRENCE, Kan. — In light of the terrorist attacks Sept. 11, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America canceled its 75th anniversary celebration that was scheduled to take place here Sept. 13-14. At press time, the GCSAA had no information about possibly rescheduling the event that was to host more than 500 people.

"It is not appropriate to host a celebratory event in the wake of the tragedies, nor do we want to risk the safety of anyone who would have to travel," said GCSAA president Tommy Witt in a statement.

The anniversary weekend was to be the mid-point of a yearlong celebration that kicked off at the International

Golf Course Conference and Show in Dallas last February and will wrap up at the 2002 show in Orlando.

During the two-day event at its headquarters, the GCSAA had planned to host an industry forum, a golf outing and a gala. During the festivities the organization also planned to unveil a bronze sculpture of Old Tom Morris, dedicate a new sculpture garden and com-

memorative walkway, and seal a time capsule.

### CELEBRATING ITS HISTORY

The GCSAA was officially founded as the National Association of Greenkeepers of America on Sept. 13, 1926, when a group of 60 greenkeepers from across the country met at Sylvania Country Club in Toledo, Ohio. The group grew slowly through the Great Depression and World War II, changing its

name in 1938 to the Greenkeeping Superintendents Association.

In 1951, the organization became the GCSAA and by 1957 had 1,000 members. After moving all over the country, the GCSAA established its permanent headquarters in Lawrence in 1974. Today, the association has more than 21,000 members, a \$21 million budget and a staff of 120.

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## Golf 20/20

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play but don't," he continued. "For example, the study emphasizes the importance that junior golf programs have to the growth of the game." (See box)

### ALTERNATIVE FACILITIES

Going forward, research is continuing on the use and impact of alternative golf facilities such as par-3 courses and golf ranges. Sportometrics, a South Carolina-based golf and sports consulting firm, is compiling a database of all alternative facilities and will provide summary statistics by state and region.

The study will analyze what makes certain facilities successful, and determine a successful business model. Additionally, it will try to quantify the impact of the alternative facilities on neighboring traditional courses. The information will identify where alternative golf facilities can and should be introduced to grow the game.

Results from both the player participation and alternative golf facility studies will be presented at the 2001 GOLF 20/20 conference that is scheduled for Nov. 11-13 at the World Golf Village in St. Augustine, Fla. ■

## Hamilton Farm

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according to golf course builder Joe Neibur. "We did a lot of hand-work in the bunkers to get the fingers in there," he said. "And believe it or not, it was harder to build square tees."

The extra effort, however, was worth it, according to the club's head golf pro Jeff Purtell. "It is a mature property with mature trees," Purtell said. "When you drive through the gates you do not feel like you are in a new development because of the history and the old stables and the overall layout and style of the course."

Indeed, said Fry, looking down the 18th hole, one would be hard pressed not to think that the course wasn't 100 years old. "The back drop for the 18th hole is this huge, old, 30,000 square-foot mansion," said Fry. "It is one of the most spectacular finishing holes in the world." ■