

BRIEFS

NELSON TO RECEIVE DONALD ROSS AWARD FROM ASGCA



CHICAGO — Byron Nelson has been selected to receive the 2002 Donald Ross Award from the American Society of Golf Course

Architects (ASGCA), which will be presented at the Donald Ross Banquet on April 30 in Santa Barbara, Calif. Among Nelson's many accomplishments is his assistance in the development of the TPC Four Seasons at Los Colinas, the site of the yearly Verizon Byron Nelson Classic. The Donald Ross award is presented annually to an individual who has made significant contributions to the game of golf and the profession of golf course architecture. Past winners have included Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer and Gene Sarazen.

SADDLE HILL TO GET A NEW START

HOPKINTON, Mass. — Developers Joe Pasquale and Dan McLaughlin have started transforming the former public golf course known as Saddle Hill to a family country club. Architect Ian Scott-Taylor will oversee the renovation, which is expected to be completed by July. The renovation, which Scott-Taylor described as a classic 1930-era design approach, will use the existing topography to create fairways cut from natural grasses. Pasquale and McLaughlin, also plan to construct a 15,000-square-foot clubhouse, adjacent to which will be a sun deck and pool.

GCBAA ELECTS BOARD MEMBERS

LINCOLN, Neb. — The Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBAA) recently elected six new directors and re-elected four directors to serve for the next two years. The newly elected directors are Ellen Davis of Greensmix, Sam Sakocius of SAJO Golf, Rob Stambaugh of Quality Golf Inc., Bob Steele of SEMA Golf LLC, Dennis Wagner of Rain Bird Corp., and James York of York Bridge Concepts. Scott DeBolt of JacklinGolf, Kirk Kyster of Landscapes Unlimited LLC, Rick Lohman of the Toro Co. and Willie Slingerland of Flowtronex PSI were re-elected to the board.

Houston development boom leads to renovations

By DEREK RICE

HOUSTON — Like most places in the country, the Houston area has seen a lot of golf course development in the last decade. As a result, most of the projects that are underway now, according to Richard Luikens, a consultant for Richard Luikens Golf Services, are renovations.

"In the Houston area, we've had such an influx in the last five to seven years. Thirty to 40 new facilities have opened up, and that is really tapering off," Luikens said. "I can only think of three golf courses that are under construction in the Houston area right now, and there is not a lot of talk of many more."

One Luikens project that is underway is a renovation of Lakeside Country Club. The \$2 million project broke ground on

Feb. 11 and has a reopening target date of July 15. The project includes complete renovation of the greens, replacement of the entire concrete cart path system and expansion of the irrigation system. Luikens is working with general contractor Wadsworth Construction, architect Ron Prichard and superintendent Terry Hutcherson on the project.

The timetable is important, Luikens said, because until mid-July the club's membership has no place to play.

"We spent a lot of time and effort putting the schedules together and getting the contractor in place and the materials in place so that we can turn the golf



A bulldozer builds up a green slope at Houston's Lakeside Country Club.

course back to the membership in a very short time," he said.

At the moment, members are forced to

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Pistol Creek looks to videotape

By JOHN TORSIELLO

BERLIN, Conn. — The owners of recently opened Pistol Creek Golf Club here have come up with unique marketing strategies to make play more enjoyable and keep golfers at the club once they finish their rounds.

Pistol Creek, which opened this month, has cameras located near the 18th green that capture approach shots and action around the hole. The tape is shown on a 15-minute delay in the club's restaurant and lounge.

"It's just a fun thing to do," said Gary Schiarrillo,

president of the Milford-based GRS Group, which developed, owns and manages the new course. "Whether you have had a great round or a mediocre one, being able to go into the grill room and watch yourself finish extends your round a little longer. To my knowledge it isn't being done anywhere else."

The owners of Pistol Creek say they have further made their course player-friendly by limiting the total number of

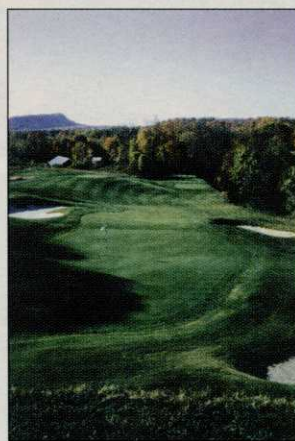
annual rounds to around 29,000 to ensure speedy play.

"We are limiting the rounds because we want people to get around the course in no longer than four and a half hours," said Schiarrillo, whose company was the consultant and project manager for Great River Golf Club in Milford. "We're taking a more long-range view rather than filling as many tee times as possible. We want people to have a pleasurable experience and come back."

To monitor pace of play, cameras will be installed at several key locations on the course. Golfers will not be let out until the previous group is on the first green. Rangers will patrol the course displaying a series of flags informing groups of their pace.

"We feel the flag system is a non-confrontational way to handle course patrol," said Schiarrillo. "Green means everything is OK, yellow means you're a little slow, and red means pick it up and move to the

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The 10th hole at Pistol Creek.

Spencer building the course of his dreams

By DEREK RICE

TOLEDO, Ohio — Denny Spencer of Spencer Golf Concepts will be the first to tell you that he's been extraordinarily fortunate in his life. After a lifetime of amateur golf, at age 50, he joined the Senior PGA Tour, where he played for five years. At the end of that run, he went to work for architect Jerry Matthews, where he was able to learn about the golf course design business.

After five years with Matthews, Spencer decided to go out on his own last April, starting his own design firm and working from his home.

Now he can add golf course owner to

his resume. Along with his brother, his nephew and two contractors who own the land, Spencer has designed and is building The Golf Club at Saddlehorn, an upscale public course located just west of his hometown of Toledo.



Architect Denny Spencer modeled the entrance to The Golf Club at Saddlehorn after a Kentucky thoroughbred farm.

Because a lot of thoroughbred horses are bred in Swanton, where the course is located, Saddlehorn is modeled after a Kentucky thoroughbred farm. Spencer said this is part of a push to add a little something extra to the golf experience.

"I believe very strongly that golf has to

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Hills, Forrest see building market heating up

By DEREK RICE

TOLEDO, Ohio — While many in the golf industry talk about the future of the development resting in the area of renovation, Steve Forrest of Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest and Associates said his firm has seen an upswing in the number of new projects it's being asked to bid.

"New work went on hold between June and December last year, but I've seen a change in the last four weeks where people are starting to move forward with new projects," Forrest said.



Steve Forrest

That's not to say that renovation numbers aren't a little higher than normal.

"When I counted up the renovation projects we had, we do have quite a few," Forrest said. "It still probably accounts for 50 percent of the projects. It may be 30 to 40 percent at other times."

The size and scope of the projects the firm is working on recently, such as the first nine holes of a 27-hole renovation at Ivanhoe Country Club in Ivanhoe, Ill., has increased as well, which Forrest said may be another indicator that the industry is turning around.

"There seem to be more extensive renovations these days than perhaps there would have been in the past," he said. "Most of them are rebuilding the majority if not all of their greens, certainly all the bunkers and upgrading the tee complexes without too many exceptions."

In total, the firm is handling about 15 renovation projects, five or six of which—in varying stages—are Forrest's responsibility.

There are two main reasons course owners look to renovate, Forrest said.

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Spencer building dream course

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go to another level. I think you have to have something that really sets you apart from the average golf course so people are interested in coming there," Spencer said. The front gate is modeled after the entrance to a farm Spencer saw in Lexington, Ky., and three-rail fences will follow the road to the clubhouse. In the Champions Grill, one wall will feature Kentucky Derby winners, while another will feature the likes of Nicklaus, Palmer and Hogan.

'COUNTRY CLUB FOR A DAY'

Spencer said his vision is to make Saddlehorn a "true country club for a day." To that end, he has designed wide fairways so average golfers can find their tee shots and big greens because, as Spencer said, "the average guy likes to hit a lot of greens and be able to find his ball and keep moving."

There won't be any tricks on this course, Spencer said.

"The bottom line is a golfer has to have fun. He may not necessarily play really well, but I don't want him losing a dozen balls or hitting a really good shot up over a blind rise only to find out there's a swamp on the other side," he said. "I want all of my hazards to be visible, I want all of my landing areas to be wide and accessible. I don't want the greens to be all tricked up."

NATURAL COURSE DESIGN

The design for Saddlehorn follows Spencer's philosophy of natural course design, he said.

"You take a piece of land and rather than just rip it apart from fencepost to fencepost, you try and find all the natural features on the site and build your golf course into the site itself so that when you're finished it looks like it's been there for 20 years," Spencer said. "It's all geared toward keeping an owner's cost down and being able to get as many golfers as possible to come back over and over again. That's what natural course design is really all about."

This philosophy is especially important because the land Saddlehorn will be built on surrounds two reservoirs for the city of Swanton. While this presented a challenge in the design, Spencer said he and his partners have come up with several ways to keep fertilizers and pesticides away from the water, both now and in the future.

"We're going to use creative

grading. All surface water will literally run away from the reservoir to a large series of basins. And we're going to create a 15-foot barrier of vegetation between the water's edge and any place that we begin to maintain," Spencer said. "We're using chemicals that have very low migration rates

and very short half-lives. We're trying to use things that we put down in frequent applications but very light applications so that they're down, they're on the ground, the plant takes them up and they're gone. Even considering the fact that we're going to contain all our surface water, I still want to be extra cautious about the chemicals we actually use." ■

LaPlaya Resort course re-opens

NAPLES, Fla. — LaPlaya Beach & Golf Resort, a Noble House Resort, has opened an 18-hole Bob Cupp-designed golf course, featuring a driving range, practice area and 15,000-square-foot clubhouse.

The course is open for resort

guests and LaPlaya private club members, and is part of a \$45 million renovation of the resort.

Cupp created a completely new course routing. During construction, contractors moved 600,000 cubic yards of dirt to create the course's contours. In addition to preserving the majority of the property's existing vegetation, more than \$1 million in landscaping was planted or moved. ■

BUNKER

RENOVATION:

CASE STUDY #43

Steve used to dread rainy weather.

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Steve made the right decision. Now, he spends a lot less money

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