

## HMS Golf bulks up portfolio

By ANDREW OVERBECK

ATLANTA — HMS Golf has aggressively entered the golf course management arena, adding six courses to its portfolio in the last 18 months. The company, which began in 1983 as a development and construction concern, continued its strong push in November adding two more properties and is looking to sign another five to six facilities in the next two months.

Early in the month, the firm added to its growing stable of Atlanta area courses with the signing of Gold Creek Golf Club in Dawsonville, and it picked up another property in South Carolina at Island West Golf Club in Hilton Head to close out the month.

"We are telling our clients not to build courses right now," said HMS Golf's director of business development James Haslam. "The market is not favorable."

The company's only construction project this year is the Cider Ridge Golf Club in Oxford, Ala. The semi-private layout, designed by Bill Bergen, will open in March. "It was a tough, hilly piece of property," said Haslam. "The course is well positioned 45 minutes north of Birmingham and is close to the Robert Trent Jones golf trail."

Haslam sees a lot of opportunity in ex-

panding into course management. "The worse the golf market is, the better we seem to do," he said. "We are a cost and profit oriented company. It is easier for us to make money than it is for an individual owner."

HMS Golf offers cooperative advertising and marketing and runs a reciprocal program for its Atlanta-area courses that Haslam said has been a huge selling point for memberships.

### TURN AROUND AT GOLD CREEK

While Haslam reports that existing courses in the portfolio are doing well this year, the firm's new additions will take some turn around work.

"At Gold Creek we changed out the general manager and superintendent," he said. "In a turn around deal you often have employees that lack leadership. We put in new management and will retrain the workers."

The new superintendent Eric Daughtry will be charged with improving course conditions and Joe Rullan will take over the general manager reigns.

For now, HMS will continue with its strategy of hiring strong on-site managers, but Haslam admitted that they will need to add staff as they expand.

"We have been small enough that we have not had to put in regional managers," he said. "But we will as we get larger."



## Editorial Focus: Golf Cars

# Underground golf car facility saves money, increases efficiency

By JOEL JOYNER

PLYMOUTH, Mass. — Here at the Pinehills Golf Club, Centennial Golf Properties saved money and established a more efficient operation by installing an underground golf car facility. The facility is in the basement of the clubhouse and has enough car storage to handle two 18-hole courses.

"Right now we have 85 cars which we used last year for our new 18-hole Rees Jones Course, but there will be 160 cars available in the storage area by the time our second course [an 18-hole Nicklaus Design layout] opens this May," said head pro John Tuffen. "It allows the cars to be easily accessed and keeps them in great condition."

The 13,000-square-foot clubhouse was designed by the Childs Bertman Tseckares architectural firm of Boston, and Club Car was involved in the base-ment design for the car facility.

"It's in the basement of the clubhouse with ramp access leading out one side of the building," said Larry Boudreau, project manager for Centennial Golf. "We built retaining walls around it, and those

retaining walls are the foundation for the clubhouse."

The original plan was to have two buildings with the car barn as a separate structure, according to David Leibowits, vice president for Centennial Golf. "Our initial concerns were about the grades. Once we managed to get the grades to coincide with the building of the clubhouse, we decided it was the most efficient way to operate."

Ceiling-mounted electric boxes allow for quick recharging of multiple cars. "There's a steel-framed grid hanging from the basement ceiling that has wire and piping running to all of the outlets," Leibowits said.

When golfers approach the Pinehills entranceway, they're directed toward the bag drop area with a pavilion structure where they are welcomed, explained Leibowits. "The bags are dropped off and players park and make their way to the pro shop."

"Once they check-in, they head toward the driving range on the other side of the building where their cars and bags are waiting for them," he said. "It's very functional."

## Car manufacturers

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IQ option that lets courses run diagnostics on and customize the performance of their fleets.

"Through the hand-held controller, you can analyze any system failures and change settings for speed and acceleration and braking sensitivity," said Holland. More than a third of its customers have ordered the system on new vehicles.

The company is also following up on leads created by its partnership with GPS provider, UpLink. The system is currently on 42 courses and the alliance fits in with the company's overall solutions-based selling strategy, said Holland.

"We are looking at improving a course's profitability," he said. "Our 1-PASS is a handicapped vehicle that expands the market, the CAFÉ Express beverage car offers more revenue capacity, and the GPS system offers the ability to add to revenues and profits."

### YAMAHA

In addition to implementing its five year warranty program this year, Yamaha Golf Cars is working on new products that are slated to roll out of its new factory in Newnan, Ga., later this summer.

At this year's trade shows, president Bill Szarowicz said the company will showcase some "exciting concepts for the future" along the lines of its new "tougher than golf" marketing strategy.

"The Battle Ready Vehicle (BRV) that OGIO introduced earlier this year was based on a Yamaha car and fits well into our plan," he said. "We will have some similar looking things in our display," he

said. "We are supplying OGIO with 200 to 300 of our cars for the BRV concept."

While Szarowicz declined to comment on how many of these concepts will make it to production, he said new products will be unveiled in July.

### E-Z-GO

E-Z-GO is pinning its 2002 efforts on increasing the market's awareness of its GPS system that is provided through an alliance with ProLink.

"When you consider that a lot of courses are struggling right now with revenue generation and differentiation, we have shown that ProLink can be a helpful tool to a golf course," said Ron Skenes, marketing communications coordinator for E-Z-GO.

The system is currently used by more than 200 courses. Skenes said the company expects the increasing popularity of GPS to drive sales.

"Golf car fleets are still revenue generators even in tough economic times," he said. "We need to educate the market on the value that GPS adds."

The company is still working on its Eagle adaptive golf car that is expected to be ready for the market this year.

### COLUMBIA PAR CAR

Columbia's newest car with the ACE EPS using permanent magnet technology went into production in June and is currently in use on six golf courses across the country. According to president Todd Sauey, the reaction from the marketplace has been positive. He expects the product to sell well during its first full season of availability.

Sauey said the new car is lighter and more efficient than previous cars while offering the same amount of torque as a gasoline model. ■



Yamaha powers OGIO's BRV

## PGA of America expands employment services

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. — The PGA of America has expanded its online employment services to include PGA CareerNet and PGA CareerLinks.

On the Web site, www.PGAEmployment.com, the CareerNet service allows employers

to make job postings that will be made available to interested PGA professionals. The complimentary search service, PGA CareerLinks, was created to help employers locate PGA general managers, directors of golf, head professionals and other key management staff.

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