



BRIEFS

THIRD-GENERATION AULT PROMOTED TO PARTNER

KENSINGTON, Md. — Ault, Clark and Associates Ltd. has promoted Eric Ault to partner. Ault follows his father, Brian Ault, who is currently president of the firm, and grandfather, Edmund Ault, who founded the firm in 1958. Eric Ault joined the firm a little more than 10 years ago, and has participated in the design of many projects, including Worthington Manor Golf Club in Urbana, Md., and two courses for the State of Kentucky Parks Department. He is currently working on projects in China, Costa Rica and Honduras.

STONERIDGE RE-OPENS REVAMPED NINE

BLANCHARD, Idaho — In early May, semi-private Stoneridge Country Club reopened nine of the 18 holes it had under renovation as part of a \$3 million project. The course had been closed for 13 months, after the new owners decided the course needed major renovation of its tees, greens, bunkers and irrigation systems. Three new holes have been constructed and the course has been lengthened slightly. At press time, the club expected the remaining nine holes to re-open by Memorial Day.

CROWN TO RENOVATE NORTHDALE

TAMPA, Fla. — The Northdale Golf Club closed in early May for renovation, which includes the rebuilding of all 18 greens, numerous bunkers and the repaving of cart paths. Weather permitting, Crown Golf Properties, which manages the club, hopes to re-open the course by Oct. 1. The total cost of the improvements should be in the neighborhood of \$750,000. While the course is shut down, members will be able to play for a discount at one of two local clubs, and Crown has suspended monthly dues and extended prepaid memberships.

DYE BREAKS GROUND ON PRESERVE

JUPITER, Fla. — In early May, architect Pete Dye broke ground on The Dye Preserve, which he called the "chance of a lifetime." In less than seven months, the Cypress Links course, which Dye designed in 1988, will be transformed within its existing routing plan. The 175-acre Dye Preserve will reside in a park-like setting 30 minutes from Palm Beach.

Lehman renovation close to home

By DEREK RICE

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — PGATour golfer Tom Lehman's latest project as an architect hits close to home. Lehman's firm, John Fought-Tom Lehman Golf Course Architecture, is renovating DC Ranch, where Lehman lives off the 10th green.

While Lehman admitted that the firm's hiring probably had much to do with marketing, his familiarity with the course played a big part in the decision.

"I've played the course so many times, I have a really good idea of what its strengths and weaknesses are," Lehman said. "The owner would like the course to be a little stronger, and it's really fun for me to be a part of making it that way."

The renovation at the course, which opened in 1997, is being performed by



John Fought and Tom Lehman at DC Ranch.

Landscapes Unlimited. It centers on the course's greens and bunkers. Lehman said the greens "really were not functioning well" and were in poor condition most of the time. The bunkers, he said, were nearly invisible because the tall, wispy prairie grass that had been planted to mark them had to be removed.

"It's both good and bad," Lehman said. "It's bad in the fact that the course is so new and it's a shame to have to redo them so quickly, but it's good in the fact that there were some things that weren't working and will be better in the future. "It had nothing to do with previous architecture," Lehman added. "It was strictly a function of the greens failing for whatever reason."

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Long-delayed course set to open

By DOUG SAUNDERS

FOLSOM, Calif. — Empire Ranch Golf Club, the most recent entry into the public golf market in California opened in May after seven years of fits and starts to bring a public venue to one of the last underserved regions of the state. Not surprisingly, the course will be very different from its



Folsom, Calif.-based Empire Ranch opened in May, seven years after its original planning.

original plans.

Those plans for the 1,800-acre Empire Ranch called for an upscale master-planned community with two golf courses surrounded by 3,500 home sites. The original developers commissioned Ron Fream of Golf Plan to design and build the courses. But as the plan went through

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Stoneleigh completes improvements

By DEREK RICE

LOUDON COUNTY, Va. — Stoneleigh Golf Club has completed most of the \$1 million capital-enhancement program it began last fall. All that remains, according to Joe Cieri, the club's general manager, is the retagging of sprinkler heads and some bridge and cart path work.

Among the enhancements were adding 13 new sand bunkers, constructing new tee boxes, adding a four million-gallon pond that stores water for irrigation and expanding the irrigation system to the practice facility landing area and several areas in the rough on the course.

Stoneleigh sought the improvements after polling its members on their desires for the club, said Joe Goodrich, vice president of Viena, Va.-based Billy Casper Golf Management, which has managed the facility since it opened 11 years ago.

"We surveyed the members, and these were the things they said would enhance

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ACE brings corporate golf to Philly

Gary Player-designed course to serve as marketing tool

By DEREK RICE

LAFAYETTE HILL, Pa. — As more and more corporations look for ways to set themselves apart from their competitors and market themselves uniquely, many are turning to corporate-oriented golf courses as a means to accomplish those goals.

One of those corporations is ACE INA Holdings Inc., a Philadelphia-based insurer, which is currently developing The ACE Club, a Gary Player-designed course 25 minutes from downtown Philadelphia. Slated for a mid-2003 opening, the club will serve a valuable purpose in the company's marketing initiatives, said Dominic Frederico, chairman and CEO of ACE INA.

"Golf has proven to be a critical and effective component of our company's marketing initiatives," Frederico said. "In the

Pellucid hopes to challenge rounds numbers

By DEREK RICE

BUFFALO GROVE, Ill. — The traditional way of looking at golf rounds numbers, which are put out by the National Golf Foundation, Golf Datatech and others, doesn't tell the real story, according to Jim Koppenhaver of Pellucid Corp., because grouping metropolitan areas by geography ignores many important factors. The result, he said, is that no one knows for certain how many rounds of golf are played in the United States.

"It fascinates me that we work in a golf industry where no one can tell you how many rounds were played last year. That's bizarre, and we're going to try to fix that," Koppenhaver said.

Koppenhaver said the major fallacy is to group metropolitan areas like San Antonio, Texas, the proposed home of a PGA Village that has caused controversy in that city (see page 1), by geography, rather than economic factors.

"If you use the Texas numbers for San Antonio, you get this humongous rounds potential number," he said. "But what we know about San Antonio doesn't seem to suggest that it should be a raging market for golf courses."

Another issue Koppenhaver has with the NGF's numbers is that they are based on consumer survey responses, which he said he has shown to be traditionally 15 percent to 20 percent too high.

What Pellucid does is group cities into metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), which are based not on geography but on rounds per household.

"What we found is that there are MSAs

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Warren Henderson and Gary Player on-site at the ACE Club.

insurance business, like most others, customer relationships are key factors in business success. We believe the ACE Club

will serve as a tool for members to use in strengthening those relationships."

While this will be the company's first golf course ownership venture, it is not ACE's first foray into the golf business. For the last five years, the company has

sponsored the ACE Group Classic, a Senior PGA Tour event held in Naples, Fla.

Player, who collaborated on the work with senior design associate Warren Henderson, said because of the course's setting, the ACE Club will be a "testament to strategic design" that will "consistently capture every golfer's interest."

Playing surfaces will include bentgrass tees, fairways and greens, with bluegrass

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Empire Ranch

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the approval process, wetland mitigations and environmental challenges forced the developers to reconsider and work out a land transfer to the city of Folsom, effectively giving the city a 185-acre site for a public course while the developer retained the housing sites.

The city searched for someone to take on the construction of a public course, but suitors were few because of the challenges to building and the lease structure proposed. After two years of trying to build the course itself, the city decided it didn't want to be in the golf course building business. By this time, the property had seen four different owners. The city

returned the land to the developers with the stipulation that a public course be built.

"We first looked at the site five years ago when one of the new developers, BGP Group of Texas, brought it to our attention. The concept of doing a golf project within a housing development was very different from the course developments we have done so we were apprehensive. We also like to

have control of the courses that we build and then lease out their operation," said Jim Zurbuchin, a partner at B and Z Property, which developed the site. "We were contacted again and given the opportunity to purchase the site, which would give us more control. We took over ownership and built the course in less than two years."

The infrastructure for the 3,000 home sites was already in place,

leaving only the original course routing as an option for the course. Architect Brad Bell had to deal with building the course on a site where so much housing was already finished, which added to the difficulty of installing infrastructure such as irrigation lines and working out cart paths in certain areas. The poor soil and rocky outcrops in some sections dictated the need to plate the fairways. Fortunately, there was a stockpile of soil left from the home-site development from which the Wadsworth Construction crew could screen out soil for fairway fill.

The course is a par-71 layout that plays to 6,668 yards from the back tees and has the challenge of several forced carries off of the tees over wetland areas. The site has 135 acres of maintained fairways using Dominant Blend bent for the greens, GQ ryegrass for the fairways, and fescues and natural grasses in the rough areas.

"We changed our approach here at Empire with an eye to having to service a large community. We have constructed a very large clubhouse that can double as a meeting place for community activities as well as service the golf operations. Now that the course is ready to open I am very happy with how it has turned out after all of this time," Zurbuchin said.

The course will be the fourth B and Z course to be managed by ClubCorp. General Manager Kevin Williams said he plans to do 60,000 rounds a year once the facility is in full operation. ■

ACE Club

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roughs and fescues in out-of-play areas.

Members of the club will be able to walk the course with a caddie or take a golf car equipped with a global positioning system.

The 35,000-square-foot clubhouse, designed by Hillier with interiors by Dick Diedrich, will house a corporate boardroom with a view of the 18th green, as well as a private dining room that can double as a second, smaller meeting space. An additional 18,000 square feet of meeting space and 120 overnight accommodations will be available on-site at ACE Center, a conference facility for business meetings, executive retreats, training and management development programs.

Frederico said the facility will serve a growing need in the Philadelphia area.

"We see an unmet demand for a corporate-oriented facility in this marketplace," he said. "Many of the private-equity clubs in greater Philadelphia are traditionally family-focused, and the most prestigious have waiting lists for membership." ■



SERIOUS SOLUTIONS