

BRIEFS

ASGCA'S GOLFCOURSE-1 TO PROVIDE DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION

CHICAGO — The American Society of Golf Course Architects has created GolfCourse-1 to provide those interested in building a new golf course or remodeling an old one with the appropriate planning guidelines and materials. ASGCA president Damian Pascuzzo will head the effort which is meant to grow the game of golf by providing pertinent information from architects on the proper planning, permitting and construction processes for new construction and remodeling. The package will include information on all types of courses, including par-3, executive and 9-hole layouts. The ASGCA already has many of the materials in place and will be distributing them to individual clubs, municipalities and investment groups. The organization will also add a special section to its Web site (www.asgca.org) for GolfCourse-1.

RTJ II CREATES DALE FURBER EDUCATIONAL TRUST

PALO ALTO, Calif. — Robert Trent Jones, Jr. has started the Dale Furber Educational Trust for the son of late Robert Trent Jones II colleague Al Furber. RTJ II has made an initial contribution of \$25,000 and hopes to match that amount over each of the next two years with the goal of assuring the kind of future for Dale that his father would have provided him. Al's brother Les Furber, a Canadian golf course architect, will act as trustee for the fund. Contributions should be sent to Les Furber, Dale Furber Educational Trust, Box 8160 Canmore, AB T1W2T9, Canada.



YORK NAMED TO GCBAA BOARD

TAMPA, Fla. — James York, owner and CEO for York Bridge Concepts, has been named to the board of directors of the Golf Course Builders Association of America. York has been in the golf course industry for nearly 20 years. Headquartered here, his company creates custom designed and on-site construction of timber bridges, retaining walls and other structures on golf courses.

Construction to continue downward trend in 2002

By JOEL JOYNER

JUPITER, Fla. — The U.S. economy hit a recession last year, and a slow down ensued in new golf course construction. The numbers for new construction in 2001 fell off a cliff compared to those recorded in 1999 and 2000. As a result, those in the industry take a cautious perspective on what 2002 has in store for new development projects and where some potential opportunities exist.

New construction hit a peak in 2000 when 524 total projects opened. "Looking at the openings in 2000, it's a pretty safe bet that was the high-water mark. We will not see that number ever again," said Barry Frank, vice president of member services at the NGF.

New development projects completed in 2001 topped out at 377. In 18-hole equivalents, that came to 284 courses compared to 18-hole equivalents of 398.5 courses in 2000 — a downward slide of 114.5 courses. "According to what we see in the pipeline right now, we think there's going to be about 325 openings this year," said Frank. "Our projections are that there will be about 230 daily-fee, 40 municipal and 55 private course openings."

FINANCING TOSS UP

Financing will be a challenging component to most new construction projects. "What the sources out there are saying is

that major lenders for new golf development do not have a great deal of interest," said Frank. "They're primarily cash flow lenders that like historical cash flows that they can project forward, and they take into account the expertise of the operator."

"If there's a choice between putting money into a new project versus something that has a historical track record, lenders are going to go with the history," he continued. "The biggest source for new construction will likely be local banks or private funding in unusual situations."

Real estate related golf projects are expected to remain consistent regardless of demand, according to Frank. "Because they serve an alternative purpose, to sell lots at an increased rate and to increase absorption," he said. "Developers will continue to build real estate related golf projects not so much that they are self sufficient but as an amenity to the overall project."

New construction, however, will continue despite financial barriers. In tough eco-

nomie times, development projects with merit will to proceed, according to Jim McLoughlin with the McLoughlin Group in Pleasantville, Ky. "A soft economy tends

CONSTRUCTION DROP OFF

OPENINGS	2000	2001	DIFFERENCE
PROJECTS	524	377	-147
18-HOLE EQUIVALENTS	398.5	284	-114.5

Source: National Golf Foundation

to weed out weaker projects before they get off the ground," he said. "Projects that are worthy, that are good for the developer and the local community, will continue to be developed."

DEVELOPERS ARE FOCUSING ON SPECIFIC REGIONS

While industry leaders say development depends on locality and demographics, there are some hot spots. According to the NGF, some of the top states for projected openings in the top four regions include: Texas, 31 courses; Florida, 20 courses; Michigan, 18 courses; Ohio, 13 courses; and Arizona, 12 courses.

"The top region is expected to be our South Atlantic region that we project to have 62 openings this year," said Frank.

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Kyle Phillips on site at Morgan Creek GC in Roseville, Calif.

Kyle Phillips returns home to California

By DOUG SAUNDERS

GRANITE BAY, Calif. — For golf architect Kyle Phillips, things have come full circle. Since establishing his own design firm after a fifteen-year association with Robert Trent Jones II Design Group, Phillips has developed a reputation in four short years for visually pleasing and strategically challenging course designs worldwide. Two of his most renowned works, Kingsbarns Golf Links just south of St. Andrews, Scotland, and Golf Eichenheim in Kitzbuhel-Aurach, Austria, have drawn attention to the enthusiastic designer. He begins 2002 by returning to California to design and build in the state he calls home.

Phillips is in the rough shaping phase of his latest American project, Morgan Creek Golf Club, a private club under construction near Roseville, Calif. After several projects abroad, Phillips is enjoying the opportunity to work close to home because it allows him to be even more hands on as the course takes shape.

"I approach every course differently," said Phillips. "The surrounding area, the landscape, the ownership, and the overall plan for any course are all factors that

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Raymond Hearn: Industry must learn that less is often more

PLYMOUTH, Mich. — The one matter of seemingly universal agreement concerning the aftermath of Sept. 11 is that things will never be the same, and it is difficult to identify an industry that remains unaffected. Golf is no exception. But like many businesses, shifts in the golf industry have been percolating for some time.

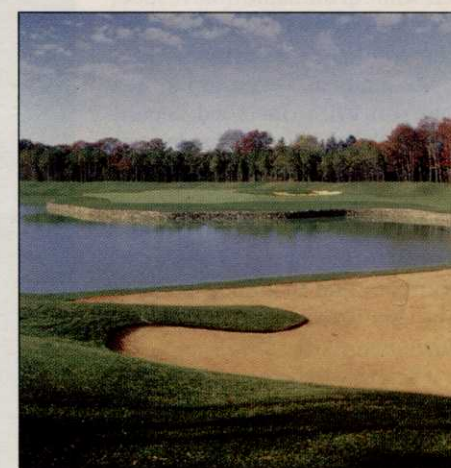
Increased competition for green fees and an overabundance of courses in some areas has been with us for some time now, and the construction of new courses has slowed considerably from the record levels of the 1990s. Plymouth, Mich.-based designer Raymond Hearn addresses possible changes facing the industry and the impact on, and of, golf course architecture.

Golf Course News: What do developers need to consider when contemplating construction of a new course?

Raymond Hearn: Like any number of business endeavors during boom times, the emphasis in the recent past has been on "more is better." The results have often been intriguing, but of course the more bells and whistles in a given design, the

greater the construction and maintenance costs are likely to be. As in any business, profitability can only be achieved by passing along these costs to the consumer.

GCN: How does this trans-



The 16th at Hearn's Sea Oaks GC in New Jersey

late into specific course features?

Hearn: If we listen to golfers across the board, I believe they're telling us what they want. This includes courses that are easier — "more playable" is the current buzzword — as well as more affordable and, wherever possible, less time-consuming to play. This is especially true of golfers new to the game or contemplating taking it up. In general, this means

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Hearn: Less is more

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courses that take maximum advantage of the existing landscape. We've paid lip service for years to the notion of "taking what the land gives us," but implementing the concept has frequently been a different matter.

GCN: Is there a model for this sort of facility?

Hearn: There's a fantastic model: Public courses in the British Isles, particularly Scotland, are truly integral to the fabric of society. This is partly a function

of the game's longer traditional establishment there, but that undoubtedly wouldn't be the case if it were priced beyond the means of the average golfer. The courses themselves were built before the days of large-scale earth moving and meticulous maintenance, but that doesn't make them any less interesting. We talk about the notion of inclusion, but we don't always walk the walk.

GCN: What about some examples from your own recent experience?



Hearn: Our firm has recently completed, or is nearing completion of three courses with construction budgets in the \$1.8 million to \$2.3 million range. They are quality designs that allow their owners to charge \$25 to \$45 per round and have quickly

developed an enthusiastic following.

GCN: But as a designer, wouldn't you prefer a large budget? Doesn't it make the design process more stimulating?

Hearn: Yes and no. First, it's hard to object to the idea of a client saying, "Just

spend as much as you want, including your fee." But, understandably, that's not the way the business is going and, for the reasons cited above, this kind of approach to design isn't what the game of golf really needs today. There's nothing wrong with an extravagant golf course project, but I'm not concerned about the guy who can spend \$400 for a day at the course. My interest is in accommodating all the people who can't. Second, designing an entertaining layout using primarily existing landforms and including strategic options for players of all abilities is more challenging, not less, than just moving earth and other features whenever the whim suits you. ■

— Tom Harack

Tom Harack is a freelance writer based in New York City.

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Kyle Phillips

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must be considered. There is no formula that is right for every golf course, and I strive to accentuate each course's unique traits in order to make each course an individual statement."

The project at Morgan Creek is a joint venture between Olympic Realty Advisors, the investment of the California retirement fund CALPERS, the Stonebridge Group of Utah, and Lakemont Homes. The entire project has been under the direction of David Cook, who was an investment consultant at Granite Bay Country Club, a 1992 project where Phillips was the lead designer.

SIX YEARS IN THE WORKS

Cook has been working for the past six years to bring the expansive Morgan Creek development through mitigation, but knew all along that he would like to work with Phillips again after the experience at Granite Bay.

"Kyle has the ability to respond to both the site and the needs of the entire project. I feel that he really listens to what we are trying to accomplish and then fits the golf course into that concept," Cook explained.

The site at Morgan Creek has subtle movement, so the key for Phillips was to set a routing plan that would create good sight lines that make the course, not the houses, the main focal point.

"Cook wanted to have a course that has a very traditional look and feel to it. After working in Europe for the past few years, I have gained more appreciation for the design work of architects, such as H.S. Colt, who designed around natural mounds and slopes to create the angles and challenges that make their courses so intriguing. I try to create these types of landforms in my designs and make them seem as if they have been there forever. This is the landscaping challenge I enjoy the most," Phillips explained.

While he continues to have more projects under consideration overseas, Phillips is happy to have more work open up here in the States. His recent renovation work at the Robert Trent Jones Country Club in Virginia drew praise during the 2000 edition of the President's Cup, and he will be doing more work there this summer. He is also completing environmental impact reports on a daily-fee facility for the city of Alameda, Calif., on a recently decommissioned naval base. ■