



BRIEFS

BLACKMOOR NAMES NEW PRO

MURRELLS INLET, S.C. — Jon Fritz has joined Blackmoor Golf Club as golf professional. In his new position, Fritz will be responsible for providing golf instruction and clinics, supervising assistant professionals, managing the golf shop, coordinating groups and working directly with guests. Fritz comes to Blackmoor from Arrowhead Country Club, where he was an assistant professional for more than four years.



Jon Fritz

STONIONIS JOINS FREEDOM GOLF SERVICES

HERSHEY, Pa. — Former Gotham Golf Partners vice president Dan Stonionis has been named executive vice president of Freedom Golf Services (FGS), where he joins former co-worker and current FGS president Allen Dupuy. Stonionis will establish a satellite office based in Rochester, Minn., to service clients and future acquisitions in the upper Midwest. Prior to joining FGS, Stonionis spent five years with Gotham Golf Partners and KSL Fairways, and three years at Doral Resort and Country Club.

COUNTRY CLUB OF MENDON APPOINTS NEW CLUBHOUSE MANAGER

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — Country Club of Mendon has appointed Joel Cummings as clubhouse manager. Cummings was formerly the general manager and chief operating officer of Lancaster Country Club in Lancaster, N.Y. He has also held management positions at Locust Hill Country Club and Oak Hill Country Club. Cummings is a board member in the Club Managers Association of America. Cummings will be responsible for re-positioning the club to offer members more events and social opportunities, such as weddings, corporate outings and golf tournaments.



Joel Cummings

Heritage Golf takes on long-coveted Valencia CC

By DEREK RICE

SAN DIEGO — Golf course owner-operator Heritage Golf Group has acquired Valencia Country Club, located in a suburb of Los Angeles, from Uniden Valencia Inc.

Bob Husband, president and CEO of Heritage Golf, said he has had his eye this particular course for a number of years.

"I've always liked the course because it was one of the best around," he said. "We think it's going to be a great acquisition for us. It fits right in with what we're doing, which is trying to stay in the high-end stuff."

Husband said there are some cosmetic changes Heritage will make, but it will be nothing too drastic.

"If we do anything to the golf course at all it will be to restore it to what Robert Trent Jones had in mind 35 years ago," he said. "I remember playing it 20 years ago, when it had deep bunkers. We'll take a look at them and see if we need to restore them. There were some drainage issues, but nothing really major there. Most of the work we're going to do will be in the clubhouse—renovating the entry and just

aesthetically giving it a better feel."

As for Heritage's acquisition strategy, Husband said this should be one of many courses the company will buy this year.



Heritage Golf CEO Bob Husband said Valencia Country Club is one of the best clubs in Los Angeles.

"We've been patient because we were waiting for some things to change a little," he said. "I think we're going to do a lot this year. Certainly, it'll be in the last half of the year because it takes that long to get anything going anyway."

Because of current business conditions, Heritage doesn't expect to see much competition for the types of courses it hopes to acquire this year, Husband said.

"We're starting to see some things with American Golf and National Golf Properties and all the things that are going on there—they're sort of out of the market," he said. "You hear other groups talking about gearing up, but there are not a lot of transactions going on. We're ready to buy a lot of stuff if we can find the right prices."

However, Husband said, any growth the company experiences will continue to be in the high-end market, which Heritage has staked out as its strategy.

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AGC sues Eagle Brook member

Counter claim 'may break' management company

By DEREK RICE

GENEVA, Ohio — Since becoming a member of Eagle Brook Country Club in 1998, Tom Doyle has seen many things about the operation that have made him unhappy, such as non-members playing the private course and sliding maintenance issues. Two years ago, he decided he'd seen enough and wanted out of his membership.

Understanding that club policy dictated that until membership reached full capacity, one member would be allowed to leave the club for every four new members who joined, he put his name on the resigning members list and continued to pay his dues. At the time, he was told he was No. 23. The last time he checked, he was told he'd moved up to No. 17, although, as he said, there is no way to know for sure, since the list is kept confidential.

Last July, Doyle decided enough was enough. He told general manager Jeffrey Kreafler to keep his \$24,000 membership fee and that he was no longer a member. When monthly dues statements continued to arrive, Doyle ignored them. When the club posted his name, as well as his wife's name, in the clubhouse as a dead-

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Editorial Focus: Course Management Systems

Keyonix looks to eliminate unauthorized rounds

By DEREK RICE

GREENVILLE, S.C. — With the introduction of its Smart Key golf car ignition system, Keyonix LLC hopes to allow course owners to regulate golf car usage and establish accountability for every round of golf played with a car.

"We're not trying to eliminate free rounds of golf, just the unauthorized ones" said Bobby LoVine, national sales manager for Keyonix. "Extra play is an expense—to the golf course, to the golf course maintenance and to the cars."

Currently, there is no system for knowing how many rounds a course is losing, LoVine said.



The Keyonix Smart Key is about the size of a keychain bottle opener.

"No one knows that. It's like asking how many times a bank didn't get robbed," he said. "Once we've completed our first full year, we'll be able to tell them about how many rounds they're losing based on trends from previous years."

Many courses don't lock their cars in a barn, so anyone with a key to the clubhouse can get access to the cars and joyride around the course, LoVine said.

"You've always got those cases where

someone drives a car into a pond or across a green or rolls one over," LoVine said. "Between the damage to the car itself, the damage to the golf course and potential injury, you expose yourself to a lawsuit because you didn't secure your golf cars the way you should have."

At the moment, Keyonix is testing its system at Carolina Springs Golf Club in Greenville. Once the system has been installed and tested, it will be available on a widespread basis.

Golf courses can program each Smart Key, which use iButton technology, in 15-minute increments at the point of sale. Once that time limit has been reached, the golf car will stop running.

"Right now, a golf car knows

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Case studies demonstrate return on GPS investment

By DEREK RICE

AUGUSTA, Ga. — According to case studies released by golf car manufacturer E-Z-GO Textron and global positioning system (GPS) provider ProLink, golf courses can see financial benefits from GPS. Courses in the case studies, conducted in summer 2001 by Fletcher Martin Ewing, showed a return on investment (ROI) of up to 240 percent and a reduction in the length of rounds by an average of 15 to 20 minutes.

The following are examples of the benefits courses across the country have seen since installing the ProLink system.

PAA-KO RIDGE

As a new course in a competitive market, Paa-ko Ridge Golf Club in Sandia Park, N.M., was concerned about slow play, so it needed a way to move golfers around the course faster, while sticking with its "cart path only" rule. Warren Lehr, Paa-ko's director of golf, brought in the ProLink system.

As a result, the course was able to achieve its targeted pace of play of four hours, 35 minutes. Additionally, the club saw a 9.7 percent revenue increase from its ProLink fees, a 35 percent food and beverage sales increase and a 215 percent ROI.

ROCKY GAP LODGE

Rocky Gap Lodge and Golf Resort in Cumberland, Md., has little competition, with the nearest courses up to two

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KemperSports adds The Bull

NORTHBROOK, Ill. — KemperSports Management has assumed management of The Bull at Pinehurst, located in Sheboygan Falls, Wisc. Designed by Jack Nicklaus, The Bull is currently under construction and is scheduled to open this summer.

During construction, Kemper-

Sports is acting as a development consultant and will operate the course on behalf of Pinehurst Farms Golf Development LP.

"Our company has had great success in developing unique destination golf properties, and The Bull promises to be one of the best," said KemperSports CEO Steve Lesnik.

Upon completion of the property, KemperSports will market the property as a Midwest golf destination. *Golf Digest* recently ranked Sheboygan County, which lies in KemperSports' backyard, as the No. 3 golf destination in the United States.

The Bull is named for the property's 150-year history as a working Holstein farm.

AGC lawsuit

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beat, he decided to fight back by taking his case to the Internet.

"The first week in February, I got a certified letter demanding \$7,200. I bought a book on programming, I reserved the name and put that site up in four hours," Doyle said.

On his site, which he describes

as "salty," Doyle tracks news about Eagle Brook, as well as its parent company, American Golf Corp. Because of some of the allegations Doyle has made on the site, he has been sued by both American Golf and Eagle Brook, as well as by Kraefle and head pro Bryan Haas, for defamation. Doyle removed most of the offending text from his site shortly after the suits were filed, but he said he plans to fight them with suits of his own.

"We're in the process now of filing multiple suits against American Golf, against Eagle Brook Country Club and against individuals," Doyle said. "Two of those suits will be for defamation of myself and my wife. I can't tell you the other suits because they're in process, but my attorney told me this may break American Golf."

Kraefle declined to address the issues of the Web site or the pending lawsuits.

"Unfortunately, we can't comment, simply because it is a pending litigation," he said. Representatives from American Golf also declined to comment.

Doyle is not alone in his fight against financially troubled American Golf, which is in the process of merging with National Golf Properties (see story on page 1). Eight years into a 40-year lease with the management company, Sugar Creek Country Club in Houston, which has seen a number of the same types of maintenance and management issues, has hired an attorney to break its lease. Among the issues Sugar Creek is addressing is airborne mold that has closed the dining area of the clubhouse, leading to \$40,000 a month in lost revenues. In order to take back the club from American Golf, however, Sugar Creek would have to pay the \$7 million that has accrued on the tenant financial obligation, as well as a debt service of \$2 million.

At press time, Doyle, who said he has received at least one death threat because of his Web site, had not yet filed his counter claims, but he hinted they might have something to do with violation of consumer protection laws.

Where this will all end up, as well as whether American Golf's merger will have any impact, is anyone's guess. Despite living along the course at Eagle Brook, Doyle has joined another club in the area. He said he would continue to update his site, which had been viewed nearly 10,000 times by early April, with information relevant to his lawsuits, as well as American Golf's merger.

"I would never think I would do something like this," he said. "I decided to take my chances on the Internet, and I have been pleasantly surprised by how popular the site has been." ■

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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