

## BRIEFS

### TROON TO MANAGE COLONIAL

FORT MEYERS, Fla. — Pulte Homes Inc. has contracted Scottsdale, Ariz.-based Troon Golf to oversee all club operations at its new golf community under development here. Troon will work with Pulte during the construction phase at Colonial Country Club, which is scheduled to open in summer 2003, and then manage the club facilities and amenities moving forward.

### COURSECO TAPS HATHAWAY AS GM, DIRECTOR OF GOLF

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Golf course management and development company CourseCo Inc. has named Scot Hathaway general manager and director of golf for its Los Lagos and Rancho Del Pueblo golf courses. Hathaway is an employee of CourseCo, which has partnered with Capitol Development Group to manage both courses. Prior to his new position, Hathaway served as general manager and director of golf at Deep Cliff Golf Course.

### MARTINSEN NAMED GM AT WINCHESTER CC

MEADOW VISTA, Calif. — OB Sports Management has appointed Jonathon Martensen general manager at Winchester Country Club. Martensen's hiring coincides with the construction of a new clubhouse, which is currently underway at the club. Prior to his hiring, Martensen held similar positions at a number of clubs, including Anthem Golf & Country Club, PGA West and Pine Mountain Lake.

### LAKE JACKSON HIRES KEMPER

LAKE JACKSON, Texas — Kemper Sports Management has been hired to manage and maintain Wilderness, the city of Lake Jackson's 18-hole municipal golf course, which is currently under construction. The course, designed by Jeffrey Bauer of Golfscapes, is scheduled to open in fall 2003.

## Freedom signs third course management contract

By DEREK RICE

HERSHEY, Pa. — Freedom Golf Services Inc., the golf course acquisition, ownership and management company founded last year by former Gotham Golf Partners regional vice president Allen Dupuy, has signed its third management contract.

Meadow Woods Golf Course in Orlando, Fla., has hired FGS to provide turnkey operational management for its 18-hole facility, including clubhouse operations, marketing, agronomy and accounting.

"We have been contracted to improve the overall facility through enhanced course conditions, customer service and targeted marketing," FGS president

DuPuy said. "We are excited about this opportunity and look forward to establishing a long and productive relationship with ownership."

Ralph Little, who represents the property's owners, said the more than 30 years of industry experience between DuPuy and FGS executive vice president Dan Stonionis, also formerly of Gotham Golf Partners, led them to hire FGS.

"We selected Freedom Golf Services based on the firm's experience and excellent reputation for enhancing the fi-



The 14th hole at Meadow Woods Golf Course in Orlando, Fla.

ancial performance and valuation of a property," Little said.

While there is work to do at Meadow Woods, the club does have some good things going for it, chiefly its location, DuPuy said.

"Meadow Woods offers an affordable, first-class golf experience only minutes from the Orlando airport, and the facility serves the area's seasonal and year-round residents," he said.

### Editorial focus: Promotions & Marketing

## Marketing becoming top priority for courses

By DEREK RICE

It's no secret that rounds played numbers declined in 2002, while the number of golf courses continued to rise. What that means for owners and operators is that there are more people competing for essentially the same size pie as we saw in 2001.

To draw more players and frequency to properties, owners and operators must recognize the importance of marketing themselves, according to Kim Allison of Scottsdale, Ariz.-based golf marketing firm In One Advertising and Marketing.

"Courses are going to have to compete in the marketing arena,

and I think people are starting to recognize that, but most of them don't know where to start or what to do," she said.

The first step, Allison said, is to understand your property's position in the marketplace, along with what unique need you can bring to market.

"There's such a sea of sameness and there are so many properties that are afraid to take some kind of unique stance," she said. "Their advertising is very generic and all of a sudden, the consumer can't really understand the differences. They need to understand what are the unique selling propositions for your property, because if they don't have any, they'd better get some."

"The challenge is going to be to find ways to keep it from always being a competition on price, because then everybody loses," she added.

One way courses can drive play is through customer loyalty programs. Desert Willow Golf Resort in Palm Desert, Calif., uses a card printer, the Zebra Eltron P420, to create "instant" ID badges that golfers can purchase to become "members" during the summer. The immediacy of the technology makes the program

Continued on next page

## Investment group hires CEO to lead NGP, AGC

By DEREK RICE

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — Assuming the buyout and merger between sister companies National Golf Properties Inc. (NGP) and American Golf Corp. (AGC) is completed, the combined company will have a new leader to steer it through what would seem to be difficult times ahead for the largest golf course owner and management company.

However, the new CEO, announced Dec. 6 by the group led by Goldman Sachs and Starwood Capital, has experience at this sort of thing.

Roland Smith, president CEO of AMF Bowling Worldwide, another financially troubled com-

pany Goldman bought in the 1990s, resigned his post with AMF the day the investment group announced he would be hired as CEO of the combined company that is expected to emerge from the buyout.

Smith was hired by Goldman in 1999 to turn around AMF. After steering AMF Bowling through a spinoff from its parent company, AMF Bowling Worldwide, as well as a subsequent bankruptcy filing, Smith oversaw AMF's emergence from Chapter 11 last year. He is also credited with rejuvenating of the Arby's brand earlier in his career.

Smith is expected to assume his new position in early 2003.

## NGCOA unveils marketplace, study

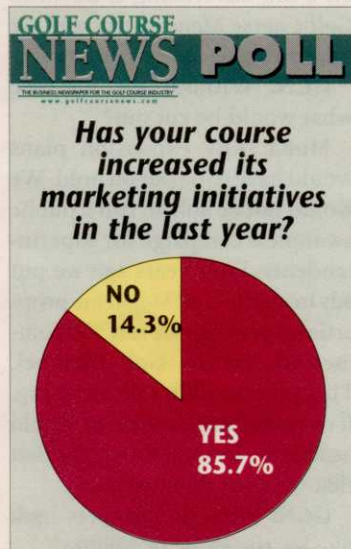
CHARLESTON, S.C. — The National Golf Course Owners Association has launched two new initiatives, the Golf Course Market and a compensation and benefits study.

The Course Market is a listing of golf properties available for purchase. Agents will be able to list properties instantly on a new Website, [www.golfcoursemarket.com](http://www.golfcoursemarket.com), which will accommodate

regular listings as well as auctions.

The compensation and benefits study is being completed by the NGCOA and the National Club Association as a means of establishing industry benchmarks for various job titles.

Results of the study are expected to be available later this month, as well as at both the NGCOA and NCA conferences.



## Marketing need

Continued from previous page

more attractive, said Roberta Olden of Desert Willow's marketing department.

"Using the P420 on premises to make ID cards eliminates golfers having to provide extra documentation every time they come in," Olden said. "The plastic cards look more professional and the Eltron printer allows us to immediately print a new member's card, and is very cost-effective and easy to use."

Allison said these types of pro-

grams are a great start, but should not be the end-all of a program.

"Loyalty is the name of the game, but it's not just about presenting a frequency card," Allison said. "It's about building a relationship with a set of customers."

Olden said Desert Willow recognizes this need to build relationships and, to that end, envisions using the ID cards for much more than temporary memberships. One

possibility the course has explored is to provide cards to Palm Desert residents to allow them to play golf at a reduce rate year-round.

Marriott, which owns and operates 27 courses across the United States, recognized the need for a marketing initiative relatively early in the game.

In 2001, the company initiated its Yard Card program, which offers incentives for repeat play,

as well as an e-mail club to reach out to potential customers.

"Both programs have worked extremely well," said Steve Hupe, director of golf at Marriott's Stone Mountain Golf Club. "With the e-mail club, we send out monthly, personalized golf special e-mails designed to increase rounds during slow periods. The Yard Card is patterned after the Subway sandwich card in that a golfer who pays the full

rate during the week receives a stamp on their card. After five stamps, the golfer earns a complimentary round any day of the week."

The bottom line for courses, Allison said, is to recognize that a marketing budget is no longer a frill in the golf business.

"Courses haven't been used to budgeting in those costs, but they are critical right now," she said. "It's a necessity for survival." ■

## Gotham merger

Continued from page 1

who opted to receive all cash for their common shares would be paid \$2.33 a share. Those who opted to receive cash and an interest in a note would receive \$1.98 and 1/174th of a note with face value of \$100.

The problem with that deal, Kimeldorf claimed, is that there is no distinction between common and preferred shareholders. Preferred shareholders are those who made a \$25 per share investment in the company in 1996. Kimeldorf and others claim the company must redeem that initial investment.

In an attempt to salvage the merger, Gotham offered an olive branch of sorts to preferred First Union shareholders by pledging \$25 million in collateral for any damages from the pending lawsuit. The money would be put in an escrow account, which would be subject to completion of a definitive agreement.

The amended merger plan also called for preferred First Union shareholders to receive \$2.50 in total compensation for each share, less an amount from ongoing litigation costs. They would also receive preferred shares in Gotham Golf, which would have the same \$25 face value.

Common shareholders, on the other hand would receive \$2.13 a share, which is less than the \$2.33 they approved at a special meeting during the last week in November.

In a related move intended to complete the merger, Gotham Golf chairman William Ackman stepped down as chairman of First Union's board of trustees, a position he has held since 1998.

In a statement, Ackman said his resignation accomplished several goals, including the appearance of conflict of interest.

"My resignation will make clear to First Union shareholders and the investing public ... that the decisions of First Union with respect to the proposed transaction are made by a board of trustees that is completely independent of Gotham Partners or me," he said.

At press time, Ackman was unavailable for comment. ■



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
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