

GOLF COURSE NEWS

THE BUSINESS NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

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Superintendents Steven Cook and Timothy T. O'Neill debate the merits of changing the GCSAA's articles of incorporation.

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COUNTERPOINT

Redstone GC ready for '03 Tour stop

By DEREK RICE

HOUSTON — After a couple false starts due to bad weather in Houston, Redstone Golf Management was finally able to open its



Dick Harmon

first 18-hole course at Redstone Golf Club in early December.

Designed by Jim Hardy and Peter Jacobsen,

the course will host the 2003 Shell Houston Open two weeks after The Masters. A second 18-hole course, designed by Rees Jones, is currently in progress and is expected to open in fall 2004. The Jacobsen/Hardy course will be private, while the Jones course will be open to the public. The Shell Houston Open will move to the Jones course in 2005.

Jacobsen and Hardy turned the existing course at Redstone GC into a 7,508-yard course. Upon completion of the Jones course, the facility, which also includes a 31,000-square-foot teeing area for

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Audubon sets 50 percent goal for 2007



Audubon International helps create protected natural areas on golf courses, such as this one at Keswick Club in Virginia.

By ANDREW OVERBECK

SELKIRK, N.Y. — Audubon International has unveiled an ambitious membership drive to attain 50 percent participation from the 17,000-plus golf courses in the United States over the next five years.

Currently 13 percent of the courses across the country have joined either the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program or the Audubon Signature Cooperative Sanctuary program. Two percent of all courses in the U.S. have achieved Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary status.

"This is an ambitious effort,"

said Kevin Fletcher, director of programs. "Now is the time to be bold and make this happen."

The plan has five objectives, said Fletcher:

- Make sure that all 17,000-plus courses know the Audubon International program exists.
- Find out why those who know about the program have not joined.
- Do a better job of explaining the benefits of the program to the environment, job satisfaction and overall golf course budget.
- Dispel any myths about the program and its difficulty.
- Work more with the industry

as a whole by communicating more with golf course managers, owners, management companies, developers and suppliers.

WHY HAVEN'T MORE JOINED?

At the core of the membership initiative is figuring out why

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GCSAA TO TACKLE LONG LIST OF INITIATIVES

LAWRENCE, Kan. — The last 18 months have been anything but quiet at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America headquarters here. From introducing an e-commerce venture, to proposing a dues increase, to studying the relocation of its headquarters, the association has kept busy. Budget shortfalls and slipping numbers for the upcoming show in Atlanta have added to the organization's growing to-do list.

Golf Course News recently caught up with GCSAA CEO Stephen F. Mona to discuss the association's list of initiatives and ongoing challenges.



Stephen F. Mona

Golf Course News: Where does the GCSAA want to be in five years?

Mona: We have five specific goals that we want to achieve by 2007. Number one, we want the superintendent to be viewed as the key to the economic vitality of the golf facility. Second, we want the

superintendent to be viewed as a key to the enjoyment of the game. Third, we want the GCSAA to be viewed as one of golf's leading organizations. If we have high visibility and credibility, than so do superintendents. Fourth, we want to be seen as the authoritative source for information and continued education for the golf course management profession. And finally, we want to be recognized as a leader in helping golf courses make a positive impact on the environment.

GCN: How do you respond to the criticism from some members

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Gotham Golf merger hits snag in court

By DEREK RICE

NEW YORK — The long-planned and now shareholder-approved merger between First Union Real Estate Equity and Mortgage and Hershey, Pa.-based Gotham Golf Corp. hit a snag in early December when the New York Supreme Court for New York County granted an injunction blocking the transaction.

At issue is compensation for preferred shareholders vs. that for common shareholders. One preferred shareholder, George Kimmel, filed a lawsuit in April seeking class-action status.

Under the original plan, First Union shareholders

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GCSAA set to descend on Atlanta

ATLANTA — The golf industry will descend on Atlanta for the 74th Golf Course Superintendents Association of America International Golf Course Conference and Show at the Georgia World Congress Center Feb 10 to 15.

Attendance at the show has surpassed 20,000 in each of the past seven years. Last year in Orlando, 726 exhibitors filled 272,600 square feet of space. While organizers said the Atlanta show will be a bit smaller than Orlando, a location that is always a top draw, there will be plenty of activity this year.

In addition to electing new officers and directors at the annual meeting Feb. 14, members will vote on a proposed dues increase and whether to amend the GCSAA's articles of incorporation. The association is seeking a change in the articles to make it easier for the board of directors to reach a decision on a possible relocation of the GCSAA's headquarters (see Point/



The 74th GCSAA International Conference and Show will be in Hot'lanta

Counterpoint on page 4).

Other activities at this year's show include:

- The Opening Session Feb. 12, with a keynote address by former Ohio congressman John R. Kasich, who served nine terms and is now a business leader and author of the New York Times bestseller "Contagious."

- The Golf General Session Feb.

13, will feature a talk by Captain Al Haynes, who will discuss how luck, communication, preparation, execution and cooperation saved the lives of 184 people aboard the plane he piloted in a 1989 crash-landing.

More information on the Atlanta show can be found at www.golfcourseshow.com.

— Andrew Overbeck

NGCOA launches Solutions Summit

PALM SPRINGS, Calif. — This year's National Golf Course Owners Association conference is designed to serve as a summit where course owners can get solutions to the issues they face in their day-to-day businesses. The Solutions Summit to be held here Feb. 22 to 26,



will feature more than 80 exhibitors, as well as educational seminars on everything from marketing and branding to golf course accessibility and player development.

Among the speakers to be featured at the conference are Ruffin Beckwith of the World Golf Foundation, Henry

DeLozier of Pulte Homes Corp. and *Golf Course News* editorial advisory board member Ted Horton.

Three awards will be presented at the summit. Gary Player will be presented with the NGCOA Award of Merit, Clay Brittan of the Myrtle Beach National Co. will receive the Don Rossi Award and Fox Hills Golf and Banquet Center will receive the Course of the Year Award.

MONA: CHANGES ON TAP FOR SHOW

Continued from page 1

that the GCSAA is going forward with its initiatives more to further the status of the organization instead of serving the needs of its members?

Mona: Being a responsive, dynamic organization carries with it some pros and cons. When we do things like PDI and Golf Supermarket and potential relocation we know that it won't be popular with all of our members. As leaders we felt like our higher calling is to move the organization and profession where we think it should go and to position our members better. So I couldn't disagree more with that statement. Providing the best possible future for our members is the underlying reason of every goal that we have.

GCN: How would moving the GCSAA to a warm-weather city help achieve the association's goals?

Mona: Would a different location with surrounding amenities

such as a golf course, hotel and conference center in a golf-centric location help us achieve our goals and vision? That is the question that we don't know the answer to right now, and that is why we are engaging in the process of considering other headquarter sites.

We have narrowed it to eight cities: Phoenix, Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston, Atlanta, Charlotte, Jacksonville, Orlando, and Miami/Fort Lauderdale.

GCN: Given the budget shortfalls and investment losses, is now the right time to consider moving the association?

Mona: The money spent so far has been to a consulting firm and to this point the expenses have been minimal. Our consultants will talk to chambers of commerce, local government officials and developers who are building golf facilities to assess interest and talk about incentives, etc.

Financially, we will have to be in a different place than we are now. We would have to get rid of the building in Lawrence and consider staff turnover and the fact that moving an organization of this size is not cheap.

GCN: How important is amending the articles of incorporation to the relocation decision?

Mona: If our members vote (at the show in Atlanta) to amend the articles it would create a higher degree of flexibility for our board to make that decision. But, could it be done without a change? Yes it could, but it just makes it more problematic. If we were closing in on a deal and had to delay a decision because we had to wait for the annual meeting or call for a special meeting, that creates some challenges.

GCN: Also on the ballot in Atlanta is the proposed dues increase. How do you justify a 20 percent increase in dues?

Hilton Head ready to host GCSAA tourney



The 18th hole at Harbour Town Golf Links in Hilton Head Island, S.C.

HILTON HEAD ISLAND, S.C. — Since the February temperatures in Hot'lanta are anything but hot, the 2003 GCSAA Golf Championship is heading south to the beach where six Hilton Head Island-area courses will play host to the event.

Participants will experience the best in Low Country golf when activities tee off Feb. 7 and 8, with registration and practice rounds. The four-ball event will take place Feb. 9, with and the Championship will be held Feb. 10 and 11.

The following is a sneak peak at the courses hosting this year's tournament:

- HARBOUR TOWN GOLF LINKS, Hilton Head Island, S.C. Architect: Pete Dye Superintendent: Gary T. Snyder Yardage: 6,973, Par: 71, Rating: 75.2, Slope: 146
- PALMETTO DUNES RESORT, Robert Trent Jones Course, Hilton Head Island, S.C.

Superintendent: Patrick Wake

Yardage: 7,050, Par: 72, Rating: 74.3, Slope: 138

- PALMETTO DUNES RESORT, Arthur Hills Course, Hilton Head Island, S.C.

Superintendent: Dan Hendry Yardage: 6,651, Par: 72, Rating: 70.2, Slope: 129

- PALMETTO HALL PLANTATION, Arthur Hills Course, Hilton Head Island, S.C.

Superintendent: Tim Maxfield

Yardage: 6,918, Par: 72, Rating: 74.0, Slope: 140

- OLD CAROLINA GOLF CLUB, Bluffton, S.C.

Architect: Clyde Johnston Superintendent: Andrew R. Chafer

Yardage: 6,805, Par: 72, Rating: 73.5, Slope: 145

- OLD SOUTH GOLF LINKS, Bluffton, S.C.

Architect: Clyde Johnston Superintendent: John Cooler

Yardage: 6,772, Par: 72, Rating: 73.3, Slope: 141

Mona: It is 20 percent over one year, but we haven't raised dues in five years so it is more like four percent, which is consistent with the economy. We have reduced our expenses by \$3 million in the last two years, but we need an increase to do everything we want to do. Our revenues have decreased because conference and show exhibitors and attendees are off a bit, advertising is down in *Golf Course Management* and we have suffered investment losses.

GCN: Without the increase what would be cut out?

Mona: Any expansion plans would have to be put on hold. We would not be able to run a public awareness campaign for superintendents. Four years ago we put ads in all the *Golf Magazine* properties, a year ago we ran 300 commercials on the Golf Channel. This year we didn't do anything. If we had a dues increase we would be able to do something like that that we can't do now.

GCN: What do numbers look like for the show in Atlanta?

Mona: We are behind projections right now. We are trailing on education and seminars, attendees and exhibitors. But it is not an alarming amount. If we get the normal pick-up between now and the show, we will be fine. But it will be smaller than Orlando.

GCN: What changes are on tap for future shows?

Mona: We are agreed in principle to combine shows with the National Golf Course Owners Association because we feel like the audience they represent is a critical one for the long-term success of our show. It is not that many more attendees, but exhibitors are happy because it cuts out one trade show and brings together another key member of the purchasing decision. We would team up on that as early as 2005.

We will also change our location anchors. We like Orlando and San Diego as anchors and then we would rotate between New Orleans, Anaheim and Las Vegas for the middle years. ■

— Andrew Overbeck