

Texas course plays around shuttle debris

By ANDREW OVERBECK

NACOGDOCHES, Texas — When space shuttle Columbia broke up during re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere during the early morning hours of Feb. 1, debris from the wreckage was spread over large parts of eastern Texas and western Louisiana. More than 1,200 debris sites have been documented in Nacogdoches County alone, including areas here on Woodland Hills Golf Course.

Superintendent Roger Owens said a course employee found an 18-inch by 18-inch piece of debris on the 17th fairway around 11:30 a.m. Numerous other small fragments have also been found on the property. Authorities finally removed the large fragment from the course Feb. 12 and took it to Barksdale Air Force Base in Bossier City, La. "It was definitely shocking,"



Several smaller pieces of debris have also been found at Woodland Hills.

said Owens. "The amazing part of it was that nobody got hurt. God was looking out for the people on the ground, that's all I can say."

Owens said the presence of the fragment, which appears to be part of large panel, did not stop play.

"They came out and tagged it, marked its location with GPS, and took pictures of it," he said. "It was just off the fairway cut, 270 yards from the tee. So we quarantined it off and put flags around it to keep people from touching it or playing with it. We played and worked around it."

NASA officials, National Guard troops and work crews continue to scour the area for pieces of debris, but are concentrating more on the western part of the county said Owens. He expects that searchers will eventually arrive to look through the heavily

wooded course for debris.

"A square mile covers 648 acres, so searching takes a while. We have found a couple of little, bitty pieces," Owens added. "We are right in the middle of piney woods. Its bad enough looking for a golf ball in the pine trees, much less trying to find debris that is little, bitty and black."

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An 18-inch by 18-inch piece of debris from space shuttle Columbia landed near the 17th fairway at Woodland Hills Golf Club in Nacogdoches, Texas.

NGCOA, NCA compile compensation report

CHARLESTON, S.C. — The National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) and the National Club Alliance (NCA) have collaborated on a compensation and benefits report for 2003.

More than 1,400 facilities provided data for the report, which delivers aggregate results categorized by facility type, number of holes, tax status, annual gross revenue and geo-

graphic region. Regional data includes cost of living indexing to further qualify the results.

The survey covers compensation for employees such as general managers, head professionals, membership directors and superintendents. In addition to monetary compensation, the associations collected information on vacation days, health insurance type and premiums and retirement benefits. Fringe benefits,

such as free golf or vehicle allowances, is also included in the report.

"This report is the most comprehensive study of its kind available in our industry, and we are pleased with the results," said Mike Hughes, NGCOA executive director.

The reports are available to NGCOA and NCA members for \$125. Non-members may buy the report for \$195.

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