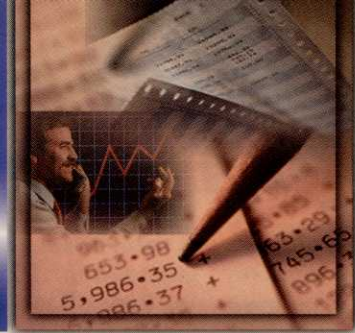


MANAGEMENT



BRIEFS

FORMER AGC PRESIDENT MOVES TO NIKE GOLF

BEAVERTON, Ore. — Less than two months after leaving American Golf Corp. (AGC), David Pillsbury has a new job as U.S. general manager for Nike Golf. Pillsbury left AGC in February, after the company was acquired by an investment group comprising GS Capital Partners 2000, Goldman Sachs Whitehall Street Real Estate Fund 2001 and Starwood Capital Group. Pillsbury is a respected golf industry insider who has been involved with many industry organizations. He currently serves on the executive steering committee for Golf 20/20, the board of directors of the American Golf Foundation, as vice chairman of the USGA's 2003 U.S. Women's Open and as vice chairman of the National Golf Foundation. He also works with the Tiger Woods Foundation, USGA, LPGA and PGA of America to operate inner-city golf programs across the country.

KEMPERSPORTS HIRES FORMER U.S. NAVY DIRECTOR OF GOLF

NEW ORLEANS, La. — KemperSports Management has hired Gordon Digby as general manager of Bayou Oaks here. Digby comes to Bayou Oaks, from the U.S. Navy, where he served as golf program director and was responsible for overseeing 39 Navy golf courses nationwide. The New Orleans City Park District recently extended its agreement with KemperSports to include full operational control of Bayou Oaks.

RAVENWOOD NAMES ROEDER GM, HEAD PROFESSIONAL

VICTOR, N.Y. — Ravenwood Golf Club has appointed Mike Roeder as general manager and head golf professional. Before joining Ravenwood, Roeder was director of golf and head professional for seven years at Bristol Harbour Resort in the Finger Lakes region of western New York. Ravenwood will host the New York State Amateur Men's Golf Championship in July.

GMACCM enters golf lending sector with a bang

By DEREK RICE

REDBANK, N.J. — GMAC Commercial Mortgage (GMACCM) recently entered the golf lending market with a splash — by providing \$650 million in financing to the investor group that purchased National Golf Properties (NGP) and American Golf Corp. (AGC), both of Santa Monica, Calif. GMACCM provided the financing to GS Capital Partners, Goldman Sachs Whitehall Street Real Estate Fund 2001 and Starwood Capital Group for the acquisition of 253 golf courses, the majority of which are located in the United States.

While this was one of the largest standalone, single-transaction financing deals in the history of

the golf industry, GMACCM isn't resting there, said GMACCM executive vice president Jerry Earnest, who heads the company's specialty lending and hospitality and golf finance groups.

"We'd like to talk to good players. We're looking to do portfolio transactions if we can but also if it makes sense to do individual transactions as well. We have an appetite for both," he



Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club in North Plains, Ore., was one of the 253 courses involved in the NGP transaction.

said. "We're active, we're here to stay and it's still a relatively competitive market from our perspective."

While the company is affiliated with former golf lender GMAC, Earnest said because the two are

separate entities, this is more of an entry into the market than a return.

"It's really a first foray. There was a mortgage banker who worked for the company four or

Continued on next page

Editorial Focus: Speed of Play

Forecaddies keep the pace at Bear's Best

By DEREK RICE

DALLAS — Slow play on golf courses is not only an inconvenience for golfers, but can also be a revenue buster for golf courses. If players aren't moving around the course in a timely fashion, it affects the number of groups a course can move through on a given day.

Slow play affects players' perception of the course, and may be a leading factor in their decision not to return on another occasion. At a resort course, like Dallas-based ClubCorp's Bear's Best clubs in Atlanta and Las Vegas, where there are few regulars who know the course well, one would expect slow play to be a part of the package.

However, ClubCorp has



In addition to being a draw for golf purists, the forecaddies at ClubCorp's Bear's Best in Atlanta and Las Vegas have helped the courses speed up play.

found that an antiquated service instituted at the clubs has helped address this age-old problem. Through forecaddie programs, the courses have been

able to maintain average round times that are more than a half-hour shorter than at other area clubs.

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Editorial Focus: Speed of Play

GUEST COMMENTARY

Slow play: you don't need to suffer anymore

By BILL YATES

Course managers fight it day after day, and players hate it. Can anything really be done about slow play? The answer is yes. Working with private clubs, high-end public courses, resorts, municipal courses and even the R&A Championship Committee on the 2002 Open Championship at Muirfield, I have proven that golf course management teams can consistently improve the pace and flow of play, resulting in increased revenue, more valuable starting times throughout the day, more satisfied customers, and higher volume opportunities in their other profit centers. Now players can find the golfing experience they have been looking for, one that is relaxed and free of delays.

The good news is that every course can solve the problem of slow play. All it takes is a strong management commitment, and the ongoing cooperation of the players. The solution sounds simple, but it is buried within two age-old myths: that every round of golf should take four hours, and that players are the primary cause of slow play. Add

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GolfGM adds equipment financing division

By DEREK RICE

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — In an effort to give key decision-makers and members of the buying team more flexibility in purchases, golf business solutions provider GolfGM debuted GolfGM Finance in March.

According to GolfGM's president and CEO Elliot Lewis, industry need drove the creation of the program.

"The golf industry has

sorely needed a program like GolfGM Finance," he said. "The industry's leading vendors and hundreds of PGA professionals and purchasing managers facilitated the creation of GolfGM Finance. These industry leaders envisioned a financing program that enabled vendors and courses to do more business in a more efficient manner."

Through the GolfGM Finance program, facilities will be able to finance up to \$50,000 in pur-

chases from GolfGM's participating vendors, which represent more than 40 companies.

In addition, facilities will be able to extend payment terms to up to 150 days.

Lewis said the program will help courses and other facilities from having to make difficult cuts, which are prevalent in this lagging economy.

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Slow play doesn't have to be a way of life

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to that the fact that the real solution plays into every manager's greatest fear; no wonder this problem has plagued the game for decades.

To solve the slow play problem, I use a "management/player equation." On one side are all the management operational ele-

ments, and on the other side are all the player elements. Until now, most slow play tools and solutions have focused on fixing only the player's side of the equation, where small improvements could be made but radical and consistent change was impossible. Today, using my Pace Manager Systems approach, we create a

partnership in which management and players share the responsibility and the problem can be solved.

First, managers must learn how to properly load the course. Poor loading and overcrowding cause players to slow to a crawl like cars on a congested freeway. Finding the right rhythm for the course maintains a smoother flow onto the course and makes it

possible in many cases to accommodate more groups, dispelling a manager's greatest fear. Secondly, managers must provide and use tools to monitor and manage the flow of play from sunup to sundown, day after day.

When I work with a course, they learn to do just that. Over a decade of helping courses improve their operations, I've catalogued all the seemingly hun-

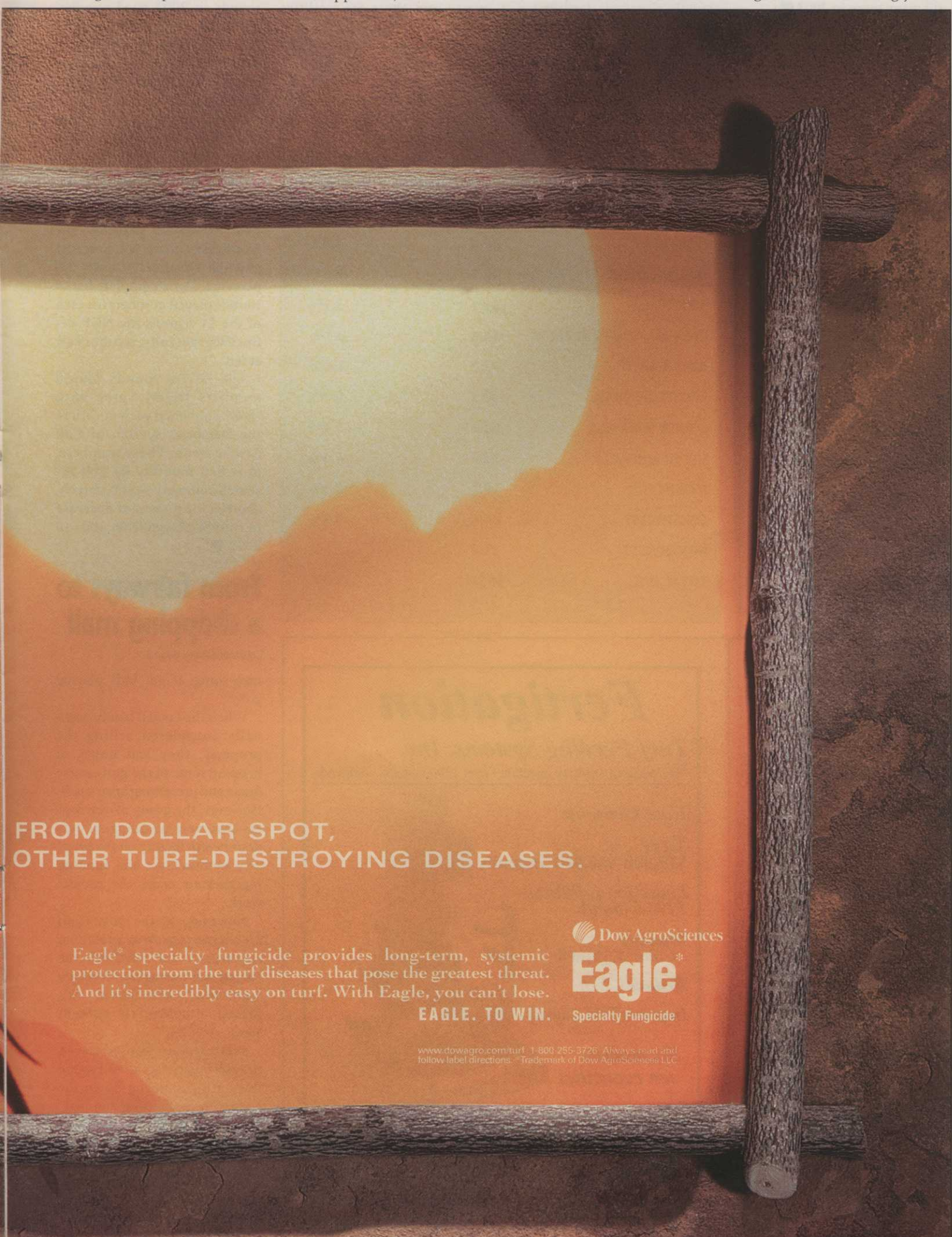
dreds of things that cause slow play into five functional areas. The "Five Cornerstones that Impact the Pace of Play" are: 1) management policies, 2) player behavior, 3) player ability, 4) course maintenance and setup, and 5) course design. My training helps courses define these areas and identify strategies for improvement. We also use a USGA Pace Rating and its eighteen individual hole "time pars" for the course to compare their actual time with the "should take" time to play eighteen holes. Not only does this objective measurement tool bring expectations in line with what the course can actually deliver (dispelling the myth of the four-hour round), but now we can determine which groups really are "slow." Now management teams can create effective monitoring tools, look for specific problem areas on their course, make changes, and directly quantify the improvement.

I use my computer simulation program to determine the optimum starting interval for each course, one that will allow maximum course loading (without overcrowding) and optimal flow of play on the course. With this in place, average round times plummet even on the busiest of days, while revenue and the player's experience and perception of value soar. Management teams can now control and deliver a consistent high quality golfing product day in and day out.

Players have a responsibility to themselves and to every other player on the course. When a starting time is issued, a "contract" has been created between management and player: management guarantees a starting time, access to a well-conditioned course, and a smooth uninterrupted pace of play, and the player agrees to arrive in time to check in, warm up and be on the first tee ten minutes prior to starting time. At the best managed courses, a group's starting time is "the time the group's first ball is in the air." When a foursome honors their part of the contract, they help ensure that they tee off exactly when scheduled.

Don't settle for delivering less than an excellent golf experience. When management teams and players partner to take the lead in the slow play challenge, wonderful things happen. The battle against slow play can be won by any course wanting to do so.

Bill Yates is chairman and CEO of Grey Town LLC and has helped lower round times on more than 90 courses worldwide.



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Forecaddies keep the pace at Bear's Best

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WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN

According to Adam Owen, general manager at Bear's Best Las Vegas, the forecaddie program was initiated as a means of providing better service to the course's customers by helping to familiarize them with an unfamiliar layout.

"It's always difficult when you go to a brand-new golf course that you've never played before, and you have forced carries where you don't know how far you have to carry it or greens where you can't really see the green, just the flagstick," Owen said. "We're able to help them out with yardage and with navigating around the course."

The reduction in average round

times was a pleasant side effect of the program, Owen said.

"For the last 14 or 15 months of our operation, we've been able

"On some of our spring days, we have 180 or 190 players, so pace of play is critical. That's what we always try to stress is that we're not only guaranteeing happiness with pace of play for the group on the tee, but also for the group 30 groups behind them."

— Adam Owen

to keep our average pace of play to four hours and 20 minutes, which for a resort round of golf is very quick," he said. "Most average rounds in Las Vegas are around five hours."

Owen said the caddies at his club attack pace of play before a round even begins by making sure

groups arrive at the first tee five minutes prior to their tee time.

"The program ensures proper starting times, so they're acting as not only starters but course marshals," he said.

Owen said the club stresses the importance of maintaining a consistent pace of play to ensure that everyone can play the course in a timely fashion.

"On some of our spring days, we have 180 or 190 players, so pace of play is critical. That's what

we always try to stress is that we're not only guaranteeing happiness with pace of play for the group on the tee, but also for the group 30 groups behind them," he said.

Despite the high costs associated with the program, Owen said the benefits of offering the ser-

vice far outweigh those costs.

"We are taking a severe hit on our cash flow as a result of offering this service because every one of our caddies is an employee of Bear's Best. It is financially daunting for us to keep this program in place," he said. "But we think it is a nice enough service that adds such an experience and adds a value to our green fee that it would be difficult to do without."

The cost for forecaddies is built into green fees, Owen said, so paying for the service is as easy as possible for customers. The only charge that isn't included in the service is the caddie gratuity.

Owen also said the program pays off for Bear's Best, since the club has a built-in representative who spends four hours with a group and can answer questions about things like the availability of home sites and other amenities at the club. ■

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