

# Golf Business & Real Estate

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**Rick Robbins** is working on the renovation to the Prestonwood Country Club in Cary, N.C. The 54-hole course will offer much more consistency to the greens and bunkers, and the drainage will be improved as well. Owned by James Goodnight and designed by Tom Jackson, the course will host the SAS Championship in September featuring past Champions Tour Members such as **D.A Weibring, Craig Stadler, Hale Irwin, Tom Jenkins, Mark Wiebe, Eduardo Romero and Tom Pernice Jr.**

**Richard Mandell** and Richard Mandell Golf Architecture, together with **Jason Sloan** and **Frontier Golf** are working on a complete bunker renovation at The Reserve at Pawley's Island in Pawley's Island, S.C. The Reserve is an 18-hole private course that measures 7,179 yards from the back tees. Frontier Golf utilizes state of the art laser and GPS technology to excavate, revamp and configure greens to within 1-millimeter accuracy of the vertical and elevation survey.

Congratulations are in order to **Frontier Golf** for receiving the Golf Course Industry 2010 Builder Excellence Award, in the Legacy Award category for Best Renovation Project on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Frontier entirely rebuilt 18 greens at the historic Olympic Club in San Francisco. The course will host the U.S. open in 2012 and has hosted four U.S. opens in the past.

The greens at the Olympic were infested with microscopic roundworms to the extent that there wasn't a long-term solution for the existing grass. Subsequently, Bentgrass was used to replace the old greens and build new ones to U.S.G.A. specifications. The entire green renovation also addressed lingering drainage issues.

**John Crowder** of ValleyCrest Golf Course Maintenance is set to lead the Keynote session, *Managing Golf Facilities In The "New Normal,"* at the Fall Golf Inc. Conference in Las Vegas. Crowder will be joined by **Dr. Jeff Higgins, PhD** of ValleyCrest Golf Course Maintenance and **Jim Riscigno** of ClubSpecialists International for this closing Keynote session on Wednesday, October 6th. ValleyCrest Golf Course Maintenance is the national leader in golf course management contracting and is the Presenting Sponsor of the Fall Golf Inc. Conference.

**Jim Riscigno** and ClubSpecialists International took over management of The Manor Golf & Country Club in Alpharetta, Ga., last month and is keeping busy these days helping private and semi-private clubs break out of their death spiral. One example of tremendous success can be found at the Winchester Country Club in Meadow Vista, Calif., where ClubSpecialists helped turn around a foreclosed property to by adding 200 members. Management is well on their way to adding new more.

ClubSpecialists works with no less than three other clubs in the Georgia and Naples, Fla., region. This market is forcing industry people to work twice as hard for half the money, but thankful to have work under the conditions. The fact the ClubSpecialists and companies like it are so busy illustrates the trend of bank turned course owner's need to enlist expertise of golf management firms. Riscigno feels that bank board members, while sophisticated in their own line of business, need the guidance of management companies. Not just for operations either. Banks also need to realign their way of thinking toward marketing and get on board with ideas that create new long-term memberships.

**Steve Skinner** at KemperSports named **Jim Hahn** General Manager of the Cape Fear National at Brunswick Forest near Wilmington N.C. Skinner feels that Hahn is the right person for the role as he has 25 years of general manager experience, as well as executive experience serving as a Kemper Sports VP. Cape Fear National was designed by Tom Cate and offers 18 holes of championship golf. KemperSports plan to add an additional nine holes and an off-site driving range.

**Harrison Minchew** of Signature Golf Design restructures three golf courses in the Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., including the Arrowhead Golf Club in Davie, Lago Mar Country Club in Plantation, and the Pine Island Ridge executive course also in Davie. All three courses were impacted by the Florida Department of Transportation's Interstate 595 project, which has a \$1.5B budget, \$60M of which affects the three golf courses and adjacent water ponds. Signature Golf Design established the cost to restructure the courses, which affected the appraisal values when it went on the sale block. Recently, the State of Florida took over ownership of Arrowhead. Owner American Golf decided to sell the course as opposed to taking on reconstruction costs and Florida will auction off the property.

The Arrowhead renovation included the implementation of 900 new trees and a complete reconfiguration from tees to greens based on the exacting standards Harrison has used on over 100 other courses he designed with Arnold Palmer Design Company.

**Cathy Jo Johnson**, GM of Golf at Incline Village, **Bill O'Brien**, GM of Maderas Golf Club, **Scott Humphrey**, PGA GM of Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club, **RJ Harper**, SVP of Golf from Pebble Beach Company and **Sandy Clark**, Golf Superintendent of Barona Creek Golf Resort will speak at the Las Vegas Golf Inc. Conference. They have been honored as Golf Inc's Most Admired Operators of 2010.

**Peter Hill** and Billy Casper Golf (BCG) took over the operations of the Green Tee and Westwinds golf courses in Victorville Calif. The City of Victorville is looking to cut its \$1.2M annual subsidy of the courses and eventually turn a profit. BCG has already made a positive impression on local players at Green Tee who have taken notice of cleaner and more distinct fairways, as well as faster greens.

Green Tee is an 18-hole 6,655-yard course designed by **William F. Bell**. Westwinds Golf Course is undergoing renovations that include clubhouse and should reopen in 30 to 60 days. It's a nine-hole par 36 with two sets of tees that allow golfers to play a full 18. BCG will oversee all golf course maintenance, staffing and training, marketing and public relations, membership programs, golf instruction and special events at both courses.

**Paul Sweitzer**, owner the of semi-private White Hawk Golf and Country Club in Crown Point, Ind., now reports an increase of membership from 280 members 18 months ago, to close to 400 members. Ownership has aggressively marketed the course and country club by implementing programs targeting various community activities and strategic pricing. One of the activities includes *Party Buses*, a program that brings participants to the facility and provides box lunches. *Themed Tent Events* attract as many as 400 to 500 people. White Hawk is a 36-hole championship golf course located in northwestern Indiana.

Sweitzer has an F&B background, so it's no surprise that the catering business of the course has improved so much that plans are underway to convert the bottom floor of the clubhouse into a banquet room with capacity for 300. Still, the lenders are trying to reduce loan balances to conform with new government regulations, so the owners have decided to put the club on the market for \$8.2 M, and concentrate on F&B, which is the current core competency. **Chris Karamitsos** of National Golf and Resort Properties Group reports that the club operates at \$737K NOI out of \$2.8M gross.

Another former Arnold Palmer Design Company exec enjoys success with her own consulting company. **Vicki Martz** recently opened Victoria Martz Golf Design, Inc., a boutique design firm managed out of Jacksonville, Fla. Martz has seen high customer interest in remodeling courses and rerouting holes, all in the effort to make golf courses more accessible, affordable and family friendly. With Arnold Palmer Design more than 25 years, Martz most recently retired as VP, Senior Golf Course Architect and Director of Environmental Design.

To obtain these goals, Martz focuses on the creation of alternate greens, grandchildren tees, as well as three 6-hole options as opposed to the traditional two 9-hole options. These developments signal the industry's desire to expand the market and increase golfer traffic. Now, more than ever, these options and others are necessary as the status quo is no longer viable in today's market. Martz is well known for her involvement with the Environmental Institute for Golf where she serves as a member of the board of trustees, and advocates sustainable golf design that protects the environment.

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The Learning Center at Galloping Hill in Kenilworth, N.J., will be transformed into a TaylorMade Performance Lab. Steve Skinner at KemperSports is partnering with the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders and TaylorMade to realize the transition from a practice facility to a facility consisting of 50 driving range stalls, a practice area including putting greens, chipping areas and bunkers, not to mention TaylorMade's cutting edge technologies to custom fit golf equipment. The facility will be only the seventh of its type in the country with others located in Palm Desert, San Diego, Chicago, Orlando, Atlanta and Boston. Additional facilities for TaylorMade Performance Labs are planned for Houston, Texas and an additional facility in Florida.

**Marie Jackson** of SydMar Golf Management Inc. increased golf traffic at The Sugar Creek Golf Course in Atlanta by 10%. Sugar Creek is an 18-hole, 6,200 yard par-71-course serving DeKalb County. Two programs in particular have helped this increase: *The Nine and Wine* program as well as *The Church League* that caters to all denominations.

**Bill Hughes** of PGA TOUR, **Jesse Thorpe** of Skyline Country Club, **Chuck Bombard** of TPC Summerlin and **Mark Brenneman** of Shadow Creek are among the General Managers speaking at the Las Vegas Golf Inc. Conference.

The Nine and Wine program creates a relaxed and romantic atmosphere featuring tiki lights, live jazz music, and of course wine and cheese, and has been particularly successful. Many golf professionals talk about utilizing these type of innovations, but SydMar implements them as they recognize the economic climate necessitates the need for innovation and inclusion to increase and sustain traffic. Sugar Creek looks to create a community atmosphere and SydMar helps to effectively spread the message. Ms. Jackson is the first African-American female to own a golf management company in the United States.

**Clay Thomas** has increased rounds at the Westchase Golf Club in Tampa, Fla., from 100 outings in September of 2009, to 700 scheduled outings for September 2010. September is typically a slow month at Westchase. The increase is a result of intensified focus on specific target markets, tournaments and other outings. This is directly in line with what Clay spoke about at the April 2010 Golf Inc. conference in Amelia Island, Fla. Westchase is an 18-hole public course designed by Lloyd Clifton.

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