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CORAL SPRINGS FOCUS



Freshening up

Improvements bolster the Country Club of Coral Springs. Page 5



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SPOTLIGHT

A Matter of Course

Investors pump new life into the Country Club of Coral Springs

Robert Weinberg

As part of ACC Strategies, the investment group that took over the Country Club of Coral Springs in 2009, Bernie Moyle was faced with the Herculean task of fixing up the then-40-year-old institution. What, he asked longtime Superintendent Rick Bright, could be done right away, at minimal cost, to help shape up the golf course?

"Well, we need sand," Bright told him.

"I said, 'Sand? You mean for the sand traps?'" Moyle says, recalling the conversation. No, Bright replied, sand was required for the entire course, to allow rain to wick into the soil and then be carried away so the course doesn't get muddy. Also, the superintendent explained, sand acts as a nutrient.

"So," Moyle continued, "the next day, I purchased approximately 300 tons of sand, something I never thought I'd do in my life. It took about a year, from September 2009 until the middle of October 2010, for us to work on the course."

When Moyle was first brought in as a consultant to oversee the acquisition of the club, the grounds and facilities had certainly seen brighter days. Opened on Thanksgiving Day in 1969, the place had fallen into disrepair and was on the brink of shutting its doors. Not only would that have resulted in the loss of about 45 jobs, but the 170-odd



Dan James is general manager of the Country Club of Coral Springs. PHOTOS/JEFF GRAVES

homes that surrounded the golf course would have seen a diminution in value to the tune of about \$100,000.

As a founding partner and the CEO of Vantage Hospitality Group Inc., the parent company of Lexington Hotels and America's Best Value Inn, Moyle was perfectly suited to turn the aging property around. He put together the investment group that purchased the property late in 2009 and set to work salvaging the club's grounds and reputation.

In addition to sprucing up the golf course — which included planting 30 oak trees — there was plenty of work to be done on the banquet/events facilities.

Air-conditioning repair, new walls, carpeting and lighting were among



the improvements required for the venue to once again be considered a premier venue for weddings, bar mitzvahs and quinces.

Located on the second floor overlooking the ninth hole, the banquet facility boasts views of

the golf course and a main dining room that seats about 230. In addition to small meeting rooms, the facility boasts a room called The Library, which comes complete with a balcony and that Moyle describes as "a great place

for an evening cocktail reception."

The club also hosts monthly ladies' nights and happy hours, as well as weekly golf outings sponsored by Bru's Room and the Weitz Group, in which participants meet up for nine holes and then socialize over chicken wings and beers. An equally important part of the country club's role is hosting charity tournaments. The club's own member-guest tournament shares the calendar with events sponsored by Publix, Patrón and former Miami Dolphin Dwight Stephenson. In fact, Stephenson's RNDC Unite Cerebral Palsy tournament is scheduled to take place on Friday, June 24. (Call 954-315-4057, or visit RNDCGolfClassic.com.)

Moyle recognized that a massive overhaul would have to take place on all levels to return the once-grand space to its former glory. Among the improvements he oversaw was the hiring of Chef Jason Berg, formerly of the Sea Gate Hotel in Delray Beach, to revamp the restaurant's menu. The mixed grill now features seven, large-screen, flat-panel TVs, refurbished tables and chairs and new carpeting and lighting. "We just made it more comfortable, more open and, frankly, more clean," Moyle said.

Of equal import, the hospitality vet knows, is making people aware of all the upgrades. Although the club opened as a private country club, it's now open to the public.

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Membership does have its advantages, such as paying lower greens fees and being able to book tee times further in advance, as well as having access to lockers and bag storage. Members can also keep their handicaps on file.

Outreach to young potential golfers and tennis players is key. The country club's tennis pro, Shawn Craig, teaches kids at the summer Tennis and Sports Camp, during which golf instruction is also offered. And the club has teamed with the city of Coral Springs and the Parkland YMCA to form a youth golf league.

Twenty-year residents of Coral Springs, Moyle and his wife, Shari, raised their own children here. Recent members of the country club, the couple plays doubles tennis and takes lesson every Monday night. Moyle further displayed his prowess at the club's annual Golf/Tennis Super Smash Combination Event in April, in which he finished first in the Bjorn Borg Group.

While the Nova Southeastern Law School grad loves to get out on the tennis court or

golf course, he truly prizes the friends he's made at the club. He likens the genial atmosphere to the TV show "Cheers" and says that members enjoy gathering at events, social outings and even informally at Runyon's. With its active and youthful demographics, he said, Coral Springs is prime territory for what the country club has to offer.

"One of the reasons the country club was very much worth saving was there's a lot of that dynamic that we want to serve within the city," Moyle said. "So that's what we're working on, getting the name out and letting people know that we're open to serve the community."

The Country Club of Coral Springs is located at 10800 W. Sample Road. Call 954-752-4500, or visit ccofcs.com.

On the Cover: Dan James, general manager and PGA pro, left; Brian Weidenbacher, membership sales; Kelly Chernicki, banquet sales, and Jason Berg, food and beverage director, work together to shine up the Country Club of Coral Springs.
Photo/Jeff Graves



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