

CAROLINA AMAZING CONCORD NATIVE TAKES ON 'AMAZING RACE.'

On the mend Injured Panthers Beason, Davis work toward recovery.



The Charlotte Observer

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# What to do when TRUMP COMES CALLIN

HIGH-FLYING MOGUL MAKES A PLAY FOR THE POINT





Donald Trump could soon own Lake Norman's The Point Lake and Golf Club, above. At left: Greg Norman-designed golf course; top center: the village area with a tavern, meeting house and general store; bottom center: tennis courts, pools and fitness center.

AND ELISABETH ARRIERO

ithin weeks an exclusive golf-club near Mooresville could be in Donald Trump's hands.

If's a prospect that has opened deep rifts at The Point Lake and Golf Club, where golfers bask in lakeside breezes and residents stroll along cobblestone streets to a village tavern.

Trump's organization — rumored to be

stone streets to a village tavern.

Trump's organization – rumored to be offering \$3 million – has pledged to pump tens of millions of dollars of improvements into the private, Greg Norman-designed course and club, which would be renamed Trump National Golf Club – Charlotte. Beyond that, few specifics about the real estate mogul's plans have been shared with residents, who expect to vote on a potential sale in March.

Some residents of the roughly 900-lot

community believe home prices will rise with the celebrity developer's involvement. They envision enhanced landscaping and world-class food.

Others fear Trump will hike costs and price homeowners out. There's talk of lawsuits, and one group of residents has offered to put up millions of dollars to buy the club, and keep The Donald away.

E. Trump

This is out of control," said resident Jim Carter, a retiree who says he has owned and operated golf and tennis clubs in Europe for nearly 50 years. He's part of a group that has expressed interest in buying the club for \$3 million.

"Tve never seen anything like this where

"Tve never seen anything like this where board members are encouraging people to vote for something when they haven't seen SEE TRUMP, 4A



# High gas prices give **GOP** fuel

Republicans eager to use \$4 per gallon cost against Obama in coming election.

By Michael D. Shear

New York Times

WASHINGTON — Rising gasoline prices, trumpeted
in foot-tall numbers on street corners across the
country, are causing concern among advisers to
President Barack Obama that a budding sense of
economic optimism could be undermined just as he
heads into the general election.

White House officials are preparing for Republicans to use consumer angst about the cost of oil
and gas to condemn his energy programs and buttress their argument that his economic policies are
not working.

not working.
In a closed-door meeting last week, Speaker John Boehner instructed fellow Republicans to embrace the gas-pump anger they find among their constituents when they return to their districts for the Presidents Day recess.

# Michael Jordan seeks to restore Bobcats' image

By Mark Price

Charlotte Bobcats owner Michael Jordan admits his team has an image problem, and he's not referring to their 4-26 record.

It's something worse, in his opinion. Somehow, after eight seasons as a franchise, the Bobcats still are not considered a part of the fabric of the community.

are not considered a part of the fabric of the community.

This is partly the team's own doing, he said, due to some regrettable moves, including a 2008 decision by former owner Robert Johnson to lay off the entire community relations staff. They were the ones responsible for coordinating team donations, community service projects and other acts of kindness.

"The former owner let things slip," said Jordan, and opportunities were lost in the process. The sports SEE BOBCATS, ILD.

SEE BOBCATS, 11A





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### WHITNEY HOUSTON MEMORIAI IZED

Stevie Wonder, Dionne Warwick and other entertainment giants offered songs and tributes during an emotional funeral for the



48-year-old pop superstar. 10A U.S. manufacturing rebounds American manufac turers bounced back in 2011, add-

ing more than 287,000 new pos tions and boosting exports of U.S. goods and services. 1D

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# DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION LABOR DAY WEEKEND OFF-LIMITS

# Wedded bliss may have to wait this fall



BY CELESTE SMITH
cosmiti@chardrotesberveccom

Allie Neyra was ready to send out her
"save the date" cards announcing her
Sept. 1 wedding in Charlotte when she
learned of a big conflict – the Democratic
National Convention.

In this month of wedding shows, engagements and intense wedding planning, Charlotte area brides and grooms are discovering
that popular dates over the Labor Day weekend are largely off limits this year. Local wedding planners are urging couples to work
around that weekend, since as many as
35,000 visitors are expected in the region for
official and unofficial events surrounding
the convention happening Sept. 4-6.

official and unofficial events surrounding the convention happening Sept. 4-6. Thirteen prime venues - including places popular for local weddings - already have been snapped up for official DNC receptions. And convention planners have first right of refusal on most venues in the region. SEE WEDDINGS, 8A



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### **TRUMP**

the agreement," Carter said.
"Yet it's so important because it changes the whole commu-

"Yet it's so important because it changes the whole community."

Taking the lead on the project is 28-year-old Eric Trump, Donald's third child and a graduate of Georgetown University, who has worked on Trump projects in Dubai, Las Vegas and other areas. He says his father wouldn't develop at The Point, but would enhance what's already there.

"We wouldn't change it in terms of aesthetic look," he told the Observer. "We'd make it much nicer."

He wouldn't elaborate on the company's plans, saying they are still being finalized. He said he and his father will come to Charlotte in early March to meet with residents and detail the proposal, which he believes residents will support.

"We have received more

port.
"We have received more than 100 calls from people saying they are totally in support of (the Trump proposal)," Eric Trump said.

of (the Trump proposal)," Eric Trump said.
Still, some residents are frustrated with what they see as a lack of transparency from the club's advisory board, which has been talking with the Trumps for nearly two years. They worry a sale is being forced upon homeowners, and other ownership alternatives ignored, by what two residents described as "a powerful pushy few."

The club's president, Rich-d Grove, said in a statement ard Grove, said in a statement the board is "committed to pro-viding as much information as possible to our members so that they can make a fully in-

that they can make a fully in-formed vote on the issue."

He said the community's in-terests "are best served by an open and full discussion among our members." It should be a "private discus-sion" among club members, it said adding "it's in appropriate

sion" among club members, he said, adding "it is inappropriate for any individual member to share confidential information they receive from the Club with the press or otherwise."

Other than Carter and Grove, none of the nine residents who spoke with the Observer was willing to be named in this story, in part because of the board's directive not to talk with the media.

one poard's directive not to talk with the media.

"It's basically in a quiet mode in the sense that nobody really wants any confrontation," one resident said. "It's not being (publicly) discussed."

### Still a destination spot

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When Crescent Resources announced plans in the 1990s to build a luxury golf-club community on Lake Norman, 30 miles from uptown Charlotte, experienced real estate experts weren't sure the demand could sustain such a high-end development. But when lots went on sale in 1998, every home in the initial phase sold on the first day.

With homes selling for \$1 million-plus and averaging 4,500 square feet to 5,000 square feet, The Point has attracted high-powered doctors, attorneys, executives, sports stars and retirees.



np's organization has pledged to pump tens of millions of dollars into the course and club, which would be renamed Trump National Golf Club – Charlotte

## 'The question I wonder about is, if it wasn't the Trump brand, would there be so much opposition?"

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A RESIDENT OF THE POINT WHO SUPPORTS THE TRUMP PROPOSAL

The community has gray, Cape Cod-style buildings housing club facilities, a tavern, a general store and a cobbler, along with a village green and meeting house.

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But homes at The Point have suffered along with the rest of the real estate market. The community's undeveloped lots once started at \$I million. Last year, homes sold for prices ranging from \$601,000 to more than \$3 million, according to research firm Metrostudy. During the past five years, the median home sales price ranged roughly between \$600,000 and \$700,000.

The community, and in particular the golf course, remains highly regarded and sought after by the affluent, says real estate agent Dan Cottingham, cowner of Cottingham, Chalk Hayes.

"By and large it's a destination of the result of the sales in a destination of the sales and the sales and the sales are sales are sales are sales and sales are sales and sales are sal

owner of Cottingham Chalk Hayes.
"By and large it's a destination that's very highly thought of," he said.
The course and 12-year-old club, however, have aged and need renovations and maintenance, members say. Some people don't like the club's food or service.
While members own the club, Crescent controlled it until Dec. 31, when the developer transferred control to the members in exchange for a \$5 million deed of trust. The Point's members can pay off the deed of trust for \$3 million if they do so by the end of May.
All homeowners must belong to the club, which offers

various membership levels ranging from \$2,100 annual dues for a community membership to \$6,600 for a full golf membership.

embership. Some club members own an equity stake, which can be worth tens of thousands of dollars.

### ning the Trump brand

When Eric Trump talks about the Trump Organiza-tion's growing portfolio of golf courses, the superlatives flow freely

tion's growing portfolio of golf courses, the superlatives flow freely.

The courses are "the best," the clubhouses "the most luxurious" and the overall experience "phenomenal," he told the Observer.

He said his company would keep the club's Nantucket village feel.

"Being contextual is absolutely everything," Trump said, referring to how the developer builds projects to match their surroundings.

Trump International Hotel & Tower Chicago, for example, is a glass skyscraper with polished stainless steel and windows of iridescent blue meant ished stainless steel and windows of iridescent blue meant to echo Lake Michigan. A 64-story Las Vegas hotel boasts golden glass. A clubhouse in Palm Beach has Portuguese round tiles and stucco.

This isn't the first time Trump has considered a Charlotte-area deal. In 2007, the company considered building luxury condos, a five-star hotel and an office tower in the 600 block of South Tryon Street,

across from the Observer. By 2008, the project was on indefinite hold.

nite hold.

At The Point, one resident who supports a sale said Trump brings "that extra piece. They'll bring us world-class tennis facilities, phenomenal

dining."

But he acknowledged that Trump, who considered a run for the 2012 Republican presidential nomination, has his detractors.

tractors.
"The question I wonder about is, if it wasn't the Trump brand, would there be so much opposition?" he said. "I think there are some people who probably don't like his political affiliations and that may have caused some of this backlash."
Trump certainly attracts controversy, said marketing expert John Sweeney, a professor at UNC Chapel Hill.
"He has a track record of some very, very successful

some very, very successful things and a track record of some very, very unsuccessful things," Sweeney said. "And The Donald takes care of The Donald."

Donald."

Some marketers have questioned whether the Trump brand has become diluted as the developer has turned to selling a range of products including mattresses, cuff links and wodka, and starring in reality TV. ity TV.

eeney said Trump's brand focuses on elegance but in an unusual way.

"He's an American icon for a certain kind of luxurious ag-gressiveness," he said. "Those two don't normally go togeth-er"

The Trump Organization as suffered its share of set-

backs.
Various Trump-affiliated companies have filed for bankruptcy protection over the

years. In fall 2010, investors bought the 41-story Trump Hollywood in Hollywood, Fla., out of foreclosure, according to news accounts.

ews accounts.

Buyers lost deposits when roposed Trump-licensed Buyers lost deposits when proposed Trump-licensed condos in Tijuana, Mexico, were never built. Currently, the developer is fighting the town of Rancho Palos Verdes in California over plans to build more homes at its luxury coastal golf course.

### Some say opposition ignored

Some say opposition ignored
Opponents on The Point
deal have held meetings, organized email campaigns and
consulted with attorneys over
stopping the sale.
These residents say they believe the board didn't follow
correct procedure when they
started negotiating with the
Trump Organization.
One golf club consultant
without ties to The Point says
he sent the board a proposal
from investors to buy the club,
but that the board has not
shared the information with
the membership.
Rob Derry, who is based in
south Florida, said he sent a
proposal in January to three of

Rob Derry, who is based in south Florida, said he sent a proposal in January to three of the club's board members of fering to pay \$3 million. The investors pledged to make at least \$2 million in capital improvements and not to rebrand the club's image, according to the proposal. Derry said he received no response and his clients saying they preferred to Derry declined to name his clients saying they preferred to remain anonymous, but said they were backed by Wall Street capital.

"We are being ignored," Derry said. "We don't do drama. We just want to buy the place."

place."
Grove, the club president,

said he couldn't comment on Derry's proposal because "we don't believe any of our cur-rent board members have re-ceived such an offer." Carter, the retiree home-owner, said he and others also

approached the board and told approached the board and told members they were willing to buy the club for \$3 million. Carter said his group offered to sell the club back to members after three years for the \$3 million sales price plus 5 percent a year interest. He said a board member told him the group wasn't interested.

year interest. He said a John member told him the group wasn't interested.

"I chose the Nantucket look, the lake, the people," Carter said, explaining why he chose to buy a home in The Point. "I don't want it to change."

Grove said Carter has never presented any written offers to purchase the club assets.

"Our board and the prior advisory board has solicited, received and considered several offers to purchase or lease the club, and we have determined the Trump offer to be superior to all such other offers," Grove said.

to all such other offers," Grove said.

If club members vote to sell, the deal could close by the end of March, according to documents distributed by the board.

One homeowner who said he hasn't decided how he will vote, said he's looking forward to getting more information. He said he's heard good and bad anecdotes about being associated with Trump.
"Everyone should be entitled to share their thoughts but we should be more openminded about it and not be driven by scare tactics and emotions," he said. "It should not be an emotional discussion."

—STAFF RESEARCHER MARIA DAVID

— STAFF RESEARCHER MARIA DAVID CONTRIBUTED.

# Egypt sets trial date for Americans

BEN HUBBARD

Associated Press
CAIRO — Egypt said Saturday
the criminal trial of 16 Americans and 27 others will start
Feb. 26 in a politically charged
case against foreign-funded
pro-democracy groups that
has badly shaken Cairo's ties
with Washington.
The trial represents as exact.

with Washington.

The trial represents an escalation in what has become the deepest crisis in U.S.-Egypt relation in what has become the deepest crisis in U.S.-Egypt relations in decades. American officials have threatened to cut \$1.5 billion in aid over the spat, and high-level officials have flown in to seek a solution. Egyptian authorities have responded by blasting what they call U.S. meddling in legal affairs.

Egypt's state news agency said Saturday the trial of 43 defendants in the case will begin Feb. 26. The report said 16 oft be defendants are Egyptians, 19 are Americans, Palestinians and Jordanians. The U.S. State Department has said 16 Americans are facing trial.

Only seven of the Americans are in Egypt, and all have heave the great from true.

cans are in Egypt, and all have been barred from travel.

