

Goldman and Oaktree buy into Global Leisure

By Martin Arnold

Global Leisure Partners, the investment boutique that has worked on the biggest recent casino buy-outs in the US, Europe and Asia, yesterday said it had sold "passive minority stakes" to Goldman Sachs and Oaktree Capital Management.

The investments underline the rapid rise of GLP since it was founded in 2004 by Mark Harms, the former head of consumer industries at Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce.

Goldman and Oaktree are understood to be investing less than £10m for a single-digit stake in the company, which specialises in leisure investments. They have also

agreed to provide equity capital to co-invest on GLP deals.

Mr Harms, who spent most of his career at Oppenheimer before it was bought by CIBC in 1997, put his own money into the firm and has since collected secondary investments from executives in the leisure sector.

The firm's network of 38 investors include:

- Alan Goodenough, former chairman of London Clubs International.
- John Donaldson, former chief executive of The Thomas Cook Group.
- Bob Scott, former chief executive of Coral Eurobet.
- Michael Balfour, former chief executive of Fitness First.



Alan Goodenough: former London Clubs chairman



Michael Balfour: was chief executive of Fitness First



John Donaldson: former Thomas Cook chief

- Lady Judge, chairman of the UK Atomic Energy Authority.

GLP advised Permira on its \$840m (£408m) acquisition of a 20 per cent stake in Galaxy Entertainment, the Macau-based casino operator. It also worked on the \$30bn buy-out of Harrah's, the world's biggest casino operator, by Apollo, and the

\$8bn merger to create Gala Coral, the UK bingo and betting group.

Mr Harms said the investments from Goldman and Oaktree would "further our evolution from an advisory business to one that does both advisory and acts as a principle investor".

He said GLP had committed about \$200m to co-invest-

ments in the deals it has advised on and forecast that it could invest in smaller deals of its own with Goldman and Oaktree in the future.

David Giampaolo, chairman of Pi Capital and an investor in GLP, said: "They have very quickly ended up doing mega deals because of their deep experience."