

THE NATION'S NEWSPAPER

USA TODAY

NO. 1 IN THE USA . . . FIRST IN DAILY READERS

®

MONDAY, APRIL 5, 1993

NEWSLINE

Finder wants lots of green for emerald

By Carl Weiser
USA TODAY

A restaurateur says he has found the legendary 964-carat Isabella Emerald — and hopes to sell the gem for at least \$20 million.

Victor Benilous, who says psychics helped him, salvaged the gem from a 1750-era shipwreck off Florida's Atlantic coast.

"Hopefully, somebody will buy it," says

Benilous, 42, of West Palm Beach, Fla.

Former University of Chicago gem expert Alex Bush says the stone is a "famous find."

Benilous says Hernando Cortes intended to use the emerald to entice Queen Isabella of Spain to back his explorations in Mexico.

Its history turns murky, but the gem was later bought by a wealthy family that registered it as cargo on the ship. The family's descendants hired him, says Benilous.



By David Berek, AP
EMERALD: Dates to 1500s