McALESTER, Okla. — Thunder-creek Golf Course project manager Sam Green thinks an 18-hole course here could be open May 1. Green said March will be a big month. "If we avoid bad weather, sprigging and seeding should be done in late February or early March. This will allow the grass to have a long time to be playable by May 1."

MARYSVILLE, Ohio — Richard B. Stahl has been named senior vice president of The Scotts Company. Stahl, who joined Scotts in 1967, will be responsible for integrating Grace Sierra, Scotts' most recent acquisition, into the organization and providing for an orderly transition of management of the Professional Business Group. Stahl will also continue to serve as Scotts representative in RISE, NACA and the GCSAA.

PALM BAY, Fla. — The City Council and the Recreation Advisory Board here plan to huddle with representatives of four firms vying to design Palm Bay's proposed golf course. If approved, the course would be built on a vacant parcel south of City Hall. The applicants are Clifton, Eisel and Clifton Golf Design Group of Deltona; Ronald M. Garl Golf Course Design Inc. of Lake- ridge; Sanford & Associates of Jupiter; and Robert Trent Jones II of Palo Alto, Calif.

ARBUCKLE, Calif. — A golf course aimed to please and keep youth on the right track has been proposed for a site west of this town, 45 miles north of Sacramento. The Elite Golf Club, formed by Pittsburg's Jess Turner in 1988 to get youths interested in golf instead of bad weather, striping and seeding should be done in late February or early March. This will allow the grass to have a long time to be playable by May 1."

G OLETA, Calif. — The California Coastal Commission will choose between surfers, seals and slices this April.

That's when it will hear an appeal filed by the Surfrider Foundation challenging the local government's approval of Atlantic Richfield Co.'s proposed golf course on an oil drilling facility west of the city.

Surfers have traditionally tresspassed over the private property to reach beaches near Naples Reef. Their organization claims a golf course will force them to hold back. They also claim errant balls can pose a threat to the harbor seal rookery at the base of the 50-foot cliffs.

ARCO counters that the Ben Crenshaw/Bill Coore-designed Dos Pueblos Golf Links will beautify the ravaged site. The company has offered to build two paths surfers can use to reach the beach. And it believes surfboards are more dangerous to the nesting seals than the occasional mis-hit golf ball.

"We've offered to provide public access, but within our budget constraints," noted Whit Hollis, ARCO's local manager of land services. Hollis said surfers and the Coastal Commission do not want ARCO to build, maintain and staff the trail around the clock to insure user safety.

"We don't want or feel it's fair for ARCO to absorb that cost," Hollis added.

ARCO presented plans for an 18-hole championship course, nine-hole par-3, club-house and seven-acre paved parking lot last year. The price tag for the 250-acre project was $10 million.

The Santa Barbara County supervisors unanimously approved Dos Pueblos last August. ARCO was therefore fairly confident the Coastal Commission would approve the concept when it met in December. But to the company's surprise, the Coastal Commission staff recommended vetoing the project.

The reason was zoning. The land was rezoned for agricultural use several years ago, even though it hasn't been used for farming since the 1920s.

Fearing a golf course would erode the area's rural atmosphere by encouraging neighboring development, the Coastal Commission staff recommended against allowing a golf course on the rural-zoned property.

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In light of the staff's findings, which weren't available until early January, ARCO asked the full Commission to delay its decision until April, giving the company an opportunity to address zoning concerns.

"The staff said the property must first be rezoned for recreational use before it could recommend approving the project," Hollis said. "We believe current zoning regulations..."
Who's got the buying power?

Continued from page 1

first came to E-Z-GO,” said Ron Skeness, the firm's communications manager. "If our sales representative has done his homework, he'll know who the decision-makers are. But it's very fragmented.”

Skenes explained that an exit poll conducted after the 1993 GC-SAA show indicated 26 percent of superintendents claim they make the golf car buying decisions. A similar survey at the '93 PGA Merchandise Show indicated 25 percent of the professionals claim they do.

While there are no hard-and-fast rules, the identity of the decision-maker generally varies by region, according to manufacturer representatives.

"In the Midwest, superintendents tend to be more involved in that type of decision," said Skeness. "Why?"

"I'm not sure," he said. "Ernie Stock, ClubCar's Southwestern sales manager, has a theory: "With the strong influence of turf schools like Penn State and Ohio State, superintendents in the Northeast and Midwest often have a big influence in purchasing all rolling stock."

"In the Sunbelt, it's more likely to be the club manager or pro."

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Dos Pueblos

Continued from page 3

tions allow a golf course on agriculturally zoned land.

"If the Commission denied the permit in April, we'd have to decide whether to litigate or seek a rezoning. Either way, we are committed to the project." Local government officials see the course helping the environment, Hollis said. Aging petroleum equipment would be removed, the site cleaned and native grasses planted wherever possible, he explained.

The ARCO representative noted the course would use wastewater from a $22 million reclamation facility expected to operate at no more than 25 percent of capacity when it opens later this year.

As for the course construction itself, Coore and Crenshaw are proud of minimal earthmoving. Approximately 100,000 cubic yards will be relocated at Dos Pueblos.

"There will be a short-term dust emission at worst," Hollis said.

"Pros are generally losing some clout, at least in Texas, according to Rodney Schenk, a sales representative in E-Z-GO's Houston operation.

"Boards seem to be relying on the recommendation of the general manager rather than the pro in our area," he said. "I like dealing with superintendents because they generally have complete control over their utility vehicles. As for golf cars, in the Houston area, anyway, I'd say general managers make 60 percent of the decisions, the pro 35 percent and superintendents 5 percent."

Todd Sauey, president of Columbia ParCars, sees the market as segmented, but fairly regimented within each classification. Excluding fleet purchases — where management companies make bulk purchases — Sauey believes the market breaks down this way:

Owners generally make the golf car buying decisions at daily-fee courses, with input from the pro and superintendent. At private country clubs, the pro or club manager advises the green committee, which usually has final say. At resort facilities, where the top executives are not as heavily involved in the golf operation, superintendents and professionals share purchasing power. At municipal courses, pros have more consultative power — but the city controller signs off on everything.

While attending all three trade shows is time-consuming and costly, the manufacturers all expect to continue doing so.

"We want to show our support for each group," Melex's Moran explained. "Tell our salespeople to never ignore the superintendent, club manager or pro. If two of them have left when the club's about to make a buying decision, you still have a friend in the third."

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