

Sometimes, the story changes in midstream



Hal Phillips,
editor

Reporters will tell you that, sometimes, a news story begins and ends exactly as you might expect. Other times the research and conversations lead you to more interesting subjects, changing the story and the reporter's original line of inquiry.

Such was the case with this month's front-page story on factory direct sales, which started as an analysis of direct marketing in the golf course industry and wound up detailing the slow-but-sure consolidation of distribution channels.

The two phenomena are related, of course. As smaller independent distributorships are gobbled up by larger firms searching for ever more efficiencies, access to the marketplace narrows — especially for smaller manufacturers whose lines might not be lucrative enough to command space on the shelves.

This last point I discovered while researching the subject of direct marketing. The epiphany? All these smaller companies were going factory-direct because they **had** to go factory-direct. They were losing access to distributors, and thus losing access to superintendents.

Of course, many on the floor in the San Francisco will be golf course distributors. I look forward to hearing their strong opinions on the subject.

One name that kept cropping up during my research was Terra International, Inc. This Sioux City, Iowa-based firm has been on a spending spree lately, adding staff (the firm has gone from 27 to 62 sales representatives since 1992) and buying up distributorships: Turf World of Houston, Bi-State Turf of Danville, Ill., Androc Products of Medford, Minn., and Asgrow Florida with its 15 in-state locations.

Two things to keep in mind as we gather in San Francisco:

- First, firms like Terra will become increasingly common as the millennium approaches. Larger firms have growth on the brain and many will go public to fund strategic, market-segmented expansions like Terra's.

- Second, Chuck Champion of Kalo, Inc. was right: Some day superintendents will have the option of buying everything via catalog. The increasing sophistication of mower and irrigation technology will always bind superintendents to their distributors. But that relationship will become less important over time, as superintendents make more and more purchases over the phone.

Hey, that's a great idea! The Course Shopping Network. Where's Barry Diller when you need him? Maybe they can get time on the new Golf Channel...

Continued on page 18

Letters

GREENS ROLLING SYSTEMS ARE NOT THE SAME

To the editor:

Golf Course News, over the past couple of years, published several stories on greens rolling techniques [GCN August & October '94]. However, we at Turfline know all superintendents have not been educated in comparing our True Surface Vibratory Greens Rolling System apart from other rollers. Quickly, here's the difference.

True-Surface units are installed on triplex mowers in place of the cutting units and they produce high-frequency, minimal weight vibrations. The following are a few key advantages of vibration:

- Low roller weight: We use a 55-pound roller that will not strain the frame or lift cylinders on the greensmower. Vibration will firm and true the surface better than physical weight.

- Speed: You can roll a green with units faster than it can be mowed with a triplex mower. No

operator training required.

- Controllable results: Vibration allows you to vary the results of the operation to match the requirements. Rolling speed can be controlled either with the hydrostatic foot pedal or with variable-speed kits. This feature allows you to control the green speed, and true the surface following aerification, spiking, topdressing or overseeding.

- Grow in: Vibration allows

new greens to be in playing condition 30 days earlier. Walk mowers were not used and greens were firm and smooth enough to use triplex mowers.

- Topdressing: Vibration following dragging or brushing virtually eliminates sand from the turf canopy. The sand falls through just before the roller gets to it, thus minimizing bruising.

Greens rolling, a practice re-introduced in recent years pri-

marily as a speed enhancing device, has now become an integral tool for overall greens management.

The development of the True-Surface Greens Rolling System is the next step. It is the direct result of the imagination, innovation and effort typical of golf course superintendents.

Steve Wilson, sales manager
Turfline, Inc.
St. Charles, Mo.

COMMERCIAL PUMP SETS RECORD STRAIGHT

To the editor:

I am writing to you in regards to your article in the October issue titled, "Irrigation design, pump house technology continue to meet, or exceed, industry standards." In the listing you provided of pump station manufacturers, Commercial Pump was not included. We feel this was a major oversight and would like to be included in any upcoming articles relating to our industry.

Commercial Pump has been manufacturing pre-fabricated pumping stations, automated control packages and control components for turf irrigation systems for over 13 years and

has over 1,000 customers.

Thank you for allowing us to introduce ourselves. We look forward to the prospect of contributing to your next golf course irrigation article.

Whittnae Schultz
Marketing Administrator
Commercial Pump Services, Inc.
Swanton, Ohio

Ed. We regret the error. The staff here at *Golf Course News* was under the impression that *Commercial Pump Service, Inc.* had continued its strategic marketing alliance with *Hartland, Wis.-based Watertronics, Inc.*, and so listed only the latter. According to Schultz, this agreement has since expired.

Golf and its opponents are finally listening; to each other

Could January's meeting of the environmental and golf communities at Pebble Beach signify a new leaf? Can the association (National Wildlife Federation) whose former President Jay Hair once declared, "This big, booming business, agriculture, is also killing the world; I mean that literally" have come to its senses? Indeed, it co-organized the conference.

Can the organization (Sierra Club) which once accused the Farm Bureau and other groups of conducting a "massive and brutally destructive anti-environmental onslaught" have recognized the fallacies of its past? Indeed, it was represented at the meeting.

Can the group (Friends of the Earth) whose founder, David Brower, once said: "Loggers losing their jobs because of spotted owl legislation is, in my eyes, no different than people being out of work after the furnaces of Dachau shut down" actually speak coherently less than three years after that Sept. 23, 1992, statement? Indeed, the Friends' current president, Brent Blackwelder, is an intelligent guy who even knows something about golf — he reportedly attended college on a golf scholarship.

Hey, anything can happen when reconciliation — no, make that a willingness to listen — is in the air.

"In many ways they ought to be allies," said Paul Parker of the Center for Resource Management of Salt Lake City, conference co-organizer. "One thing that may surprise people is the fact that a lot of environmental people are golfers and a lot of golfers are environmentalists. There is a common bond there."

The fact that a lot of golfers are environmentalists would surprise exactly no one in the golf industry. But the fact it might surprise environmentalists illustrates, in part, the great divide that has existed between the two groups.

Boy, is there a lot of garbage (an appropriate term) at issue between them. But unless you're dealing with the devil, if you want to cohabitate, it's best you at least meet. So, meet they have. Now we shall watch and decipher the fallout from the Pebble Beach session (see story, page 4).

The sensible people in both communities would harbor the same hopes as Ron Dodson, president of the progressive New York Audubon Society, which has worked cooperatively with the golf industry for several years now.



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

Continued on page 68

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Editorial Office
Golf Course News
PO Box 997
38 Lafayette Street
Yarmouth, ME 04096
207-846-0600; Fax: 207-846-0657

Advertising Office
National Sales:
Charles E. von Brecht
227 Second Avenue North
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
813-898-7077; Fax: 813-825-0923

Western Sales:
Robert Sanner
Western Territory Manager
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Lawrence, KS 66046
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Marketplace Sales:
Mary Anderson
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Golf Course Expo Sales
Michael Lafaso
207-846-0600; Fax: 207-846-0657

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Phillips commentary

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A word of caution, reiterating a point from Peter Blais' front-page story on the GOP-controlled Congress. Agencies like Environmental Protection and Land Management will play key roles for the Clinton Administration, as it tries to make political hay-making end runs around Gingrich & Co. Agencies are not subject to Congressional oversight, as anyone in the Reagan and Bush administrations will tell you...

...

San Francisco is one of my all-time favorite cities. Three quick suggestions on where to enjoy some atmosphere and perhaps a libation: **Vesuvio's** on Columbus, right next to City

Lights book store, provides a bar experience you won't soon forget. Emphasis on the funky here. Great beer selection, throwback decor, and just about anybody is liable to walk in. Bring your own Whole Earth Catalog.

For the more traditional tavern experience, try **Tosca**, located just down the street from Vesuvio's, also on Columbus. A real '40s-style long bar. Edward G. Robinson would be right at home here.

If you have a car and feel like getting out of the city, sample the **Pelican Inn** in Muir Beach. Located across the Golden Gate Bridge in Marin County, The Pelican is a beautiful country inn with a genuine British-style pub attached, complete with darts and short stools. Further, the food served in the dining room is first-rate and reasonable.

Douglas: Golf and the Calif. Coast

Continued from page 17

Act public-access policies.

When a new golf course is proposed for a coastal location, the threshold question is the appropriateness of the land use and its compatibility with surrounding uses. Once these questions has been answered; other, more project-specific concerns must be addressed. Based on our experience, golf courses designed in an environmentally sensitive manner are much less likely to raise significant Coastal Act

problems. Early consultation with local government and Commission staff, before a design is fixed, most often yields timely identification and resolution of potential problems. The Commission, to the extent its limited staffing resources allow, is committed to and encourages such consultation.

Although each project is unique and raises different concerns, some basic principles of design can facilitate coastal development permit approval.

- Select a suitable location that minimizes potential conflicts with surrounding uses and underlying existing uses such as agriculture. Respect urban-rural limit lines and avoid use of prime agricultural lands.

- Maximize opportunities for public access across, around and along the project. A recently approved golf course in Santa Barbara County (the ARCO project) and the Links at Spanish Bay in Del Monte Forest — both Commission-approved projects — are good examples of this principle.

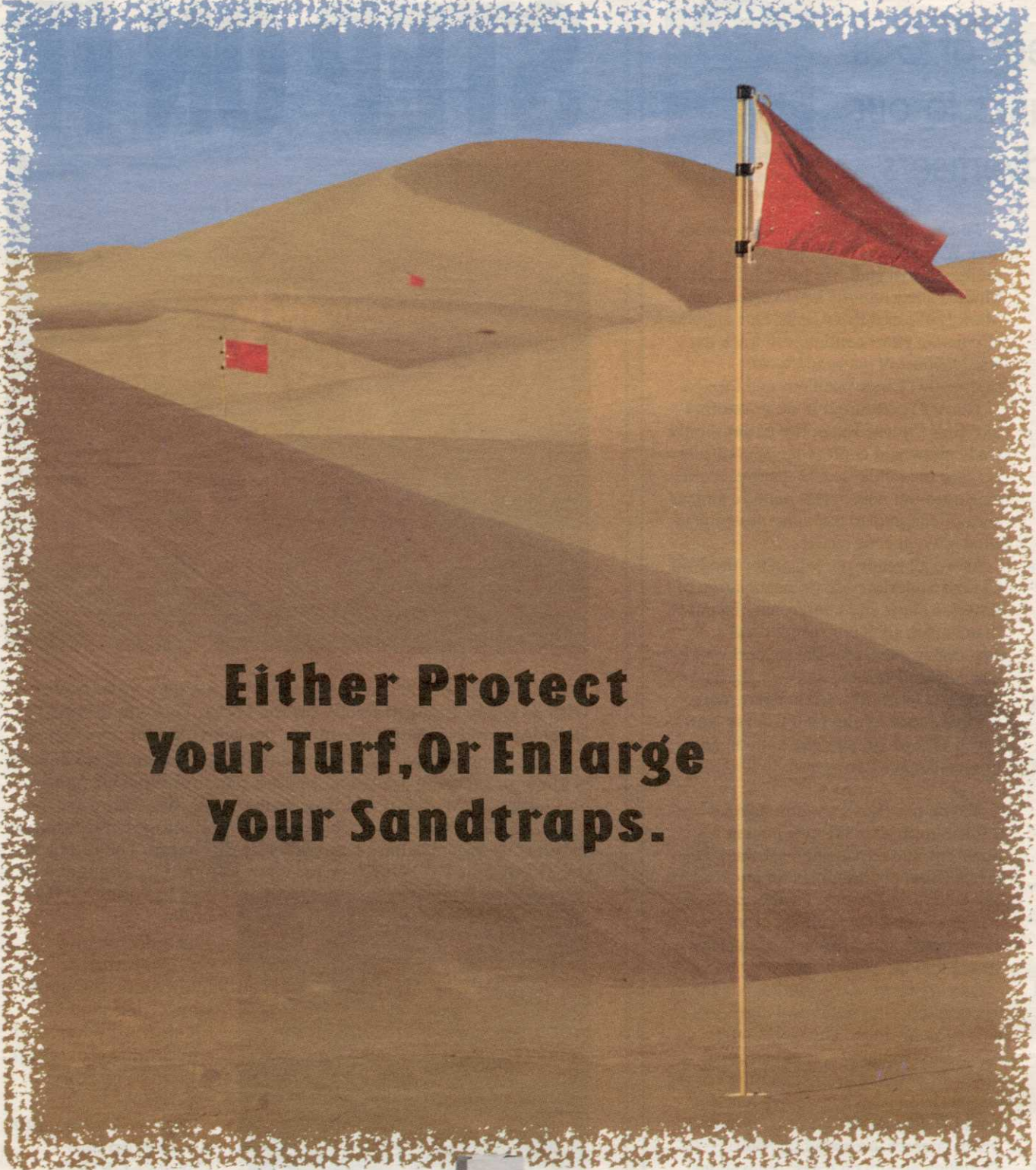
- To the maximum extent feasible, let nature guide the design. Natural features such as tree cover, streams and ponds, and sand dunes, should be preserved to the extent possible and land-form alteration should be minimized. Environmentally sensitive habitat areas should not be disturbed.

- Habitat values should be preserved, mitigated and/or enhanced. Project design should take into account wildlife corridors, feeding, breeding, nesting and roosting areas and the benefits of using native plants. The Links at Spanish Bay again provide a good example.

- Issues relating to water supply and quality must be addressed. The use of reclaimed water is desirable and project design should minimize dependence on potentially polluting chemicals.

- Provisions to protect the land in perpetuity from subdivision or conversion to other types of development in the future are also important. The ARCO project was approved by the Commission in large part because such a provision was incorporated into the project.

Careful, creatively designed and managed golf course projects can be both environmentally beneficial and economically rewarding. The Commission staff stands ready to help project developers meet those goals in a way that has enduring value for all those who cherish the California Coast.



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