

## Here's the poop: Fertilizer business is really hopping



Hal Phillips,  
editor

**Y**ou only need to hit me over the head three, maybe four times before I begin to sense something is afoot. I speak of the fertilizer industry, where big things are happening. To wit:

- East recently met west when **Pursell Industries** of Sylacauga, Ala., entered into an alliance with **J.R. Simplot** of Pocatello, Idaho, to manufacture fertilizers for the turfgrass, nursery, consumer and agriculture markets. Pursell, best known for its controlled-release product, Polyon, has supplied fertilizers to Simplot for 10 years. Simplot is known for its phosphate fertilizers marketed under the Best and Apex labels, aimed somewhat to the turf industry, but mostly to agricultural and retail markets. This new agreement makes both firms national players, giving them the strength to compete with newly rejuvenated...

- **Vigoro Corp.**, which has overhauled its ParEx brand line with new management, manufacturing arrangements, public stock offerings and market emphases. "I think you're being kind if you say there has been a decline in the impact of ParEx over the past two years," said Ron Gagne, Vigoro's new vice president and general manager of the firm's Professional Products Unit. "We have created a separate division with separate manufacturing facilities for the turf business. That explains some of the reorganization." Gagne comes to Vigoro from competitor O.M. Scott. Indeed, Gagne reports to another former Scott employee, Senior Vice President Ken Holbrook, prompting a few industry wags to call the new regime, "O.M. Vigoro." Alas, Vigoro has also hired a new chief financial officer for its Pro unit, Jay Ferguson, and he's not from Marysville, Ohio. He's a 20-year veteran of General Electric. Look for Vigoro to debut its new slow-release nitrogen nutrient, IBDU, early next year. Also look for the firm to concentrate on selling to the management companies with larger course portfolios.

- When it comes to models, you could do worse than **O.M. Scott**, the fertilizer giant which continues to capitalize on its double brand equity. Consumers know Scott, as do superintendents. Scott's title sponsorship of the Senior PGA Tour's Tradi-

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## Living long and prospering in the golf course universe

**'T**he Star Ship Enterprise, going places where no one has ever gone before." Fast-forward that film, please, to the new series. Yes. That's it: "Golf Ship Enterprise, taking golf to places it has never gone before."

Can you hear *Star Trek* originator Gene Roddenberry now? I can ... almost. Because it is true: Even this late in history, citizens of Golf Nation are taking the game to parts of this earth where not even those Scots of old had introduced it.

No, not everyone in the world plays golf. In fact, not everyone even knows what in the world golf is. In some places folks are just happy if they know what **food** is; their minds are otherwise occupied than with this game. For them, it could be far more than a game. It could be food in their mouths.

In the Dominican Republic, golf course architect Pete Dye is the Man Who Could Be King. The Teeth of the Dog and Links courses he designed at Casa de Campo, built in 1971 and 1976, have brought employment to many.

Jobs, jobs, jobs ... as well as sport, sport, sport. We just need a few more crewmen aboard Golf Ship Enterprise.

There were heroes of the past who hot-trotted the globe with visions of golf courses on topographical maps rolled under their arms. Their numbers are legion, and some of them are legend. They took golf wherever they could find the land and the equipment to build a few holes: From Alister Mackenzie and C.H. Alison to Peter Thomson and Robert Trent Jones Sr.

But they didn't reach every nook and cranny. And today the heroes of this tradition may even come from the masses — the dedicated masses of people who want to share the experience golf has given them with others.

Let's take a quick look at one such person, my Maine main example: Dr. Steve Polackwich. An 80-year-old retired optometrist, former Maine Amateur and three-time New England Senior champion, Polackwich traveled this summer to Poland — one of those countries barren of golf. His mission was twofold: visit family and talk about golf's possibilities in that country with Juliusz Sochan, deputy director of the Department of Interna-



Mark Leslie,  
managing editor

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## Letters

### POROUS CERAMIC FOLLOW-UP

To the editor:

I certainly enjoyed reading the articles about porous ceramics in the September issue. It is most gratifying to know that the industry is beginning to take notice of what I perceive to be an extremely important advance in soils management and root-zone engineering. I would like to offer some clarification in a few areas that were addressed in the article, if I may.

I think it is important to state that porous ceramics and organics are not necessarily in competition with each other. They may, in fact, be complementary in many instances. In some sands, porous ceramics may be all that is required. In others, it is desirable to include both types of materials in order to achieve the most ideal balances. The goal is to create a root-zone mix that has excellent water-holding characteristics while maintaining very high percolation rates and to use whatever materials it takes to accomplish those objectives. Porous ceramics offer the advantage of being permanent, while organics change due to biodegradation.

Another comment centered around the differences between "calcite and clay" vs. diatomaceous earth products. The

proper term is calcined clay; also calcined diatomaceous earth. The calcining process is the firing process, which renders the materials physically and chemically stable. By definition, calcining is heating a material up to, but just short of, the melting point. The amount of time and the exact temperatures are extremely important to properly calcine a material. Profile is double-calcined, while Isolite and Axis are calcined once. Also, because of the difference in base materials, Profile will increase CEC, while the diatomaceous products will not. Soil pH is also affected differently, due to pH differentials between the base materials.

Lastly, I would like to comment on Ed Seay's statement regarding the elimination of rock and tile. This is certainly a possibility with the increased flexibility that porous ceramics provide, but it would not apply in all cases. Existing soil types and climatic conditions must be factored in before making this type of decision.

We should remember, however, that some of the most outstanding greens in this country have no sub-surface drainage. They exist on some of the fine old golf courses and were built long before the USGA concept was introduced. The Denver

Country Club, where I was once the superintendent, is a prime example.

It is my hope that the industry will not look at porous ceramics, per se, as simply a new product in the marketplace. The emerging technology surrounding these materials needs to be understood and intelligently applied in the golf and sport turf industries. The result will be better golf, safer fields and more environmentally sound turf.

Lou Haines, director  
Technical Operations  
Soils Management  
Technologies

### SCHOOL POLICY?

To the editor

Enclosed is a copy of a letter written by my 10-year-old nephew. He was involved in a class debate at school. This child was coached by his adult leaders to present this point of view.

Aside from the fact that this is a form of child exploitation, the promotion of this kind of mis- and disinformation creates a major public-relations problem for the golf course development industry. Children trust their leaders and tend to accept what they say at face value. How can the industry compete against that kind of power? What will the results be a few years down the

road when these children become adults who will decide the fate of proposed golf course developments?

This confirms my opinion that there are those in the environmental movement who will stop at nothing to impose their views on the rest of us. We in the golf course development industry cannot afford to be complacent in the face of this kind of activity. It is critical that steps be taken to combat this type of brainwashing and educate the general public to the truth about our industry.

Dan Nolan  
Kajima Engineering and  
Construction, Inc.  
Golf Division

### Patrick's Speech

Today's topic is the golf course. We would like to debate the golf course coming to the beautiful San Ynez Valley. This would be a problem because they will tear down the trees and wreck the environment. Animals homes will be destroyed, and many new drunk drivers will fill the streets. The air will be filled with pollution from the cars and new buildings that will be built. Because of the pollution people will get sick and possibly die, basically what we're trying to tell you is we want to keep this beautiful land from turning into LA. Thank you.

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

THE NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

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**Subscription Information**  
Golf Course News  
P.O. Box 3047  
Langhorne, PA 19047  
215-788-7112

**United Publications, Inc.**  
Publishers of specialized business and consumer magazines.  
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## Leslie comment

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tional Relations' State Sports and Tourism Administration.

Polackwich came away from his meeting with Sochan saying: "To me personally, it's a four-star deal, bringing golf to my ancestral country, because golf has done so much for me... This is a seed. My basic idea is creating golf for juniors. That would later translate to adults."

His forecast for Poland? "They want to wait for the economy to stabilize. Then they can build golf courses to complement other tourist attractions, like their great ski areas. They have 3 million visitors a year to [ski area] Zarkopani alone."

Golf Nation could use a few more Steve Polackwiches — Golf Ambassadors who take it upon themselves (even when they're vacationing in their ancestral lands) to expound on the virtues of golf.

The world is ripe for the invasion of golf:

- It took 20 years for Moscow to get its golf course after Robert Trent Jones Sr. and Jr. first traveled there. How long for Steve Polackwich in Poland?

- Arnold Palmer in 1985 opened the Bamboo Curtain long enough to design Chung Shan Golf Course in China, with Ed Seay and Bob Walker. J. Michael Poellot and Brad Benz did a couple more in 1987-88. Now golf is bur-

geoning there, with 11 courses in the ground and more than 80 under construction or in planning.

- Israel has but one golf course, yet may boast a half-dozen in another year or two.

- Egypt had only 36 holes for the longest time. But architect Larry Packard is doubling that.

- Golf is being revisited in a big way in India, where it has been long lost despite having perhaps the world's oldest golf club outside the UK, Royal Calcutta, formed in 1829.

- Even in Yugoslavia — even as bombs burst within earshot — officials dreamed of golf development a couple of years ago.

Roll the film. I want to see that ending.

Checking out where various course architects have taken golf can send you flipping through your atlas. A smattering: Alister Mackenzie in Uruguay, Harry Colt in Trinidad; C.H. Alison in Malaysia (1931); James Braid in Singapore (1924); Percy Clifford in Mexico and Colombia; George Cobb in the Bahamas (1965); George Fazio in Panama (1974); Gary Player in Bophutatswana (1979); Rees Jones in Namibia (1977); Robert Trent Jones Sr. in Guadeloupe (1977), Brazil (1958) and Sardinia (1972); Jack Nicklaus in the Cayman Islands (1985); Willie Park in Monaco (1917); Seth Raynor in Bermuda (1924); and Ron Fream in St. Kitts, Fiji, Brunei...

In this month's question-and-answer feature (see page 37), course architect Greg Nash bemoaned the fact that the golf cart and lack of caddies have changed how people look at golf courses.

"I changed a lot of my design philosophy the day I played Pinehurst No. 2, which you can't take a cart on," he said. "When you walk that golf course, it is astounding to see all the undulations and depressions that Donald Ross designed that you never would see if you were riding a cart, and the impact of the way the golf hole plays."

"I came to a realization that there were a lot of little things I'd been missing because I'd never seen or felt them. So I started putting them into my designs. It's amazing the intricacies and subtleties on the courses in the UK that you don't see over here."

**Golf and Recreational Finance is proud to announce it closed or committed \$81,150,000 in loans in the first ten months of 1995.**



A NationsBank Company

**\$7,000,000 - NORTHGATE COUNTRY CLUB, Houston, TX**  
*Refinance of an 18-hole private course.*

**\$3,400,000 - THE LINKS GROUP, Myrtle Beach, SC**  
*Refinance of leases on 144 holes of golf plus a credit line for future acquisitions.*

**\$11,500,000 - THE LODGE OF FOUR SEASONS, Lake of the Ozarks, MO**  
*Refinance of a 311-room lodge, 211-slip marina and 45 holes of golf.*

**\$5,000,000 - KEMPER SPORTS MANAGEMENT, Chicago, IL**

**\$2,250,000 - OLDE POINT GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB, Wilmington, NC**  
*Refinance of an 18-hole public course plus construction funding for clubhouse expansion.*

**\$2,500,000 - GEORGETOWN COUNTRY CLUB, Georgetown, MA**  
*Refinance of a 9-hole public course plus construction funds for additional 9 holes.*

**\$3,500,000 - THE SEA RANCH GOLF LINKS, Sea Ranch, CA**  
*Refinance of a 9-hole public course plus construction financing for second nine holes.*

**\$2,400,000 - WHITTIER GC, Whittier, CA & VICTORIA GC, Los Angeles, CA**  
*Refinance of two 18-hole public courses.*

**\$5,000,000 - THE BEACH CLUB GOLF LINKS, Ocean City, MD**  
*Refinance of an 18-hole public golf course and construction financing of an additional 18-hole public course.*

**\$3,600,000 - THE HERITAGE GOLF CLUB, Atlanta, GA**  
*Construction financing for an 18-hole public golf course and a line of credit for new acquisitions.*

**\$5,200,000 - AVILA BEACH RESORT, San Luis Obispo, CA**  
*Refinance of an 18-hole resort golf course.*

**\$8,000,000 - CRYSTAL SPRINGS GC & BLACK BEAR GC, Sussex County, NJ**  
*Refinance of an 18-hole public golf course and construction financing of an additional 18-hole public course.*

**\$3,800,000 -- CHESTNUT HILL GC, Darien, NY & DEERFIELD CC, Rochester, NY**  
*One 18-hole & one 27-hole public course -- one loan to refinance one and acquire the other.*

**\$8,500,000 - ANGEL FIRE RESORT, near Taos, NM**  
*Acquisition of resort - ski mountain, 18-hole golf course, 157-room hotel, RV park, & assorted amenities.*

**\$9,500,000 - GOLF CLUB OF ILLINOIS, EAGLEBROOK CC & BURR HILL GC, Chicago, IL**  
*Loan to Southwest Golf to refinance 2 courses, acquire a 3rd, and provide a line for future acquisitions.*

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## Temperature

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geographic areas in the country.

In practical application, the hydrated ESN polymer is best described as elastic, very durable and resilient. This characteristic is very desirable in turf applications, including high traffic areas where many hard, shell-like controlled-release fertilizers are prone to shatter.

At the same time the polymer is transparent and thus a turf manager may visually monitor the liquefaction of the urea and be assured that adequate nitrogen is available to turf over time.

While moisture is important to the initial hydration of ESN, one of the fundamental advantages of the product is that after the initial hydration the rate of nutrient release is not affected by moisture.

The continuous polymer membrane enables the release of nutrients at a predictable rate regardless of the presence of either excessive or very little moisture.

In contrast, common controlled-release fertilizers are affected by moisture. Sulfur-coated urea, for example, will release more nutrients through holes and imperfections in its coating when increased moisture is present. Therefore, each time it rains or irrigation is applied, nutrient release increases and the accuracy of the stated longevity of the product comes under question.

Moisture also affects soil microbiological populations. These populations are difficult to predict with varying soil-moisture levels. The end result may be an unpredictable breakdown of the sulfur-coated urea, methylene urea and ureaform.

While ESN precision-controlled nitrogen may not solve all the problems turf managers face in today's hurry-up, do-it-better industry, it has shown under real world conditions that it can be a major factor in the production and maintenance of consistently beautiful turf.

GOLF COURSE NEWS