**Courses, supers withered by drought**

**By Mark Leslie**

There are 100-year floods and 100-year droughts. For some, this was a 100-year summer. It was drenching wet in Florida and Ohio. There was record-crunching heat and humidity in Pennsylvania. Dew points went through the roof in Minnesota. Everywhere from Delaware to the Midwest, golf courses got scorched.

"The only guys happy are west of the Rockies," said Golf Course Superintendent Association of America President Gary Grigg after a meeting of chapter representatives in Lawrence, Kan. "It's been drought in the Northeast, heat in the Midwest, rain in the South." [Director] Paul McGinnis said Arizona had a stretch of 47 days when the temperature was over 110 degrees.

"This was the worst summer I've ever seen for growing grass," said Terry Buchen of Double Eagle Club in Galena, Ohio. "We had so much rain, and the heat and humidity was the worst I've ever seen. The grass just cooked."

Cooked so badly that many golf courses closed down so crews could aerate and resod. People were hitting balls off bare soil at some facilities.

"If you had new greens with sand-based construction, generally you were fine," said Stan Zontek, director of the U.S. Golf Association Green Section (USGA) Mid-Atlantic Region.

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**Alumni key university development strategy**

**By Mark Leslie**

COLUMBIA, S.C. — In the Southeastern Conference (SEC), 75,000 to 100,000 fans pack football stadiums every Saturday in the fall. Now a unique concept in golf development, The University Club, aims to pack them in at new golf courses located at those same SEC schools.

Indeed, The University Club at University of South Carolina (USC) boasted a whopping 12,000-plus members when it opened its first 18 holes here on Sept. 15. A second University Club — this one at Louisiana State University — could register similar numbers when it opens in a year or so.

Targeting universities with "a fervent athletic supporter base," this new company, called The University Club, decided to concentrate first on the Southeastern Conference which leads the nation in attendance at football games.

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**Audubon targets public-access at Golf Course Expo**

**By Mark Leslie**

ORLANDO, Fla. — Sensing that the vast number of public-access golf course officials are not joining the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System because they believe it is cost-prohibitive, the Audubon Society of New York (ASNY) will address them in a special session during Golf Course Expo here, Nov. 9-10.

"Our program is not geared towards finding interesting ways for golf courses to spend even more money from an already dwindling budget," said ASNY President Ron Dodson. "But we want superintendents to consider conservation as a mechanism to save money. Generally, our program should be thought of not only as environmental but as cost-efficient as well."

The ASNY is one of several major associations

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**Golf Course Expo**

**Banc One goes sour on muni financing deals**

**By Peter Blais**

Banc One Leasing Corp., a major lending institution that helped finance approximately a dozen municipal golf facilities using municipal lease arrangements, has taken over or is negotiating with municipalities on four of those projects, according to a bank attorney.

The courses are located in Minnesota, Colorado, Iowa and California, said Jeffrey Ayres, senior attorney for Banc One Corp., the holding company for Banc One Leasing.

Continued on page 37
Banc One was eager to sell the project to the public. “We were hired to build the courses,” said Ayres. “In each case, we came in on time and on budget for the work we were contracted to do.”

• North Links Golf Course in North Mankato, Minn., opened its first nine holes in July 1995, a year before it was anticipated because of rainy weather during construction, according to Town Administrator Bob Ringhofer. Cart rentals were also below estimates, Ayres added. Ringhofer said the projections made in the feasibility study were optimistic to begin with since national rather than Minnesota figures were used in making the projections.

The caliber of the feasibility work is critical for any golf project, said consultant James McLoughlin of the Pleasantville, N.Y.-based McLoughlin Group. “Too many feasibility study outfits simply say ‘yes’ out of the box,” he said. Ayres said Banc One is actively seeking a consultant experienced in the management of any UST.

Banc One the past two years, Gundersen said. Floods and heavy rains damaged the course and curtailed play. “We did have a couple architects tell us it’s the poorest building job they’ve ever seen. We [city] made a lot of mistakes. But accepting the course as built in the first place was probably the biggest one... The city is still operating the course. But I don’t know how much longer we can.”

Neptune strongly disagreed with Gundersen regarding the quality of his company’s construction work. Any problems were the result of the city engineer’s changing of the architect’s plans. First Golf was ordered to go along with those alterations, he added.

We absolutely did a poor job on that golf course,” he said. “It was built to the specifications we were told to use. We did what we were hired to do and no one can document otherwise.”

Gundersen added that Banc One hasn’t been very supportive. “They wanted us to issue some junk bonds to fix up the course, but they wanted First Golf to do the work. They [First Golf] were the problem in the first place,” Ayres said he couldn’t comment on the Carter Lake situation since Banc One was still negotiating with the city.

“North Mankato and Carter Lake could have been refinanced properly to make both work for their municipalities,” Neptune said. “I think both will be successful in the long run.”

In the early 1990s, Banc One financed an additional nine holes and a sprucing up of the abandoned Appletree Golf Course in Fountain, Colo., to the tune of $3 million more.

The city and local investors operated Appletree for four years before taxpayers voted to turn it back over to the bank in January 1994, said City Finance Director Bill Clark. “We just wasn’t doing it any better,” Clark said. “The city ran it alone for a year, but it became clear it just wasn’t going to happen for us.”

Appletree never came close to reaching the 50,000 to 60,000 rounds projected in “overly optimistic” feasibility studies, Clark said. He blamed the course’s relatively isolated location, far from the main road and a dozen miles outside Colorado Springs, for the lack of play.

Ayres said Banc One is actively seeking a buyer for the course. “We’ve had a professional management company in there for the past two years and they’re doing well,” he said. “There are so many municipalities that are having to make tough decisions about how to spend their money. Taxpayers often view golf as a luxury and therefore responsible for UST cleanup costs.”

Lenders will be allowed to regularly monitor or investigate borrowers’ collateral, business condition and financial health. The lender may also require that the property be maintained in an environmentally sound manner as well as provide financial, administrative or other specific or general advice to clean up the property if contaminated.

Banc One, which provided $4.6 million in junk bonds to fix up the course, but they wanted First Golf to do the work. This [First Golf] were the problem in the first place,” Ayres said he couldn’t comment on the Carter Lake situation since Banc One was still negotiating with the city.

“The new nine opened 30 months ago. Total revenues have been less than projected largely because greens fees have been held artificially low, Goodman said.

Banc One has been involved in the venture from the outset.

Speaking of Asia-Pacific, expect a homecoming of sorts over the next few years, as American architects who’ve made their marks in the Pacific Rim look to secure more domestic contracts.

Many U.S. designers find it easier to cut their teeth abroad, where the pool of qualified native architects is, frankly, rather limited. Yet the call of America’s lucrative design market, not to mention the “luxury” of doing business closer to home and family, is beginning to pull them back. Examples: Ron Frehm, Nelson Wright Haworth, Perry Dye and J. Michael Poilott. Domestic golf course developers would be remiss if they failed to consider these four, and others like them, for U.S. design jobs. They’re experienced, innovative and, perhaps most important, they’re hungry.

**U.S. & banks**

Continued from page 35 security interest.

The lender would not be liable for cleanup costs from a contaminated property provided it does not engage in petroleum production; refining and marketing; participate in the management or operation of the UST; or store petroleum in the UST after foreclosure.

“It’s the right thing to do,” Rhodes said. “The old rule was excessive environmental protection. It hurt everyone from golf course owners to gas station owners. This gives lenders the safe harbor they need to make loans.”

The rule specifies a range of activities, including foreclosure, which lenders can undertake to manage and protect their collateral without being held responsible for compliance.

The rule also describes circumstances under which a financial institution would be considered to be participating in the management of any UST property and therefore responsible for UST cleanup costs.

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**Management**

**Phillips comment**

Continued from page 8 simply made applications impossible. Meanwhile, in the upper Midwest, the combination of oppressive heat and sky-rocketing dew points made for fungus heaven. Indeed, manufacturers could barely ship the fungicide fast enough.

Of course, it matters not what the adverse weather conditions might be — the superintendent faces the music without exception. That’s why Mark Leslie’s column (turn back to page 8) is so insightful this month. Go ahead: Give it a read... I can wait.

Apologies are due the Jacobsen Division of Textron, which was inadvertently left out of September’s report on the First International Hong Kong & China Golf Exhibition and Conference (page 39). Jacobsen will exhibit during the November show. Indeed, Jake has been involved in the venture from the outset.

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**See us at Golf Course Expo (booth #423) Nov. 9-10**

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