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JURASSIC GOLF?
Not exactly, but the new nine at Puddicombe-designed Dinosaur Trail Golf & Country Club in Drumheller, Alberta, Canada, is other-worldly. For story, see page 35.

Industry experts believe combating course vandalism requires more community involvement, not higher fences. For the story on this ail-too common problem, see page 17.

OF PIPES & PALMS
The PGA Club at The Reserve celebrated its Audubon Signature status with pomp & circumstance. See page 54.

VANDALISM: A COMMUNITY ISSUE
Easy credit drives GATX out of golf?
By PETER BLAIS
SAN FRANCISCO — In an ironic response to the improving financial climate for golf course development, GATX Capital Corp. will no longer make golf course loans, according to Vice President Roy Powell. GATX has traditionally loaned money in high leverage, high rate-of-return situations that traditional lenders (banks) typically shun, Powell said. GATX and companies like them were one of the few sources of capital during the late 1980s and early 1990s when traditional lenders, scared off by the depressed real-estate market, shied away from making golf-related loans.

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Big Fish/Little Fish: Jacobsen absorbs Bunton
By HAL PHILLIPS
LOUISVILLE, Ky. — If you believe consolidation indicates a healthy industry, the golf course business just got healthier.

In a move company officials claim will “increase its leadership role in the turf-maintenance industry,” Racine, Wis.-based Jacobsen Division of Textron, Inc. has acquired the Bunton Company, a manufacturer of turf equipment based here.

No significant upheaval is expected at Bunton in the near future, according to Bill Robson, interim general manager here at the firm’s Louisville headquarters. For the time being, Jacobsen distributors will handle Jake products and Bunton distributors will handle Bunton products, he said.

“That doesn’t mean that if a Jacobsen distributor wanted to sell Bunton, we wouldn’t look at it,” said Robson. “But right at the moment, nothing will change.”

With approximately 100 employees, Bunton’s 1995 sales were $19 million. According to Herb Henkel, Textron president, Bunton’s facility and employees will remain in Ken-
mixes and top dressing are superintendents Dan Dinelli of North Shore Country Club here and Scott Cybulski of Falmouth (Maine) Country Club.

The seed "jumped out of the ground," said Dinelli, when he used straight yard-waste compost mixed in with bentgrass seed in his tee and fairway divot mixes.

Acknowledging that his evidence is "anecdotal right now," Cybulski said he used a composted turkey manure, marketed as a fertilizer, as his top-dressing mix after aeration and said it "does wonders for the grass... It usually takes 10 to 15 days to be grown in. This took seven to nine. It was fast.

"It's not a soluble salt," he added. "It's something that is really hot, so that when you're grinding sand up against it, you're not breaking particle coatings or breaking down ammonium sulfate or anything that is going to burn. So it seems to be something that is going to work out well." "We can say for sure that if compost's effectiveness is related to microbiological changes and that microbiology is a key to understanding why it works," Dinelli said.

"It is a tough problem to crack. I've been working on it for nine years and it took seven years to get to the point where we can ask that question and have the techniques to answer it." Dinelli added that compared to the normal straight sand or 80-20 sand/vermicompost, compost's superior water retention accounts for some of the improvement in grass growth.

Poultry-based compost, he said, "has a wider spectrum of activity. Part of the reason is that there are chemical factors that actually provide disease suppressiveness, too — mainly ammonia. Yard waste serves the purpose of increased water holding. But it wouldn't affect disease suppression." Yard-waste compost is more of a soil amendment than a fertilizer like poultry compost, said Dinelli. "They address two different issues. But they both harbor carbon and other nutrients. Carbon is the organic matter in all these products that helps drive and elevate the microbial activity.

"In the past we always used our 80-20 top-dressing mix. The difference is like night and day. The divots heal roughly four times faster than with any other method we've used." With his yard-waste compost, Dinelli said: "In 10 to 14 days the divot has green fuzz where you can't see the black soil unless you're on top of it. In the old mix, a few seedlings would come up, but we would have as much bentgrass encroachment from along the perimeter of the divot. Using straight compost, I feel confident that the majority of the grass that fills back in is the actual seed you're using and you're not relying on encroachment from the side.

"Using the normal sandy-type soil that tends to dry out quickly, how do you manage many newly seeded little areas? You're not giving those little seedlings much advantage."

Top dressing with sand and adding the composted turkey manure on top, helps, Cybulski said. "Top dressing is messy anyway, nobody's worried about the organic fertilizer."

Saying that superintendents can encounter "real problems creating compost themselves if they can't do it properly," Nelson encouraged superintendents to buy compost from commercial operations, whether it be municipalities or companies. Besides the more widely known products, he said: "We have isolated types of compost that aren't widely available but that work really well. There are batches of municipal sludges here and there that are really good. Others don't do anything."

"The dilemma with yard-waste compost is consistency," Dinelli said. "With poultry they have a consistent product from one batch to another."

Dinelli mixes his bentgrass seed with the compost and, at the same time, deals with any inconsistency by using a large 1/4-inch mesh screen stretched across 2-by-4s riding on top of the trailer.

One person shovels compost over that screen, while another lightly sprinkles in bentgrass seed.

"It's very scientific," Dinelli laughed. "But it works. It screens out any of the larger solids (like vugs), and just as importantly it blends the seed into the material throughout the whole load."

About 7 pounds of seed mixes with 2 yards of compost in the trailer, and it takes 6 cubic yards of material, on average, to repair all tees and fairways at the 18-hole facility.

"I don't know what the magic of compost is," said Dinelli. "But it works, because it holds moisture better or whether its darker color and warms up quicker, but the difference is dramatic."

North Shore uses other organic fertilizers as well, he said. "I've used Sustane and NatureSafe. I'm very religious with using Milorganite... We web it all so it all works together."