

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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IN DEMAND ON THE GRAND STRAND
Golf course architect Mike Strantz has followed one Best New Upscale Course selection in 1996 — Stonehouse — with a second Best New pick, Royal New Kent, in 1997. Now he is in such high demand that he is turning down developers each week. See Q&A, page 35.

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El Niño'd: West Coast gets hammered, with rains, floods

By DAVID WILBER

The winter's intense El Niño-driven storms have hammered California golf courses, highlighted in early February when a series of weather-related records were broken. Several areas of the state recorded the lowest barometer readings ever in February.



Access to the 15th tee at Pebble Beach Golf Links is destroyed as a result of the El Niño-driven storms in early February.

California courses found that no amount of installed drainage could handle the rains since they began on already wet ground. El Niño was not choosy about the golf courses it attacked as rivers, streams, drainage and retaining walls

SEE EL NIÑO COVERAGE, PP.30-33

statewide reached their limits. The Monterey Peninsula received no mercy. "We had the highest tide and the biggest swell ever

recorded in Stillwater Cove," said Mark Michaud, superintendent at Pebble Beach Golf Links. "If we hadn't put in the new seawall on the 18th hole, I'm sure we would have had some ma-
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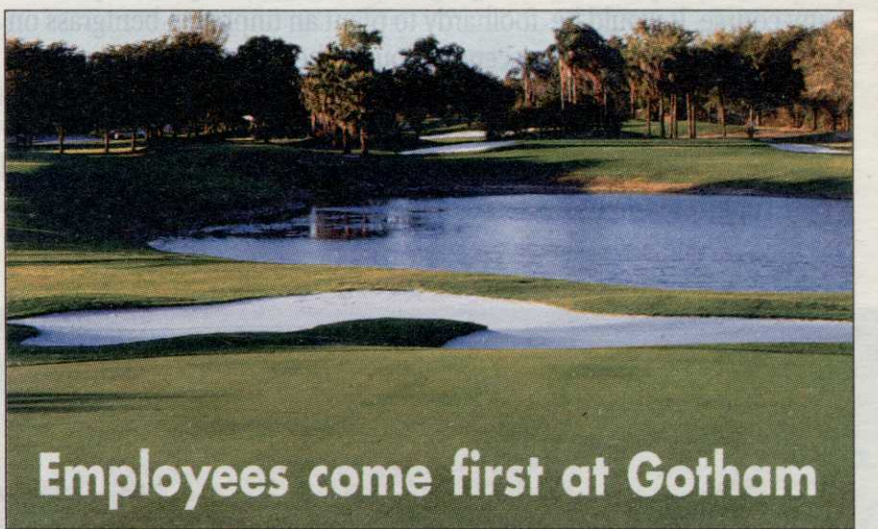
A First Tee 'first' looms

By MARK LESLIE

RICHMOND, Va. — Neighboring Chesterfield County is "fast-tracking" the Richmond First Tee Foundation (RFTF) proposal through an approval process that could lead to earthmoving in May and put it on target to be the nation's initial project built from the ground up as a First Tee facility.

"We are thrilled with the county's support," said Fred Tattersall, a financial adviser and the moving force behind RFTF. "They have put us on a fast-track program they reserve mostly for large businesses moving to the area."

If all goes smoothly, an April 6 informational meeting with the general public and representatives from the County Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission will be fol-
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Employees come first at Gotham

California Golf Club was one of the early purchases that propelled Gotham Golf Partners into the world of course operations.

By PETER BLAIS

Building a course operations firm that is both financially successful and provides a first-rate quality of life for its owners and managers are the dual goals of Gotham Golf Partners, according to company President R. Danny Mays.

"Family and quality of life are very important to all my managers," said Mays, who along with many of GGP's upper-level executives are former employees of KSL Fairways, a Vir-

ginia-based multi-course operator. "In the golf business, it's always been a given that you work seven days a week. But to properly manage entities you have to put people in place who can perform and do their jobs. We have sophisticated management so that there is time for other things in our lives.

"We push our managers to make sure they get their days off. If a manager can't take his days off then he
Continued on page 49

Mower manufacturers see 'ease' to please

By JOHN FARRELL

Hoping to make life a little easier for golf course operators, major mower manufacturers are addressing real-life concerns — everything from ease of operation and maintenance to noise pollution — as they bring the next wave of products to market.

In what is part of the largest new prod-

uct roll-out in the company's history, Jacobsen is introducing its new HR-9016 Turbo (TM) Wide-Area Rotary Mower.

First unveiled at the GCSAA show in Anaheim, the HR-9016 is a 16-foot-wide rotary mower with a 90-hp turbo-charged diesel engine and 4-wheel drive.

"One of our goals in designing the HR-
Continued on page 56

Mowers

Continued from page 1

9016 Turbo was to make routine maintenance and service as easy as possible," said Bill Potter, Jacobsen product manager.

In meeting that goal, the mower is constructed with no pulleys, idlers or belts, and uses all-hydraulic drive to the three cutting decks to assure efficient, reliable operation requiring less-

frequent service.

Potter added that the product meets the need for peak mowing productivity at golf courses, parks, municipal grounds and sports fields.

Originally designed to meet the needs of European sports fields and golf courses requiring a high-precision, multi-purpose mowing machine, Toro's Grounds Pro (TM) 2000 is ex-

pected to fit nicely into U.S. markets as well.

Featuring easy-to-reach controls and rear steering to ensure maximum maneuverability, the Grounds Pro utilizes reel cutting units to provide superior quality of cut. Available with either a five-blade fixed-head or an

eight-blade floating head, the cutting units raise hydraulically to accommodate tight spaces and narrow gates.

In addition, the Grounds Pro Quick Link (TM) A-frame attachment system allows for a wide variety of attachments, converting the machine from a preci-

sion reel mower to a rotary broom, dump cart, fertilizer spreader, sprayer, debris blower, or snow plow.

"We've touted it as a total grounds maintenance system for a grounds area that has multiple kinds of turf to maintain," said Jody Walsh, public relations spokesperson at Toro. "If you're a golf course that really needs this kind of a utility vehicle, it's a nice fit."

Moving in a different direction, Ransomes has delivered the industry's first electric triplex greens mower, the E-Plex II.

According to Peter Whurr, director of marketing at Ransomes, the company has taken the first-generation E-Plex machine and enhanced it per users' requests, with refinements such as an improved green speed. Now, for instance, regardless of whether it's going uphill or down, the mower maintains the same speed, producing a uniform clip rate.

The company also reports having improved operational characteristics of the product, such as making it easier to steer and placing the whole tractor on a true 48-volt system, so the battery maintains full discharge across all cells.

Of course, because it's battery-powered, it's also environmentally friendly. No pollution into the atmosphere, no noise, and none of the issues normally associated with greens triplex mowing, like hydraulic oil leaks or extensive engine maintenance.

"And because there's no noise coming from it, if you're in a noise-sensitive area, you can still get out early in the morning to cut greens without disturbance to any residents in the area," said Whurr. "Now, if you're able to do that, the course can open earlier and you can get more rounds of golf into the course earlier on."

John Deere's 2500 Triplex Greens Mower was also introduced in February. Primarily intended to mow golf course greens, the machine also mows tees, approaches, and some small fairways.

"What we've tried to do is design the machine around the operator so it's as easy as possible to operate," stated Nolan Meggers, John Deere product manager.

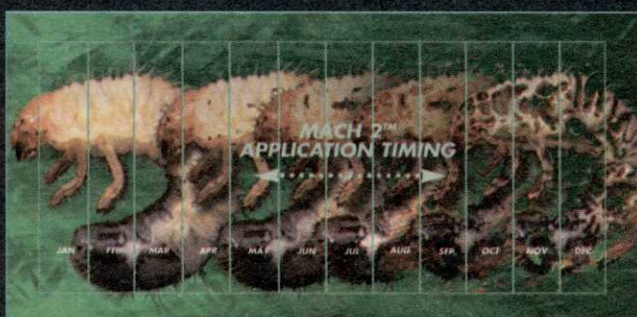
"This way, they can make nice straight lines on the green, and it does a very effective job of giving a good, quality cut."

Meggers added that the company also tried to keep serviceability at the forefront of the design so that whether a technician is performing routine maintenance or simply performing a daily check, "it's very easy to do."



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