VGM Golf aims new program at superintendents

Scotts Co. latest to get on board

BY MICHAEL LEVANS

WATERLOO, Iowa — What started out as a buying group for pro shop managers has moved its way into the maintenance shed.

VGM Golf Inc., part of an alliance called VGM Group, has developed a Superintendents Division that the organization said will save courses money on everything from fertilizers to hole cutters while keeping — in most cases — existing distributor relationships in place.

“As our membership of pro shop managers grew, and our members asked for more and more services, it was a natural for us to add superintendents,” said Mike Sawyer, VGM Golf's national sales manager.

It’s VGM's goal to roll its more than 1,500 members — mostly pro shops — into the Superintendents Division.

Here’s how it works: VGM Golf never touches the product. Instead, it negotiates a sales program with manufacturers based on volume and passes the savings on to its member courses — the more member courses the better the deal. In turn, VGM negotiates lower minimums, extended dating, cash rebates, freight discounts and related member premiums.

The VGM member contacts its sales representative or distributor, place an order, give a VGM number and the member is locked into the negotiated price.

“We don’t resell, so we keep the sales rep involved,” said Sawyer. “Many times distributors hear the term ‘buying group’ and think they’re out of the picture. That’s not the way we work. We try, whenever possible, to keep the distributor in the picture.”

One-time fees to join the superintendents group are $390 for a 9-hole facility and $480 for an 18-hole facility. Savings vary from product to product.

“I assume we might have a price increase,” said Sawyer. “Because, just like anything else, the more our members save the more our service is worth. We do, however, grandfather our current facilities. If you’re in at $480 now you’ll be in at that price 10 years from now.”

At press time, VGM had firm ed up programs... Continued on page 62

Single-rider golf car market heats up

BY MICHAEL LEVANS

EXETER, Pa. — Pride Golf, a new division of scooter and liftchair manufacturer Pride Healthcare, has entered the single-rider golf-car market with a bang.

It was recently announced that Pride Golf's car, the second single-rider to enter the golf market from the home medical equipment industry, will be the vehicle of choice for disabled golfer Casey Martin, should he earn a berth in this year's U.S. Open at The Olympic Club in San Francisco.

Pride was chosen following a recent testing session held by The United States Golf Association (USGA) in Denver. "[They] [USGA] were looking for a cart for Casey and if yours met certain specifications they invited you to send a cart out for testing," said Pride spokesperson Craig Otto.

"We sent one out, they put it through testing," Otto added. "I assume we might have more member contacts its sales representatives. We do, naturally, grandfather our current facilities... Continued on page 62

Textron/Ransomes: The dust settles, new structure emerges

BY TREVOR LEDGER

IPSWICH, Suffolk, England — Now that the dust has settled on Textron Inc.'s takeover of Ransomes PLC, a clear picture of the group's strategy and structure is emerging.

The new company is called Textron Turf Care and Specialty Products and is headed up by the former president of Ransomes, Peter Wilson. As president of the new worldwide organization, Wilson is based in the company headquarters here in Ipswich. The American arm of Textron Turf Care and Specialty Products is based in Racine, Wisconsin, USA, with Jacobsen's Phil Tralies as president. Tralies will report to Wilson.

Peter Wilson is naturally excited with the developments at what is now a very well placed market competitor.

"It creates a very strong company from both a financial and technical viewpoint," said Wilson. "It gives us a wonder-

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