

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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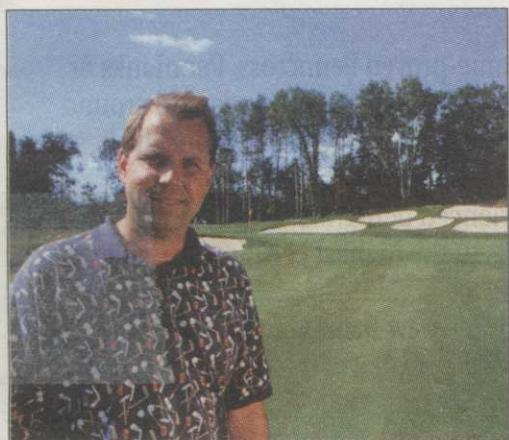
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With more than 900 courses under construction, the golf car market has never been busier 61

Beauty and the Berm

When the "new" wears off at a golf course, put on a new dress. 17



ATOP TWO WORLDS

Scott Hoffman not only maintains four courses at the top-rated resort in Minnesota, he stepped into designers' shoes and laid out *Golf Digest's* 1997 3rd Best New Upscale Public Course in North America. See *Super Focus*, page 17.

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Rain Bird snags AGC exclusive

By M. LEVANS

AZUSA, Calif. — The directors of maintenance at American Golf Corp. (AGC) have changed its irrigation supplier with the recent signing of an exclusive three-year agreement with Rain Bird.

AGC estimates that it will use Rain Bird Products — from replacement sprinkler heads to the new Cirrus central control irrigation system — in 20 new course irrigation system installations this year. The arrangement could even-

tually trickle down to all 260 AGC courses.

According to AGC, it will continue a service contract with Toro, AGC's previous irrigation supplier, to maintain the existing equipment.

"There are perceptions that we go after the low bidder," said John Meyer, director of fleet management and national accounts at AGC. "That is not the case. We have 8 directors of maintenance. I look at them as the committee and say, 'Irrigation is coming up, who should get a proposal.' The only two names that come up are Rain Bird and Toro. Quality versus quality, you can't get any better in this industry."

Rain Bird won the tight battle, said AGC, with its commitment to extensive after-market service. Rain

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CCA banks on PGA ETC

From wire services

DALLAS — The International Group of ClubCorp has acquired a 23-percent interest in PGA European Tour Courses PLC (PGA ETC) from Thompson Investments, Ltd. The transaction is valued at more than \$10 million.

PGA ETC is a company that owns and invests in flagship, tournament golf venues in Europe. It is listed on the London Stock Exchange and trades under the symbol (PGA). ClubCorp will also have two seats on the board of directors of the company.

Thomson Invest-

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The Indian River Club: an environmental winner

Audubon cracks down

By MARK LESLIE

SELKIRK, N.Y. — Probation. Excommunication. These terms that embody enmity are now part of the lexicon at Audubon International (AI), long a bastion of teamwork and cooperation.

While the majority of the 66 golf courses in the 4-year-old Audubon Signature Program are committed to it and swear by its effectiveness, others have fallen off the bandwagon, or perhaps were never aboard, according to AI President Ron Dodson.

Lamenting the fact that he had to, first, "place on probation," then "excommunicate" one of the eight fully certified Audubon Signature facilities, Dodson said: "Our strongest program is only as strong as our weakest one, and we can't allow people to make our name look weak. We already

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Estate courses on the rebound

Certainly not your average backyard. The 2nd at Rich Harvest.

By MARK LESLIE

SUGAR GROVE, Ill. — Disappointed in Augusta National's famous par-3 12th hole at Amen Corner, Jerry Rich came home to his 2,000-acre estate and built what he calls a better one. Dis-

appointed in Augusta's 200-yard-long Magnolia Lane, he built a Magnolia Lane of his own. It meanders across two miles.

This is Rich Harvest Links. This is Jerry Rich's dream — a dream that grew from the idea of a

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modest couple of practice holes to a stunning facility that will open 18 championship-

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Toro secures exclusive with Wentworth Club

By TREVOR LEDGER

VIRGINIA WATER, Surrey, England — Wentworth Club has just committed itself to a five-year exclusive contract with Toro for all its irrigation and machinery requirements.

Chris Kennedy, golf courses manager at the unique tournament venue (it is the only club that hosts two European tour events) said was clear as to why Wentworth has been painted Toro red.

"We have three Toro irrigation systems installed and 70 percent of our machinery was Toro anyway. It is far easier

to carry spares for just one manufacturer so it makes sense to have all the machinery from one source.

David Cole, sales manager for Lely U.K., Toro's distributor, confirmed the arrangements. "Wentworth was looking to embrace machinery as well as irrigation with one single supplier. They [Wentworth] spoke to almost all of the machinery suppliers and decided on Toro.

What does this mean for the companies who have the

remaining 30 percent of the machinery at Wentworth?

"All non-Toro equipment is to be taken off site and a large fleet of replacements will be installed in two phases," said Cole.

The first phase of equipment was delivered in April with phase two starting April 1999.

No doubt the increased buying power such an exclusivity brings will enable the Surrey Club to negotiate a good deal, nevertheless new machinery does not come cheap. At £700,000 for the equipment contract alone, it is unsurprising to

hear that Cole is pleased to cement an existing relationship with such a unique tournament venue.

As more and more companies attempt to consolidate and get their foot in the door at countless golf courses, exclusive machinery and irrigation deals are likely to become commonplace, or at least less rare. Notwithstanding that fact, Toro have a prestigious feather in its cap having landed Wentworth and St. Andrews in the same month.



Turf & Garden expands into sod production

CHESAPEAKE, Va. — Turf and Garden, a division of Todd Farm Equipment, Inc. has expanded into the sod growing business.

The company's newest venture, "Southern Belle Turf Farms," located in Southampton County, Va., sits on a 269 acre tract of land along the Blackwater River.

Steve McCulloch, a 12 year sales veteran at Turf and Garden, member of the board of directors of Todd Farm and former golf course superintendent,

has been named Farm Manager.

David Rhodes, president, said, "Sod production is a natural fit in our business. We have the turf and irrigation expertise in-house, our sales and marketing arm are in place, and our existing customer base includes golf courses and lawn care companies. The obvious need was for the land, and now that dream is reality."

The farms will produce bermudagrass and turf-type tall fescue sod.

Jake distributor makes 'hands-on' possible at Penn State

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. — The Penn State University turfgrass program provides students with the opportunity to use state-of-the-art turf maintenance equipment — thanks to the efforts of companies like equipment distributor Krigger & Co., of Gibsonia, Pa., and Jacobsen Division of Textron in Racine, Wis.

During the 1997 summer and fall season, 43 Penn State turf students used equipment provided by Jacobsen and Krigger & Company to maintain research plots and enhance their education in turfgrass science and turf maintenance. The equipment included a Jacobsen Greens King V triplex greens mower,

Greens King walk-behind greens mower, LF light-weight fairway mower and Aero King verticutter-seeder.

"We are committed to supporting the education of turf students wherever we can," said Jacobsen vice president of quality and customer support, Tony Saiia.

Penn State's turf research facilities draw students primarily from the Turfgrass Science baccalaureate program, plus the Turfgrass Management two-year program and Landscape Contracting baccalaureate program.



FROM THE COVER

Rain Bird/ AGC

Continued from page 1

Bird distributors are currently putting AGC personnel through one- and two-day orientation sessions.

It's no secret that exclusive agreement with management companies are increasing industry wide as management company breadth increases. This, said Wendi Abrams, Rain Bird's national sales manager, could make things easier for a supplier's sales force.

"Equipment purchasing decisions are being made by the management companies, not the individual courses," said Abrams. "So it certainly helps us when we're dealing with one group of decision makers over many, many courses."

"With the American Golf arrangement we're obviously interested in the financial aspects of the agreement, but more importantly we're interested in being involved with a company that, we believe, created that market and leads that market."

Abrams likens AGC and other large course management companies to the Wal-Mart and super-store scenarios. It's about volume.

"Mass-merchandisers re-created the market for other manufacturers," said Abrams. "We feel that's what American Golf is doing to golf. They push us to stay cutting edge and keep our cost structure down. In turn, that keeps us sharper and more competitive."

Zeneca launches Web site

WILMINGTON, Del. — Zeneca Professional Products has made available a new information vehicle for the turf and pest control markets with the introduction of its website at www.zenecaprofprod.com.

Visitors to the site can access information on the entire Zeneca professional products portfolio, which includes its turf and ornamental and pest control product lines.

The site features comprehensive information for each product, including efficacy information, handling and application recommendations, mode of action, fields of use and trial data.



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