

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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TOP 10 STATES IN GOLF COURSE OPENINGS-2000

FLORIDA - 41

TEXAS - 38

CALIFORNIA - 31

MICHIGAN - 28

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Source: National Golf Foundation

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PERIODICAL

VIEW OF THE FAZIO LAYOUT AT THE FOUR-COURSE BAREFOOT RESORT, THE FIRST CLIENT FOR THE NEW LANDMARK NATIONAL EAST. SEE STORY PAGE 21.



No downturn expected for fertilizer prices

Impact of high natural gas costs lingers

By ANDREW OVERBECK

Fertilizer prices, after their sharp recent rise, are expected to remain high, and industry experts say the record cost of natural gas is the primary culprit.

It has been a tough several months for fertilizer manufacturers, formulators and distributors as natural gas prices rose 500 percent to more than \$10 per million British thermal units (MMBtu), squeezing already-thin margins.

Natural gas is a major cost component in the manufacturing of nitrogen fertilizer. As a general rule, every 50-cent increase brings a \$10 increase per ton of urea.

GAS PRICES TO SPIKE IN FALL

At press time, urea was averaging just over \$100 per ton in ports along the Gulf of Mexico, a primary point of production and importation. Natural gas prices, meanwhile, had receded to below \$4/MMBtu. Fertilizer producers see no drop in prices in the coming months, however, because natural gas remains at double its historical levels and will likely spike again in the fall.

Moreover, manufacturers are still generating product using higher-cost urea purchased before prices softened.



Bill Whitacre

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Biotech turfgrass destined for market

By JOEL JOYNER

WEST KINGSTON, R.I. — Like it or not, generically engineered turfgrass is on the way. Not only that, but researchers say the possible varieties are all but endless.

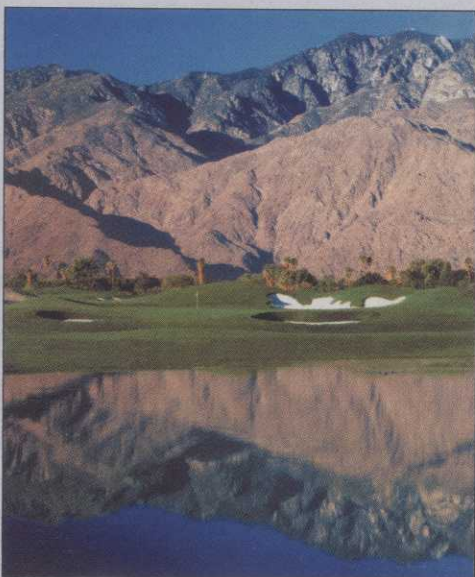
"I believe there will be a continuous stream of engineered turfgrass products by various companies," said Albert Kausch, visiting associate professor here at the University of Rhode Island. "It's possible now to clone any gene from any organism and introduce that into turfgrasses for various traits. The technology itself is so beneficial and useful that it will go forward."

"We expect to have products available, certainly within the next four to five years," added Kausch, who is also a research scientist for the biotechnology company HybriGene, headquartered in Hubbard, Ore.

In the last few years, genetically engineered crops such as corn and soybeans have taken over



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The first hole at OB Sports-managed Cimarron

OB Sports shifts base to golf-wild Scottsdale

By JAY FINEGAN

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Another golf course management company has joined the parade to Scottsdale, fast emerging as a center of gravity for the game.

OB Sports, until recently based in the Pacific Northwest, has set up shop in this golf-crazy town on the outskirts of Phoenix. The firm foresees operational efficiencies and increased national visibility from the more centralized location.

"Although we have received tremendous publicity for our success on the West Coast, we are now seeing opportunities to expand our image and delivery of services to more of a national level," said company founder and CEO Orrin Vincent.

In business since 1972, OB Sports has received heavy attention in the past few years for the successful development of new courses on the West Coast featuring unique "themes,"

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Stone Tree brings public golf to Marin County

By DOUG SAUNDERS

NOVATO, Calif. — The new daily-fee Stone Tree Golf Club here in Marin County stands as a testimony to tenacity.

It took the developers eight years to run a permitting gamut involving 11 federal, state and local agencies. To meet some objections concerning wetlands, the

owners donated 64 acres to the Nature Conservancy. The initial routing plan was rejected. More than 13,000 trees had to be planted.

But when the 7,000-yard layout opened last November, it marked the completion of the first championship golf course

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Stone Tree

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within the carefully controlled borders of Marin County in more than 20 years.

Marin, an enclave of golden hills and tranquil woodlands, lies just across the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco. Its bold headlands provide dramatic vistas of San Francisco, the bay and, to the west, the Pacific Ocean. A century ago, when these wild lands were accessible only by ferry and train, the wealthy built summer homes here. Alister MacKenzie's first American golf course, the Meadow Club, was sculpted here in 1927.

LOCALS WARY OF DEVELOPMENT

Today, Marin is home to artists, environmentalists, rock musicians, and every movement imaginable to enhance the human experience. These ingredients blend in with some of the most affluent bedroom communities, creating a vibrant tapestry that captures all that is the fabled California lifestyle.

Residents of this region are protective of their open space. "Tough construction regulations make it difficult to build, especially golf courses, and land is really expensive here," said superintendent Kevin Pryseski. "There's only a handful of courses in the county, and I doubt you'll see another one."

When the 240-acre parcel of land known as



View of a wetlands hole at Stone Tree

Black Point became available in 1988, four local investors thought they could make something special for golfers. Little did they know about the endless stream of hearings, votes and paperwork that had to be navigated to turn the dream into reality.

The parcel is a stretch of agricultural land next to Route 37, Marin's main east-west artery, whose only recent use was for an annual crafts fair. Stretches of the property had become an illegal dump — any change in its land use would be an improvement. Half of the property spilled into a large flat area of grazing land while the other half worked up a large hillside covered in majestic oaks.

RESIDENTIAL COMPONENT

The developers first contact for course design was former USGA president Sandy Tatum, who has earned a strong reputation in Bay area golf circles, not only for his interest in promotion of the game but also for his work in course architecture. Tatum has been involved in such projects as the Links at Spanish Bay in Monterey, the attempted reconstruction of Harding Park in San Francisco, and Lake Shasta Resort near Redding.

"The investors were golfers themselves and knew how desperately this growing region needed a quality daily-fee facility," said director of golf Paul Soczka. "To make the project financially feasible, it was determined that a certain number of home sites would be required." The plan, however, was to keep the best parts of the property for the golf course and hide the home sites elsewhere."

JOHNNY MILLER COMES ABOARD

The owners, realizing the project's regional significance, brought in local resident and pro golfer Johnny Miller and his design partner, Fred Bliss. As part of the original design team, Miller drew up the initial routing plans and also added strong name recognition.

When the first routing plan failed to satisfy various new requirements, Miller, Bliss, Sandy Tatum and his partner, Jim Summers, of Golfco Co., collaborated on an acceptable routing and mounding design. The consortium of four designers stuck together through the process, with Summers handling the daily work of shaping, and Miller and Tatum adding input on shot values and green sites.

"Summers worked on the site every day," said Pryseski. "He made the changes in the field. There was quite a bit of conflicting opinion [between the four designers], which is probably why the layout works so well. Someone's feelings may have been hurt a little, but in the long run we got the best design."

13,000 TREES PLANTED

Once construction finally began, it took

Continued on next page
GOLF COURSE NEWS

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Stone Tree

Continued from previous page

23 months to complete. Continental Golf Construction Co. of Auburn, Calif., handled the heavy lifting. The great challenge was shaping the 10 holes that play along the flattest part of the golf course. Care was taken to frame each hole with mounding, so only the hole you are playing is in view.

"This was a very difficult site to

build on, as we could not impact any wetland areas, and these areas continued to be declared even during construction," Summers said.

To tie this area to the tree-laden hillside portion, more than 13,000 trees were planted along these holes, satisfying a permit requirement to replace – on a three-to-one basis – trees that were taken down from other parts of the course.

"Every tree we removed was inventoried by an on-site arborist

to determine how many trees we would have to add to other areas," Summers said. The new trees – live oaks, valley oaks, willows and alders – were mostly placed on the flat, treeless section of the property to give the course more definition."

PLAYING SURFACE

The mounding in the flat areas was another challenge, built as the mounds were on bay mud that behaved like Jell-O. "We moved

over 300,000 cubic feet of dirt on the property and imported over 180,000 cubic feet of sand to add a full sand cap to the course," said Harvey Lundershausen of Capital Golf Construction. "All of this took a lot of time."

According to Pryseski, the effort paid off. "We have a firmer playing surface during the winter – our rainy season," he said.

The course offers bentgrass greens and a rye/bluegrass mix

on the fairways and tees. Water comes into play on several holes, with six acres of man-made wetlands, three ponds and two creeks. "There are only 40 bunkers, because the wetlands, hillsides and water features add enough challenge," said director of golf Soczka.

The difficulty of the design and construction lead to the development of Stone Tree's motto – "A handcrafted classic." ■

Mungeam

Continued from page 14

Mungeam – a member of the board of governors at the American Society of Golf Course Architects – has become a familiar name in Met area golfing circles. His recent designs include High Bridge Hills GC, the North Course at Charleston Springs GC in Millstone Township, and Colt's Neck Golf and Country Club. All three courses are in New Jersey.

Course construction permits were secured for Hudson Hills back in 1997; Mungeam has spent the past two years honing his design plans here in New Castle. Several of the overgrown holes are still discernible, though none will be part of the new Hudson Hills 18.

"We have aerial photographs of the old course, and if you go out in the field you can see everything," Mungeam continued. "You come across these depressions, and if you scrape around you'll find the old bunker sand. We found a tee sign the other day – a post with fancy wrought-iron work and a board hanging from it. But the writing has been worn away by time."

"The former course was wedged onto just 110 acres, but today we have 150 acres to work with," he added. "It's great land, steep in some sections but lovely, rolling terrain with nice views to the west. When we're finished, I daresay Hudson Hills will be the best public facility in Westchester County."

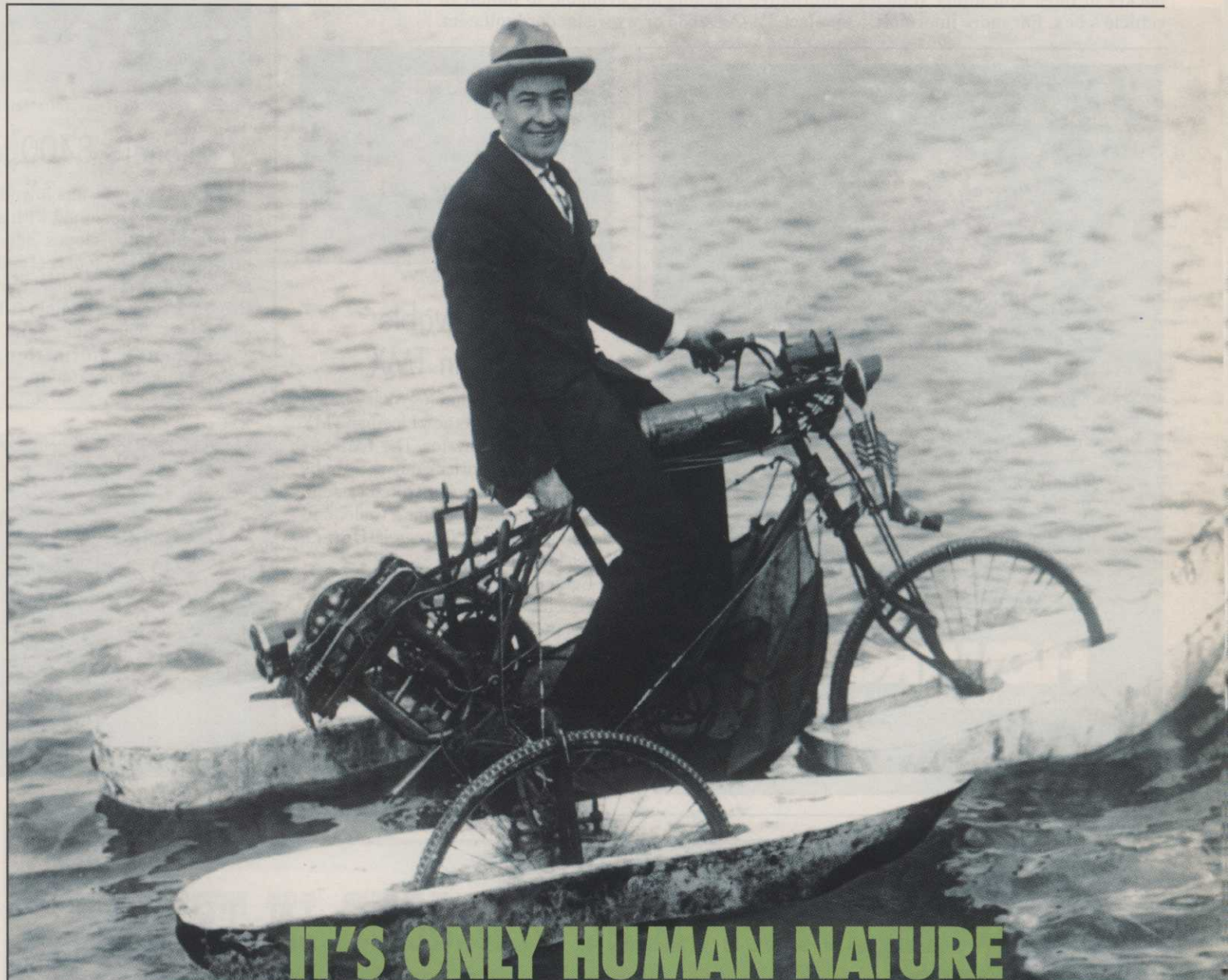
A COURSE FOR CLINTON

Much has been written about where Bill Clinton, now a resident of neighboring Chappaqua, will play his golf. Mungeam, for one, has a suggestion. "Hudson Hills will definitely be affordable enough for anyone on a government pension," he quipped.

Having christened four original layouts last year (including partner Brian Silva's much praised Black Creek Club in Chattanooga, Tenn.), Cornish, Silva and Mungeam will open four more original designs in 2001, including Mungeam's LeBaron Hills CC, a private club in Lakeville, Mass.

Also, the Mungeam-designed South Course at Charleston Springs will open this fall. ■

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