

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

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## INSIDE

### Superintendents retool regs

Superintendents in Pennsylvania and New Jersey work to change water restrictions.....8

### Safety goes high-tech

GPS offers a multitude of safety features from golf car tracking to two-way communication.....19



#### GOLFERS ON FILM

In a move to keep golfers at the club after they have finished their rounds, the owners of newly-opened Pistol Creek Golf Club (above) set up cameras on the 18th hole. The action is then shown on 15-minute tape delay in the club's restaurant. To read more about the club's other innovative ideas, see story on page 14.

#### COURSE MAINTENANCE

Moss invades Colorado, no cure in sight.....8  
Prevent accidents with safety plan.....8  
Tools of the Trade at Dalton's Copper Hills G&CC..10

#### COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Arvida donates live oaks to 'Old Ironsides' ..... 3  
Hills and Forrest moving forward in 2002 ..... 14  
Ron Garl excited about paspalum's future ..... 15

#### COURSE MANAGEMENT

Industry watching NGP merger..... 19  
Palmer Golf enters Pennsylvania..... 19  
KemperSports focusing on growth ..... 20

#### SUPPLIER BUSINESS

PBI Gordon, Griffin ready with new herbicides .. 23  
Rain Bird developing soil moisture probes ..... 24  
New products galore.....27

RENOVATION WORK, LIKE THIS PROJECT AT LAKESIDE COUNTRY CLUB IN HOUSTON, IS GIVING NEW LIFE TO OLDER COURSES. SEE STORIES ON PAGES 14 AND 15.



## Drought conditions on East Coast to persist into spring

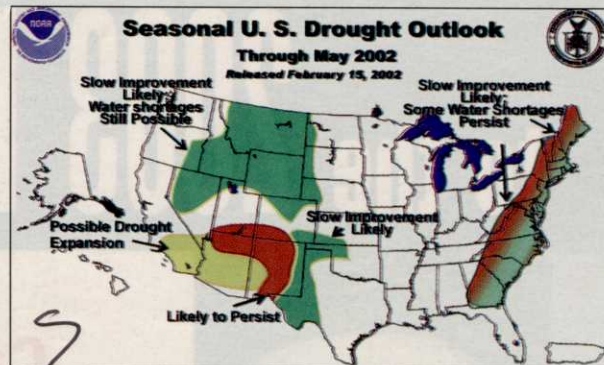
By A. OVERBECK

The warm and dry winter along the entire East Coast has helped courses increase play and has allowed superintendents to tackle more off-season tasks. However, as dry weather has persisted into March, courses from Maine to Georgia are facing the possibility of entering spring under challenging drought conditions.

Some states have already declared drought emergencies and put re-

strictions into place and many more states could follow suit. The long-term forecast from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) calls for a slight improvement but predicts water shortages will continue to persist through May. Among the more staggering drought indicators are:

- The Northeast experienced the second driest September through February in the past 107 years.
- NOAA said the



drought, which started in some areas in 1998, is now classified as hydrological because of low ground water, lake and well levels. These droughts typically take longer to end.

- Drought emergencies have already been declared in New Jersey and in 26 counties in Pennsyl-

vania (See related story on page 8). At press time, New Hampshire and Maryland were close to declaring emergencies.

"This winter drought is not unprecedented, but it is unusual for such a large area to share a drought of this magnitude," said

Continued on page 12

## Organic golf activists score major victory

By A. OVERBECK

BROOKLYN, N.Y.—The Long Island Neighborhood Network (LINN) has won a major victory in its battle to make all new golf courses organic. A four-judge Appellate Division panel here unanimously reversed a lower court decision Feb. 25 and ordered the Town of Stony Point to comply with SEQRA (State Environmental Quality Review Act) by completing a full environmental impact statement (EIS) before continuing work on its \$18 million Rick Jacobson-designed golf course.

The decision builds on a

similar lower court victory and settlement in Suffolk County in 1998 (GCN June 1999) that forced the county to commit to making its two new 18-hole courses in Yaphank completely organic. The recent decision, however, could set a precedent on a larger scale since it



would apply to Nassau and Suffolk counties in addition to Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, Orange,

Continued on page 5

## Gotham, First Union Real Estate to merge

By DEREK RICE

NEW YORK — On the same day National Golf Properties announced its planned merger with American Golf Corp., First Union Real Estate Equity and Mortgage Investments and Gotham Partners LP also agreed to merge. The resulting entity, Gotham Golf Corp., will be a publicly traded company.

Representatives from both companies declined to speak on the record for this story because a registration statement had not yet been filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission. There is no formal target date for completion of the merger, although if it has not been completed by August 31, payouts to First Union shareholders increase.

The deal has been in the works for some time now, and has been through many proposed incarnations

Continued on page 20

## Toro, GE Capital create financial offering

By ANDREW OVERBECK

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — The Toro Co. has partnered with GE Capital Vendor Financial Services to provide a branded, single-source financing solution for golf courses and municipalities.

The move not only consolidates the company's previous financing options

but it also gives Toro access to a financing arm that is larger than Textron Financial Services and John Deere Credit.



### Financing

Textron Financial Services and John Deere Credit have managed assets of \$9.1 billion and \$13 billion, respectively, and GE Capital has served assets of nearly \$20 billion.

Continued on page 25



## Organic golf activists score victory

Continued from page 1

Dutchess, Putnam, Westchester and Rockland County where the case originated.

"This expands the organic golf concept beyond Suffolk County," said Neal Lewis, executive director of the LINN. "It helps to establish a precedent to make developers at least study the use

of organics during the EIS process. This is the first court case that has gone to the appellate level that addresses pesticide use and the construction of golf courses."

While the last two court cases have applied to municipal- or county-owned projects, Lewis said the ruling will apply to pri-

vate developers once the EIS process is triggered. The law does not force courses to be all-organic, but it requires them to give a "hard look" to organic alternatives.

"It gives environmental activists leverage when working with developers," said Lewis.

### 12 HOLES ALREADY BUILT

The Town of Stony Point's attorney cannot believe that the

court shut down its construction project.

"We started construction in the fall of 2000 after getting approval from the Supreme Court [the state's lowest court] to proceed with construction," said attorney Frank Phillips. "We now have 12 of the 18 holes ready to be grassed. We are \$9 million into an \$18 million project and we get shut down. We have heavy

equipment that is just sitting up there and it is costing the town a significant amount of money."

Lewis took the Stony Point case on behalf of a group of homeowners who were concerned that their drinking water would be contaminated by pesticide runoff. They filed an appeal to the Supreme Court ruling in December 2000, arguing that the town had to complete an EIS. While the appeal was being processed, construction was allowed to proceed because Lewis and the homeowners were more concerned about stopping the use of pesticides that would be used when the course was completed.

"They argued that they did not have to complete an EIS because there would be no negative impact from the project," said Lewis. "They maintained that by using Integrated Pest Management, they would not damage the environment. The law states that if there may be an impact, an EIS is necessary. The higher court agreed with us and said that by using IPM the town cannot claim that there is no potential for impact."

Since the EIS process, which can take upward of a year to complete, could seriously delay the Stony Point project, Phillips is planning an appeal.

"In the appellate brief they just asked to stop the project before the point of applying pesticides or fertilizers, so we believe that we should be allowed to proceed with construction," said Phillips.

In the meantime, Phillips is recommending that the town get started on an EIS, but he is not sold on organic golf.

"We are not opposed to the idea of using organic materials," he said. "But all of the chemicals that we propose to use are being used on every course in Rockland County. If we are forced to go organic and be brown all the time, everyone else using pesticides will be green and the town will have an \$18 million project worth nothing." ■

## Geese control

Continued from page 4

Resident Canada geese are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and can only be legally taken during hunting season, unless a special federal permit is obtained from the Wildlife Service. The agency is in the process of drafting proposed regulations that would authorize states to undertake a number of population control and management actions without having to go through the permit process.

The Wildlife Service issued its draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) March 1 and a 90-day comment period will run until May 30. ■



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