

GOLF COURSE NEWS

THE NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

A UNITED PUBLICATION

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 8

AUGUST 2002 • \$7.00

www.golfcoursenews.com

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RENOVATION COMMUNICATION

In the latest installment of a series tracking the progress of the renovation project at Willoughby Golf Club in Stuart, Fla., superintendent Kevin Downing outlines the need to keep members informed about the progress of renovation work (members playing on a soon-to-be-closed green are pictured above). He also discusses the ins and outs of the bidding process. See page 12.

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COUNTERPOINT

New Bayer ES head: 'Bar has been raised'

By ANDREW OVERBECK

MONTVALE, N.J. — The field of major agrochemical players narrowed further in late May as the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) approved Bayer AG's acquisition of Aventis CropScience from Aventis SA and minority owner Schering AG (GCN July 2002).

The buyout marks the demise of another multinational player and the creation of Bayer Environmental Science.

Josh Weeks, former vice president of Aventis Environmental Science's Chipco Professional Products group, will head the new professional products division of Bayer ES.



Josh Weeks

DIVESTING FIPRONIL

One of the first challenges facing Weeks will be the forced divestiture of two key product lines. As part of the approval, both the FTC and the European Commission are requiring Bayer ES to dispose of its fipronil and acetamiprid product lines.

While acetamiprid is a neonicotinoid class of chemistry that is being developed primarily for the greenhouse industry, the fipronil divestiture will directly impact the golf market. As part of the deal, however, Bayer ES will

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Quarry Hills sets new opening date

By DEREK RICE

QUINCY, Mass. — Reports of the death of the Quarry Hills Golf Course outside of Boston are greatly exaggerated, according to one of the project's developers, Chick Geilich.

"It's interesting how the stories get totally twisted," Geilich said. "We extended our contract with the Big Dig to accept 50 percent more dirt than our original contract and as a result of bringing in this extra dirt, we are a year behind our original projected finishing date."

In recent months, published reports have suggested that the development had stalled because of run-ins with city officials and a lack of



With nine holes completed, Quarry Hills is looking toward an early 2003 opening.

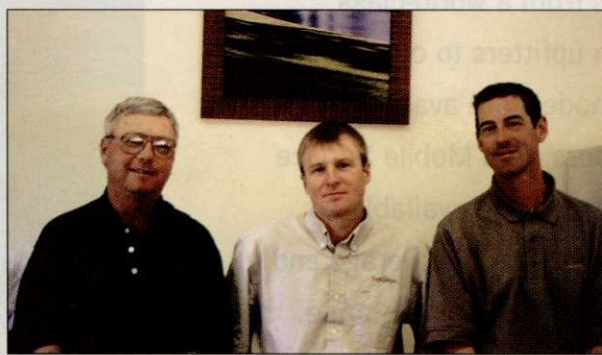
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Lahontan Golf Club pushing organic boundaries

By DOUG SAUNDERS

TRUCKEE, Calif. — While other courses in the High Sierra are considering what synthetic materials to use to jump-start spring turf growth, Lahontan Golf Club here is taking an organic approach. Each spring, head superintendent Kevin Breen's crew diligently spreads 43 tons of chicken crumbles on the 130 acres of fairways to build up the soils before opening day.

Six years of organic efforts at Lahontan, an 18-hole Tom Weiskopf-designed course, have begun



(Left to right) Mike Kosak, Martyn Hoffman and Kevin Breen

to pay off. Each year Breen has been able to cut back on his annual synthetic fertilization to sustain a

healthy stand of turf.

The direction toward an organic maintenance program was put into place

when construction began under the watchful eye of Mike Kosak, the director of agronomy. This enclave of mountain homes and the only private golf club in the Lake Tahoe region has stressed a careful environmental program to blend the development into the natural landscape with as little intrusion as possible.

Kosak has strived to utilize organic farming methods to make this property sustainable for

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Management companies holding on

By DEREK RICE

SANTA MONICA, Calif. and CHARLESTON, S.C. — Two financially troubled golf course ownership and management companies — National Golf Properties (NGP) and Golf Trust of America (GTA) — received reprieves of sorts in July from their creditors.

NGP, which has continued to push toward a merger with its largest ten-

ant, American Golf Corp., despite pressure from shareholders, has reached an agreement with its lender, Bank One N.A., to extend the forbearance period on NGP's \$300 million credit line until March 31, 2003. As collateral, NGP granted mortgages and deeds of trust on its properties. The company has been in technical default

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Lahontan strives for sustainability

Continued from page 1

future generations. While many question whether golf courses can be successful through an organic program, Kosak and his staff have stepped up and done just that. So far, the results are convincing.

"When we began construction in 1996, we took soil samples from the site in order to learn where our soil structure would

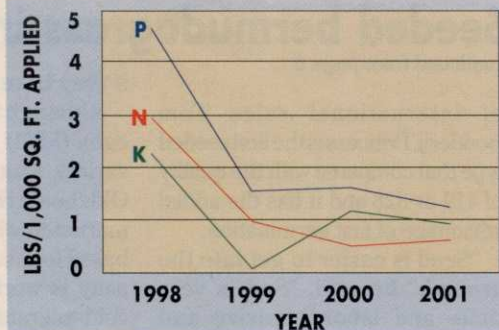
need to be enhanced," said Kosak. "We then began to develop a plan that would help to build up our soil, which in turn will be more beneficial to our turf. The nutrients necessary for plant growth exist naturally in every acre of land. The challenge is to manipulate the soil chemistry in order make these nutrients available to the plant. This

is the fundamental idea behind sustainable agricultural practice."

Kosak's ideas are not revolutionary, but they are cutting-edge in an industry that over the last 15 years has strived to reduce synthetic chemical use but has hardly made strides toward an organic approach to maintenance. The pressures of visual appeal, economic accountability and the lack of information about

alternatives have kept most turf managers from finding an alternative to synthetics.

Kosak began to realize the need to find an alternative to synthetics while he was working at a mountain course in Colorado in 1984. He began to



Lahontan's organic program has reduced fertility levels.



PROJECT TIME



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wonder why native grasses around his course appeared each spring, thrived through the summer and then disappeared in winter all without the need for artificial help. His interest to find out why this could not be done for the turf on his course lead him to extensive research on his own.

At Lahontan Golf Club, Kosak has had the chance to put his years of theory and practical knowledge to full use. Since the course was planted he has used a combination of conventional materials and alternative materials to build not only healthy turf but also create better soil conditions.

"In many ways we are not grass growers, we are dirt growers. Our fertilizer budget is on par with most golf courses, but where we spend more money is in our soil amendments," said Breen. "These are applications of materials that change our soil chemistry in order to bring out the naturally occurring phosphorous and nitrogen. Through the years we have been able to dramatically lower our synthetic applications as our soils improve. At some point our goal is to develop soils that will not need any synthetic applications."

Both Kosak and Breen are continually researching and looking for alternative products to use at their course. Along with chicken crumbles they have used volcanic dust from Canada as a phosphate alternative, a livestock feed known as Fertile Fiber, and a local source of compost material from an organic dairy farm co-op in the nearby Washoe Valley.

Breen and Kosak feel that the interest in organic turf maintenance is growing. While more courses would like to be more organic, Breen cautioned that it takes a solid commitment from both the superintendent and the ownership of a course.

"It is a strong leap of faith to go to a more organic approach. It has to be looked at as a long-term program with the goal of curtailing and eliminating synthetic materials," he said. "We have some advantages with our climate in the mountains that control many pathogens, and through the solid support of the developers here. We hope that at least we can become an example that provides factual evidence that this type of program can be successful." ■