

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

THE NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

A UNITED PUBLICATION

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 7

JULY 2002 • \$7.00

www.golfcoursenews.com

## INSIDE

### Making the switch

Spring Creek Ranch CC is converting its roughs from a fescue blend to Palisades zoysiagrass.....6

### Renovation work

There are many choices when it comes to improving bunker drainage and converting turf.....11



Photo: Freddy Bird

#### MOVIN' ON UP

Ever since the century-old Monterey pine that stood near the 18th green at Pebble Beach Golf Links succumbed to lightning and disease last fall, the plan was to replace it. After searching far and wide for a suitable replacement, the course found one – a 67-foot cypress tree – right on the property. See story on page 3.

#### COURSE MAINTENANCE

CourseCo develops program for inner city kids.....6  
Tools of the Trade at TPC at Four Seasons ..... 7  
New MACH 2 label approved .....10

#### COURSE DEVELOPMENT & RENOVATION

Developer building conservation community ..... 11  
2003 U.S. Open site 11 years in the making ..... 11  
Architect calls for 'good sense' in debate ..... 20

#### COURSE MANAGEMENT

Freedom signs first management agreement ..... 15  
Lottery winner realizes million-dollar dream ..... 15  
Tips for improving super/golf pro relations ..... 15

#### SUPPLIER BUSINESS

SRO to keep on top of turfgrass market ..... 18  
FTC approves Bayer acquisition ..... 18  
Syngenta looks to continue growth ..... 18

PERIODICAL

## POINT

Ron E. Jackson of Meadowbrook Golf and golf industry consultant Michael A. Kahn assess the value of management companies.

Page 4

## COUNTERPOINT

Editorial Focus: Turf & Seed

### Turf Seed forging ahead with naturally Roundup resistant turf

By ANDREW OVERBECK

HUBBARD, Ore. — While it continues to work on transgenic Roundup ready turfgrass, Pure Seed Testing, Turf Seed's research corporation, is also pressing forward with its decade-long effort to develop naturally Roundup resistant turfgrass.

"Ten years ago I asked the marketing guys what they would like to see in the future and they said herbicide resistant grasses," said Pure Seed Testing president Crystal Rose-Fricker. "I decided to start work on Roundup because it was the most accepted herbicide and most usable to kill grassy weeds like Poa annua."

Rose-Fricker has already developed Aurora Gold hard fescue, and Pure Gold and Tomahawk RT tall fescues that tolerate higher than usual rates of Roundup. All three

Continued on page 8



Crystal Rose-Fricker in the field

### Textron continues refocusing efforts

By ANDREW OVERBECK

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — With its manufacturing and engineering facilities mostly consolidated to its Charlotte, N.C., and Ipswich, England, facilities, Textron Golf, Turf and Specialty Products is pushing forward with other initiatives to retool the company.

These ongoing efforts involve condensing product platforms, rolling out a new walk-behind greens mower line and opening a new testing facility that will include a par-3 golf hole. Over the long-term, the company also plans to convert to a build-to-order company instead of a build-to-stock company giving its dealers and distributors more control over inventory and costs.

"Charlotte is the center for turf engineering globally," said Michael Vickers, Textron's new vice president of engineering for turf products. "When we moved here from Racine [Wis.] we assembled a new team of engineers because there were very few people who wanted to transfer down here."

"We ended up with a team that is extremely diverse from both an experience and a industry point of view," he continued. "We have engineers from aircraft, automobile, agricultural and construction."



Michael Vickers

Continued on page 19

### AGC defamation suits proceed in Illinois

By DEREK RICE

GENEVA, Ill. — In late May, Santa Monica, Calif.-based American Golf Corp. (AGC) and disgruntled Eagle Brook Country Club member Tom Doyle finally had their day in court to address lawsuits filed by each side alleging defamation.

AGC alleges that Doyle's Web site that criticizes Eagle Brook is defamatory. Doyle

alleges that he and his wife were defamed when their names were posted at the club as deadbeats. He also claims breach of contract and fraud on the part of AGC-operated Eagle Brook.

At the May 23 hearing, Judge Patrick Dixon set a late-June court date for a preliminary hearing on the suits. At this hearing, both sides will be forced to play all their cards, which is essentially what Doyle said he has been seeking from the beginning.

At issue is the status of maintenance issues at the club, as well as Eagle Brook's insistence that members join a resigning members list and wait for a set number of members to join before existing

Continued on page 16

### Oneidas building on casino, golf successes

By DEREK RICE

ONEIDA, N.Y. — The Oneida Indian Nation has broken ground for construction of the first of two new golf courses to complement its Shenandoah Golf Club at Turning Stone Casino.

"What the nation is looking to do is to shift Turning Stone from a casino that has a golf course to a golf destination that happens to have a casino," said Mark Emery, a spokesman for the Oneida Nation.

The decision to build the two new courses was based on the increased demand for golf in the

area surrounding the casino, Emery said.



The Oneida Indian Nation in New York is building two new golf courses at Turning Point Casino to complement Shenandoah Golf Club, the 12th hole of which is pictured above.

"Golf is very popular here, and people have been thrilled with the

Continued on page 12



## Lottery winner

Continued from previous page

rolling terrain and a mix of open and wooded tracts.

Second, he analyzed the market. There were 19 nine-hole courses within 30 miles but no other 18-hole facilities. Third, he made sure more land was available because he wanted – and knew that golfers wanted – an 18-hole

course. He found out he could buy 76 adjoining acres from farmers.

In October 1996, Lewis plunked down about half of one annual lottery check – \$212,000 – to buy the course. In 1998, \$1 million later, he opened the vastly improved St. James Country Club. Architect Joel Goldstrand built 11 new holes, 13 new greens and revamped the remaining old holes. A tee-to-green irrigation

system was installed, most of the 62 bunkers, cement cart paths and a driving range.

At 6,832 yards from the back tees and with a slope rating of 136, St. James now is considered one of the best courses in southern Minnesota.

With luck and hard work, Lewis had achieved his first goal: building a quality golf course for south central Minnesota.

He's still working on his second goal, making a profit, but he said he's getting closer and has the financial staying power to succeed.

Lewis hired Luckcraft as his PGA pro and general manager. They have marketed the course to cities within a 40-mile radius and are beginning to see results. "I can see light at the end of the tunnel, and I'm pretty sure it's not a freight train coming the

other way," Lewis said in late May, a few days before collecting his annual Powerball payout, which he refers to as "high holy day."

Life as a millionaire golf course owner hasn't been utopia. In 2001, the Watonwan River flooded his course three times. St. James didn't open until May 9, more than a month behind schedule and after losing potentially thousands of dollars in greens fees.

Lewis, who is on the board of the Midwest Golf Course Owners Association, has no plans to buy another course and tries to keep his avocation as simple as possible. The course and 10,000-square-foot clubhouse close every year Nov. 1. Lewis then heads to Arizona for the winter.

He has four full-time employees, including course superintendent Bruce Leivermann. "I have two dynamite guys. Hopefully I stay out of their way," Lewis said.

Yet Lewis, now 65, still is the boss, driving the 100 miles from his home to St. James at least once a week. He's enjoying his newfound power, unlike the old days when he was a rung on the corporate ladder. Now he chairs his own company meetings, often at a local coffee shop.

Lewis even got his way when the course was redesigned: He ordered Goldstrand to build a square green as a marketing tool. The 185-yard seventh hole has one big postage-stamp green — 70 feet wide, 70 feet deep. "I make sure they mow it square," he said. It's the only square green in Minnesota and maybe in the country, he said.

With luck, vision and hard work, Bob Lewis Jr. has put his stamp on golf in southern Minnesota. ■



## BUNKER RENOVATION: CASE STUDY #27

Jack used to struggle with his maintenance budget.

He always looked for ways to control costs yet deliver results.

Over the years, he implemented many new methods and routines.

His bunkers always eluded him.

After most storms, he would spend \$1,800 to \$2,500 on labor,

repairing water damage on his bunkers. Jack was looking for answers to

his bunker problem and found a solution that works.

## TOUGH DECISIONS ... SERIOUS SOLUTIONS

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and ends the routine of sand trap maintenance. It prevents washouts,

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the budget for other important items. He's happy to have found a

serious solution to his elusive bunker problem.

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## AGC case

Continued from page 1

members are allowed to leave.

Doyle also asked the judge to place his \$24,000 membership deposit in escrow because, as he said, if AGC declares bankruptcy, that money – and the money from members of AGC-operated courses across the country – will be lost. Dixon said he was not permitted by law to do that, but, according to the *Daily Herald* (Arlington Heights, Ill.), he did order a hearing to consider extenuating circumstances and determine if AGC is likely to lose its lawsuit and then reconsider freezing the deposit.

AGC is in the midst of a merger with National Golf Properties (NGP), which owns many of the courses AGC manages. The *Los Angeles Times* has indicated that NGP has hinted at bankruptcy in quarterly reports.

Doyle declined to discuss the specifics of the suits at press time, saying that a deal may be in the works. Representatives of AGC did not return calls seeking comment for this story. ■