

Pursell Technologies' FarmLinks taking shape

By ANDREW OVERBECK

FAYETTEVILLE, Ala. — FarmLinks, a groundbreaking golf course project, is taking shape here on the sprawling farmland surrounding Pursell Technologies Inc.'s (PTI) corporate campus.

The 18-hole, Hurdzan/Fry designed FarmLinks, the central focus of Pursell Farms, is two-thirds of the way complete and seeding at the course began in April. President and CEO David Pursell is pressing superintendent Tim Lacy and builder Landscapes Unlimited to have the rolling parkland layout ready for unofficial play in October in time for the bi-annual Pursell Cup charity golf tournament.

Pursell Farms, however, is much more than a golf course. The company built the facility as a testing site for its own controlled-release Polyon fertilizer and other insecticides utilizing its Precise technology. Pursell said there

will be numerous environmental test sites on the property in addition to areas such as the putting green that will be constructed in thirds using three different construction methods.

"One third of the green will be the standard USGA green, one third will be a California green, and the other third will have a sand/Profile soil amendment mix," said Pursell. "The green will also feature 12 different types of bentgrass."

While construction is ongoing, PTI has been bringing in superintendents from across the country to receive product training and indulge in Southern hospitality. Guests now stay in a well-appointed guest lodge that overlooks FarmLinks' 17th green.

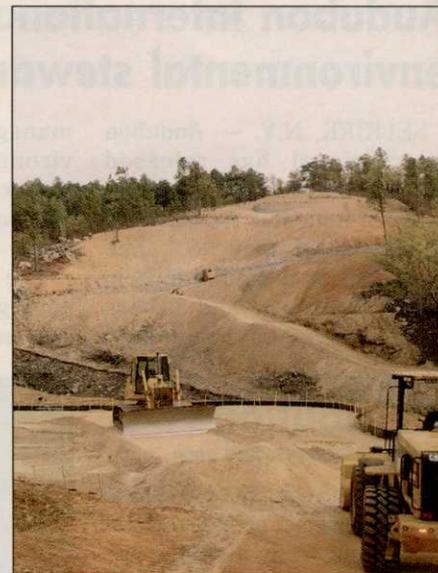
The company, along with its formulators and distributors Simplot Partners and Harrell's, is on track to bring 850 end users to the facility this year.

Last year it brought in approximately 700 end users. Superintendents currently receive .45 continuing education units from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America for participating in the training session and Pursell hopes to up the credits once FarmLinks opens.

In addition to the education and marketing programs, PTI has aligned itself with several top golf suppliers and in the process defrayed the total construction and operating cost of the facility. In return, key sponsors such as the Toro Co., Club Car and Flowtronex will have the ability to bring down end users and use the facility to test new products.

"So far Toro has been helping with the irrigation installation, Flowtronex has provided the pump station and Club Car has provided equipment," said Pursell. "It has been a great collaborative effort so far."

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Bulldozers shape the green on FarmLinks' fifth hole, a 200-plus-yard par three that drops 150 feet from the tee. Pursell will use the course, which is the centerpiece of Pursell Farms, as a testing ground for its products and technologies.

Photo: Andrew Overbeck

Harding Park renovation on track

By DOUG SAUNDERS

SAN FRANCISCO — After four years of debates, proposals, and false starts, the City of San Francisco has finally developed a plan to take on the renovation of city-owned Harding Park Golf Course located on the shore of Lake Merced, just across from the renowned Olympic Club.

In April the San Francisco Board of Supervisors approved a \$15 million renovation plan that will transform the 80-year-old course into a championship-quality venue that will host the 2006 PGA Tour Championship. The approval of city and state funds to finance the much-needed upgrade will allow work to begin in June on an optimistic plan that was first proposed by San Francisco resident and former United States Golf Association president Sandy Tatum in 1998 (GCN April 2000).

The plan to rebuild the neglected course has been a labor of love for Tatum. His first concept was to find a way to make the project economically feasible by securing the presence of the PGA Tour to use the course. The city signed a 35-year lease of the course with Arnold Palmer Golf Management in January 2000 with the intent to let Palmer Golf do the renovation work and allow them to recoup expenditures through a sliding greens fee schedule over the period of the lease.

MANAGEMENT COMPANIES RETREAT

Palmer Management backed out of the agreement in January 2001 when continuous wrangling with city officials, concerned golf groups and environmental activists caused project delays making it economically unfeasible. City officials attempted to attract other

management companies, including KemperSports Management of Chicago, to step into the deal but had no success.

In the past year, new members of the board of supervisors looked



The 18th hole and clubhouse at San Francisco's Harding Park, where renovations are finally underway after years of delays.

Photo: Freddy Bird

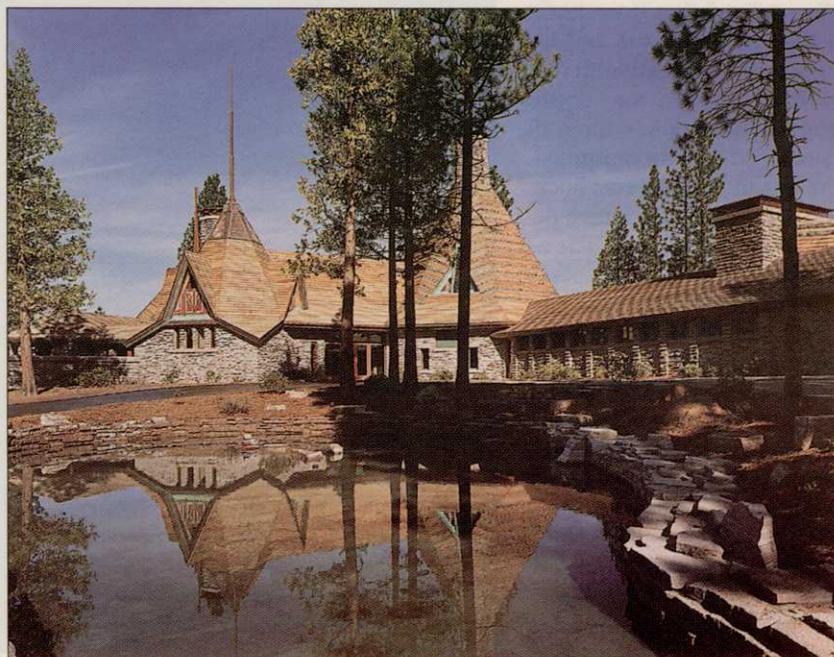
more favorably upon the idea. As a result, the project will be paid for with a combination of \$2 million of city funds and a \$13 million grant from California State Parks bond fund that will be paid back over time through greens fees. The Harding Park complex includes the 18-hole layout, the Fleming Nine executive course, and a driving range and generates close to 160,000 rounds annually.

Board member Tony Hall created the Golf Fund to finance the project and has made it clear that all revenues from greens fees will go back into Harding Park and toward the operations of the other city-owned courses.

"We are going to turn Harding Park into a world-class venue that all the residents of San Francisco can be proud of and we will maintain municipal control over the golf courses," Hall said.

This guarantee addresses a concern voiced by local golf groups who feared that an outside management firm would eventually shut out local players from a rebuilt course. Now a citizens advisory committee will recommend a new fee structure and the parks and recreation

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A CLUBHOUSE 78 YEARS IN THE MAKING

In 1924, architect Frank Lloyd Wright was commissioned to design a clubhouse for the Nakoma Country Club in Madison, Wis. However, the building was never completed — until now. The building, known as Nakoma, was recently completed as the centerpiece of the Taliesin Architects-inspired Gold Mountain Community and the Dragon Golf Course, located 50 miles north of Lake Tahoe. Owners Dariel and Peggy Garner, worked in conjunction with Taliesin Architects, the architectural practice Wright established in 1893, to ensure that the 22,000-square-foot clubhouse, which pays homage to Native Americans, was faithful to the drawings Wright produced 78 years ago.

Photo: Wayne Source

Southeast Partners rolls out low-cost distribution model

By ANDREW OVERBECK

LAGRANGE, Ga. — In a move to improve distribution efficiency and service to golf courses in the Southeast, Butch Gill has teamed up with other industry professionals and suppliers to form Southeast Partners.

In Florida, where the company is established, the alliance brings together suppliers Simplot Partners and Turf Merchants and distributors Sunniland Fertilizers and Vopak. Gill has taken those core competencies and paired them with quality sales representatives and industry notables such as Billy Griffith and David Barnes.

The business arrangement allows for high quality products, represented by

knowledgeable salespeople, to be delivered to superintendents quickly and efficiently. Southeast Partners has been able to jump right into the business cheaply because its model does not require it to purchase any distribution facilities or trucks.

Gill has worked in the seed business for the last 25 years, most recently as a representative for Turf Merchants. He and Turf Merchants president Steve Tubbs came up with the idea for Southeast Partners as an alternative distribution and sales model.

"When AgriBioTech went bankrupt and our largest distributor Terra was bought by Land O'Lakes, we had to find another way

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Joe Jemsek, Chicago's Mr. Golf, dies at 89

CHICAGO, Ill. — Joe Jemsek, Chicago's Mr. Golf and public golf pioneer, died April 2 after a long battle with cancer. He was 89.

Jemsek got into the golf ownership business in the 1950s with the goal of making a private country club experience available to a public golf audience. His com-

pany, Jemsek Golf, owns and operates eight public golf courses in Chicago, including Cog Hill Country Club and St. Andrews Country Club. He bought Cog Hill in 1951, and brought the Western Open to Cog Hill's Dubsdread No. 4 Course in 1990.

Jemsek began his career in golf at age six as a caddie in in the

Chicago suburbs, and worked his way up to golf pro and eventually golf course owner.

Jemsek won numerous accolades over the years including the William D. Richardson Award from the Golf Writers Association of America and the National Golf Foundation's Herb Graffis Award. He was also cho-

sen as the Professional Golfer of the Year by the PGA of America and was inducted into the Chicago Sports Hall of Fame.



Joe Jemsek

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commission will have the final say. But it is certain that a sliding fee schedule will be implemented that will keep greens fees lower for city residents and will see fees for out of town players increase substantially.

A COMPLETE REBUILD

The year-long project will implement a redesign that was drawn up by the Palmer group with input from Tatum and PGA Tour course consultant Chris Gray. After eliminating the current turf stands of broadleaf weeds, the layout will receive a new irrigation and drainage system, soil improvements, greens rebuilt to USGA specs, and new bunkers and tees. Some holes will be lengthened to accommodate the Tour Championship. In addition, the Fleming Nine will be completely rebuilt, a new driving range will be located near the new clubhouse, and a First Tee Program sponsored by the PGA of America will be added to the complex.

Shawn Sweeney, an area supervisor for the department of parks and recreation, will oversee the renovation project.

"We have several firms bidding on the renovation work at this time. Our city workers will be sent to other projects while the major construction work is done. Once we start planting the new courses, we will increase our staff at Harding from 12 to 17 workers. It is important the city finally took control of this much-needed project," Sweeney said.

PGA Tour officials have agreed to bring the Tour Championship to the new Harding Park every third year starting in 2006. Earlier plans called for the Tour to pay \$500,000 in fees for each visit, which will help to pay off the bond loans. It is estimated that each visit by the Tour will generate over \$20 million to the local economy.

No one will be happier when work begins than Tatum, whose vision has remained true to save a great public course for his hometown.

"I understand how much it matters to play a really great golf course in wonderful condition, what it does to the entire experience," Tatum said. "I also understand there's a concept about municipal golf that it's okay for municipal golfers to be given a third-rate experience. One of the things this project can do is demonstrate just how dead wrong that is." ■

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