Investors snag Western Golf

New owners move company to Southern California, hand reins to longtime exec. Heath

Western Golf Properties Inc. manages eight golf courses, including Stonewall Golf Club in Gainesville, Va., pictured above.

BY DEREK RICE

SANTA ANA, Calif. — A group of private investors based in Southern California, including former Western operations executive Bobby Heath, acquired Phoenix, Ariz.-based Western Golf Properties Inc., an 18-year-old management and development company, last month. Financial terms were not disclosed.

As a result, the company planned to relocate its headquarters to Santa Ana location. The new owners selected Heath to become the company's president, effective in March. Heath, who will replace Western Golf founder Joe Black, said he hopes to guide the company through what are rough times for the golf industry.

"We are faced with an increasingly competitive environment at each property, making the focus on driving revenue paramount, while adjusting operating costs as necessary to achieve net operating income," Heath said. "That being said, my vision is to infuse marketing savvy into our current management style."

Officials at Western Golf declined to discuss the transaction in detail before Golf Course News went to press. In a statement, the Continued on page 14

In spite of drought

Black Hills blooming

BY DEREK RICE

RAPID CITY, S.D. — In the shadow of the Black Hills in South Dakota, architect Ron Farris is putting the finishing touches on the Golf Club at Red Rock, nine holes of which should open this month, against Farris' advice.

"It's not perfect, but that's okay," Farris said. "It's not perfect, but that's mostly because of the drought last year."

Red Rock is one of seven active South Dakota projects according to the National Golf Foundation. The crown jewel of this group, Farris said, is the Graham Marsh-designed Sutton Bay Golf

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Carlson leads on county green standards

BY ANDREW OVERBECK

VENICE, Fla. — When superintendent Tom Carlson here at The Venice Golf and Country Club achieved Audubon certification, he wasted little time sharing the club’s accomplishments with the surrounding community.

From giving Sarasota County a water management and environmental officials tours of the course to making presentations at other area clubs during member-guest outings, Carlson has been busy spreading the word. However, his latest community effort will have a much broader impact. Carlson is part of an advisory committee that is creating future golf course development and management standards for Sarasota County.

“When I came to Venice Golf and Country Club I made it clear that I was not comfortable living up to standards, I wanted to set standards,” said Carlson. "I hope these actions lead to sustainable community development."

Sarasota County’s Board of Commissioners charged Continued on page 20
BASF set to grow
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to tie these two divisions back together and have one specialty group."

Briggs has already made inroads by integrating the mostly post-patent chemistry from TopPro into the BASF product line. The turf and ornamental products include Curasan and Propiconazole fungicides, Vaxline and Basagran herbicides and Amidro Pro fire ant bait.

While work on selecting which products will be pulled forward is ongoing, Briggs said the new portfolio will be comprehensive. "BASF is strong in herbicides and TopPro has one of the broadest turf fungicide portfolios," he said. "BASF is awaiting two new fungicides [Insignia and Emerald]. So if you take what BASF has coming in 2003, and the post-patent chemistry from TopPro, we will have the market needs covered."

According to Briggs, approval from the Environmental Protection Agency is expected on Insignia and Emerald by mid-summer. The products will likely not be available until the 2004 season. Another significant boost to BASF's product offering is slated to come with Bayer ES's divestiture of its fipronil products, which include insecticides Chipco Choice, Top Choice and Firestar. Briggs said the deal would allow the licensing back of the products, including the trade names, to Bayer ES. The U.S. Federal Trade Commission approved the deal Feb. 14, and at press time both parties were waiting to hear from the European Commission.

"Fipronil will really complete the line," said Briggs. "It is a very effective insecticide."

Syngenta partners with Pursell Farms
FAYETTEVILLE, Ala. — Pursell Technologies Inc. has added another industry sponsor to its budding 18-hole research and demonstration golf course. FarmLinks at Pursell Farms is set to open in early June.

Pursell Technologies developed FarmLinks to provide the industry with an outdoor working laboratory to test new products and maintenance practices that will benefit the industry.

"Syngenta will be using the FarmLinks facility to test products and management solutions," said Joe DiPaola, Ph.D., golf market manager for Syngenta. "We'll be supplying pest control products for the course and working with the FarmLinks staff to demonstrate our solutions approach to turf problems."

FarmLinks at Pursell Farms is the venue for the PTI Tour program. Each year, Pursell Technologies brings in more than 1,000 professionals from the golf, turf and horticulture industries to visit Pursell Farms for two to three days of learning, recreation and relaxation. FarmLinks is designed to showcase 18 holes of experiments to tour attendees, where they can learn about products, equipment and turf management practices.

Lesco expanding
Continued from previous page

The company is also opening new Service Centers and 30 Lesco Stores-on-Wheels with regional stocking assortments and improved transportation services. The company is also opening new Service Centers, which are expected to generate approximately $10 million of net sales in 2003, bringing the total net sales increase to a range of 6 to 8 percent. Lesco opened a new Service Center in Haverhill, Mass., on April 2, the first of 23 new outlets that the company plans to open in 2003. DiMino said Lesco has identified major U.S. markets that could support more than 500 additional stores.

"In order to maximize the long-term value inherent in the Lesco model, we have to open additional Service Centers. We should always have a group of stores entering their third year of operation," said DiMino. "In the third year stores become profitable and they begin to pay the costs of new stores. Unfortunately, Lesco has not opened new stores since 1998 and for the next two years we will have to pay for store openings through the sacrifice of short-term earnings."

Lesco has one of the broadest turf fungicide portfolios, which include Curalan and Propiconazole fungicides, Vaxline and Basagran herbicides and Amidro Pro fire ant bait. While work on selecting which products will be pulled forward is ongoing, Briggs said the new portfolio will be comprehensive. "BASF is strong in herbicides and TopPro has one of the broadest turf fungicide portfolios," he said. "BASF is awaiting two new fungicides [Insignia and Emerald]. So if you take what BASF has coming in 2003, and the post-patent chemistry from TopPro, we will have the market needs covered."

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