

GOLF COURSE NEWS

THE BUSINESS NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

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The USGA's James Moore and Dr. Michael Hurdzan debate the merits of USGA greens vs. California greens.

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COUNTERPOINT

BASF packs specialty portfolio

By ANDREW OVERBECK

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, N.C. — With the integration of its TopPro Specialties subsidiary, the pending approval to market fipronil insecticides and the expected registration of two new fungicides, BASF's professional turf and ornamental group is poised for rapid expansion.

The group also recently reorganized its upper management, sales force and customer service teams. Former TopPro vice president Stephen Briggs is the new director of BASF's Specialty Products Department (SPD) which includes the turf and ornamental group.

"When BASF acquired MicroFlo [TopPro's parent company] in 1998 they didn't have a specialty group so they kept it as a subsidiary in Memphis, Tenn.," said Briggs. "With the American Cyanamid acquisition in 2000, they now had two specialty groups that were going to the same or similar markets with similar customers. It was decided based on customer input and efficiency within the organization

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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 presi-

dent, 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 a heightened level of business and 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

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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.

"You'd love to have as much maturity as possible on a golf course," he 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 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

sory 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

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Carlson is restoring natural wetlands at Venice G&CC.

effort will have a much broader impact. Carlson is part of an advi-

Black Hills find green

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Club scheduled to open this year in Agar. "Sutton Bay is just a beautiful golf course," Farris said. "It sits on what used to be a 30,000-acre ranch, so they won't have any development anywhere around them."

The development of quality golf courses in South Dakota may lead to a greater

influx of tourists, Farris said, but there is no formal plan underway to draw them. He said he hopes golf will complement two of the state's already strong tourist attractions: Mount Rushmore and pheasant hunting.

"I was always surprised that golf was not as promoted. Granted, people don't look at South Dakota and think, 'What a weather Mecca,'" Farris said. "We have a tremen-

dous amount of pheasant hunting that takes place here. People fly in from all over just to come pheasant hunting here, so Sutton Bay will have a hand in that.

"There's also three million people who come out here to visit Mount Rushmore every year," he added. "Red Rock is about 15 minutes away. I just don't think people

have really marketed it."

While the private Sutton Bay will offer hunting, fishing and a sporting clay course based out of its lodge accommodations, Red Rock will offer \$27 green fees, which Farris described as a steal.

"There's something for everybody here," he said. ■



Architect Ron Farris said Sutton Bay is the crown jewel among the courses set to open in South Dakota this year.

Dye blasts changes in design, technology

Continued from page 10

against all those women who play the golf courses every Tuesday morning."

Dye also said many golf course developers start off on the wrong foot when building golf courses. According to Dye, too many owners and developers try to cut costs by not hiring a superintendent until after construction and sometimes grow-in are complete. Dye said ideally, a superintendent should be on-site long before groundbreaking.

"Hell, they should be there before I get there," he said. "The developers who start these things, they don't have any knowledge about what they're doing. They always think they can save \$3.75 by letting the contractor run around out there, screwing up the golf course. Then they wait until after we're gone and bring the poor guy in there blind and he's trying to fix all the mistakes. You can sympathize with them a little bit because they don't know."

However, Dye said he wouldn't refuse a job simply because the developer hadn't yet hired a superintendent.

"I go in and say, 'Look, you should have a golf course superintendent,' but the owners are putting up the money, so you've got to go along with it because you want to live, you don't want to starve," he said. "I try to get them to hire a superintendent on the job. I believe the superintendent doesn't come there just to watch, he comes there work, and he puts his crew together right there in the beginning because they're going to have to take it over."

If a contractor won't hire a superintendent during construction, Dye said he hopes they will do so before grow-in at the very least.

"I can't ever understand why they want a golf course contractor to grow in a golf course. That's about the damndest thing I've ever listened to," he said. "I think the superintendent should take charge and grow in every golf course. It's crazy to have a guy running a bulldozer one day and the next day cutting the greens. But it happens all the time."

One area where Dye differs from many architects is in contracts. He said while he realizes he should have one for every job, he never signs one.

"I should have a contract when I design a golf course for people, but I've always found that no matter whether I have a contract, the owner has a hell of a lot more money and a lot more lawyers than I do. So I don't have a contract," Dye said. "He can fire me anytime he wants to, and a lot of them have."

When it comes to bunker placement in his designs, Dye said his philosophy has changed over the years, mainly because he has designed so many TPC and other tournament courses. Today's players, he said, have more or less perfected their bunker play.

"I used to put all my bunkers real tight to the greens, but they can get in there and pop it up, no problem," he said. "So now I'm trying to make the bunkers where the ball will kick farther away and make a longer bunker shot to the green." ■

Sunday River course

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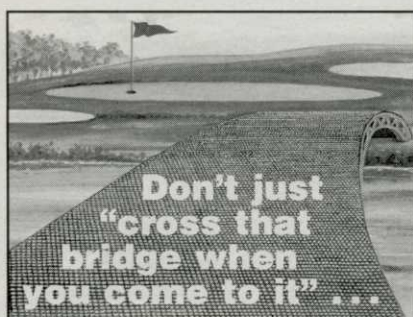
its neighboring New England states. Jones designed the course at Sugarloaf/USA, which is also owned by Sunday River's parent company, American Skiing Co. In a statement, Jones expressed his pleasure that the course would go forward.

"I am so pleased to hear that the Sunday River golf course is going to be completed. In the initial design phase we were delighted to find that the terrain was terrific and well-suited for golf with a lot of similarities between

the land and nearby Sugarloaf Golf Course," Jones said. "I know this will be a great golf course with fairways that are a little wider, more forgiving and player-friendly. We think it's a great venue and look forward to the first round."

Harris Golf will oversee construction at the course, while Ty Butler in Jones' Charlotte, N.C., office will make occasional visits to the course during the development.

Golf Course News will continue to follow this project as it progresses in our backyard. Look for updates on the construction in future issues.



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