

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

THE BUSINESS NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

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Kevin J. Ross, CGCS, and Audubon International's Kevin A. Fletcher debate the value of Audubon's certification program.

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## COUNTERPOINT

## Rebranding: Textron to go with Jacobsen

By ANDREW OVERBECK

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — As part of its second rebranding strategy in as many years, Textron Golf, Turf and Specialty Products has changed its name to Jacobsen Turf, Commercial and Specialty Equipment. The company will officially announce the name change and introduce several new products at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Show in Atlanta this month.

Last fall, Textron adopted orange as its flagship color to visually unify its four major brands: Jacobsen, Cushman, Ryan and Ransomes.

The recently announced rebranding strategy will go much deeper than the paint job. The Cushman and Ryan names will be folded into the Jacobsen brand, joining the Ransomes products that were rebranded last year. For the first time, commercial landscape products will also be branded Jacobsen.

"We did some research over the last year and a half that indicates there has been fragmentation in

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## Palmer Design gets boost in 2002



The 8th hole at the Palmer-designed Rivertowne Country Club outside Charleston, S.C., which opened last year.

By DEREK RICE

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla. — Despite the amount of negative news coming out of the golf course industry, 2002 was a banner year for Palmer Course Design, according to Erik Larson, the company's vice president and general manager.

The company experienced larger than average revenue increases last year as compared to 2001, Larson said.

"It wasn't just double-digit growth, it was 25 percent in revenue," he said. "We picked up two new markets — offshore construction and we've also started a remodel program that

has been very helpful."

Larson also said the company expects revenue growth in 2003.

"We're going to have a good year this year too — good being up from last year," he said. "What percentage I can't predict, but I would say it's going to be in the five to 10 percent range, and we're comfortable in that prediction."

While the offshore market has been lucrative of late, Larson said it is often unpredictable and lags behind trends in the United States.

"The offshore market is always herky-jerky," he said. "When things go down here, it tends to pick up there because they follow the trend that happened here a

couple years prior."

The company's remodel program, called Charger Series, is a new addition to its menu of services and has seen a very positive response, Larson said.

"With this program, the improvements are endorsed as

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## Court ruling puts Gotham Golf future in limbo

By DEREK RICE

HERSHEY, Pa. — The last several weeks have seen the fortunes of a Gotham Golf Corp. merger with First Union Real Estate Equity and Mortgage rise and fall on almost a daily basis.

At press time, the merger seemed as far from a done deal as it has been since it was first discussed nearly three years ago. The Wall Street Journal reported that William Ackman, co-head of Gotham Partners Management Co., a \$300 million hedge fund, announced to investors that he and partner David Berkowitz were shutting down their fund. Ackman also said Gotham Golf,

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## Deere to test hydrogen fuel cell technology

By ANDREW OVERBECK

MOLINE, Ill. — As part of an effort to explore alternative fuel options across all of its product lines, Deere & Co. has partnered with Canadian fuel cell manufacturer Hydrogenics Corp. to develop a modified Pro-Gator demonstration vehicle that uses a hydrogen fuel cell.

The project is being handled by Deere & Co.'s new ePower Technologies Group that was set up last year to evaluate alternative fuel technologies and see how well

they fit into the company's plans for future products.

"We are learning how to apply



An engineering diagram of Deere's hydrogen-powered Pro-Gator

these technologies to a variety of our products and some of the first

candidates are going to be some of our golf equipment like mowers and utility vehicles," said engineer Bruce Wood, director of the ePower group. "These are products where the hydrogen fuel cell can do something better than a diesel engine or a battery. The technology has made enormous strides in the last couple of years."

Wood said Deere turned to Hydrogenics because they are a leader in

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## Textron takes Jacobsen name, introduces new products

Continued from page 1

the marketplace as a result of having multiple brands," said Jacobsen's Joe Zvanut.

The rebranding move is part of an ongoing consolidation strategy within the company. In 2001 it began a process that consolidated product engineering and design, sales, marketing and customer service and support into three locations. The turf

care division operates out of Charlotte, the utility vehicle division is based in Augusta, Ga., and commercial grounds care is based in Johnson Creek, Wis. As part of this strategy, the firm also streamlined product lines and reduced costs in manufacturing, distribution, procurement and warehousing.

While Zvanut said the consolidation process is still ongoing, he

added that the company will count on several new products to drive its growth in the golf market.

Among the products that Jacobsen will be introducing in Atlanta are two new walk-behind greens mowers.

The patented E-Walk electric greens mower uses two 48V electric motors that independently drive the ground speed and clip frequency. It uses snap-in/snap-out sealed battery packs and is lighter than a comparable gasoline-powered unit.

"It is pollution-free and noise-free," said Zvanut. "And it has no oil or hydraulic fluid. This is a growing market segment."

Depending on the size and un-



The E-walk has two 48V electric motors

dulation of the green, the E-Walk will be able to mow 18 greens with two to three battery pack changes.

Jacobsen's Tournament Cut-22

is squarely aimed at Toro's Flex-21 mower that has been a hot-seller over the past two years.

The Tournament Cut-22 has floating head reels allowing it to move horizontally, vertically and from side-to-side to eliminate scalping on severely undulating greens. The unit will be available with 4-hp Honda engine or with the new 48V electric power system.

In addition to the walk-behind mowers, Zvanut said the company will unveil a new fairway mower, a PTO-driven verticutter, and a new line of utility vehicles in Atlanta. ■

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## Mihailides, Reelcraft developing market

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projects," he said. "We need to get consultants and distributors involved to spec the product."

However, since irrigation sales depend on slimmer and slimmer margins, Mihailides is finding it difficult to penetrate the market with such a cost-prohibitive product. While it is difficult to argue the convenience of having an underground, constantly pressurized hose next to a green to control hot spots and localized dry spots, it has been difficult for some superintendents to get past the price point.

"Our underground reel costs \$1,450 with a 75-foot hose attached. A quick coupler, pressurized isolation valve, hose and fit-

tings costs \$400 and the hose can be used all over the course," said Mihailides. "So there is a price difference. But we are also saving courses labor, time and wear and tear on equipment."

"This keeps the hose right at hand and saves water because you only have to water as much as is needed," he continued. "Instead of sending four or five guys out to hand-water all day long, one guy can do it."

Product benefits aside,

Mihailides realizes that he has a challenge ahead.

"We have a brand-new product and no competition," he said.



The pressurized, retractable hose is hidden underground.

One way he hopes to build awareness is to produce private-label products. "That way," said Mihailides, "superintendents won't say 'Why should I buy this' but 'Who should I buy it from?'"

In a move to expand the product line beyond underground reels, Reelcraft has also introduced a trailer-mounted reel to allow golf courses to more easily transport hose around the golf course. The unit hooks into the back of a utility vehicle. ■

## Wireless rotor

Continued from page 24

identification information via a handheld device. That information is then transferred to the central control system, allowing the rotor to be operated with the central control, Rain Bird's Freedom System, or manually. Pricing for the wireless system has not been released.

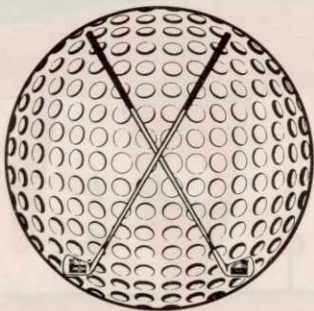
According to Sakurai, the wireless rotor will offer many advantages when it comes to renovation work.

"Wireless technology provides the necessary installation flexibility and makes retrofits and additions simple," he said. "There is no turf damage from trenching, limiting downtime in play." ■

— Andrew Overbeck

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