

GOLF COURSE NEWS

Editorial focus:
Speed of Play ...19

THE BUSINESS NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

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INSIDE

Thundering tee shots

Winterstone GC will open on time and operate normally while underground excavation and blasting continues 14

Pin placement simplified

Golftech is helping courses identify hole locations with its GPS-based slope zone analysis mapping solution 23

COURSE MAINTENANCE 8

- UMass researcher determines pesticide exposure rates
- Tools of the Trade at Elliot's Colonial Country Club
- Nikolai suggests describing greens in terms of contour

DEVELOPMENT & RENOVATION 14

- Oakland's Metropolitan Golf Links opens after eight years
- Doak hopes to open doors for future architects
- ASL, Willowbend observe strict construction standards

COURSE MANAGEMENT 19

- GMAC Commercial Mortgage enters golf lending sector
- Forecaddies contribute to bottom line at Bear's Best
- GolfGM offers equipment financing program

SUPPLIER BUSINESS 23

- BioSafe Systems rolls out Greenside Injection unit for custom applications
- JustAir jumps into subsurface aeration business
- New products abound

POINT

PGA vice president of agronomy Jon Scott and architect Mike DeVries debate whether green speed thrills or kills.

Page 6

COUNTERPOINT

Bayer ES to retain Chipco product line

By ANDREW OVERBECK

MONTVALE, N.J. — Bayer ES has reached an agreement with regulatory officials and BASF AG on the divestiture of its key insecticide active ingredient fipronil. The deal includes back-licenses that allow Bayer ES to continue to market fipronil products, including the Chipco Choice line, to the turf and ornamental markets worldwide. BASF, which bought fipronil, will have rights to the active ingredient in the global professional pest control and agricultural markets.

The divestiture of fipronil and other fungicides was required by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission and European Commission as part of Bayer CropScience's acquisition Aventis CropScience. The planned divestiture was announced in late October and negotiations between Bayer ES and BASF finally wrapped up after the European Commission approved the deal March 24.

Retaining rights to market the Chipco products in the turf and ornamental market gives Bayer ES a solid insecticide lineup.

Continued on page 27

MUNICIPAL GOLF UNDER SIEGE



Sassamon Trace Golf Course in Natick, Mass., is one of several municipal courses nationwide experiencing financial hardship.

By DEREK RICE

NATICK, Mass. — In March, the executive-length Sassamon Trace Golf Course became the focal point of an election for town selectman when a candidate proposed closing or selling the course, which was projected to lose \$300,000 in its fiscal year ending June 30.

While this case took place on a small scale — an executive course in a small town — it illustrates the challenges facing municipalities across the country. In a down economy, towns and cities look to improve their fiscal bottom line. And with course revenues

and rounds played numbers either flat or falling nationwide (see story below), municipal golf courses can be seen as good targets for cutting costs.

"It's the towns, cities and golf courses that lose out," said Pat Berger, business manager for Boston-based Sterling Golf Management, which operates Sassamon Trace.

The town of Natick also considered terminating its agreement with Sterling. The town's finance committee has approved the course's \$400,000 budget, which will carry operations through December, or until the Sterling

contract runs out. At press time, the budget still needed to be approved at an April town meeting.

Beyond December, the course's future is uncertain. Before that time, the town will consider whether to renew the contract

Continued on page 17

Editorial Focus: Putting Green Management

Morris' Stimpmeter study reveals optimum speed

By ANDREW OVERBECK

FRANKFORT, Mich. — The Stimpmeter has never been a superintendent's best friend, but here at Crystal Downs Country Club, Mike Morris has changed all that. After an exhaustive two-year study that included Stimping two greens twice a day, collecting weather data, recording cultural practices and surveying members, Morris has determined the optimum green speed for the 1933



Asst. superintendent Don Roth checks out a pin placement.

Alister MacKenzie and Perry Maxwell-designed layout.

"We never had a problem with green speed before," said Morris. "But the issue arose at the club after we had a course come in up the street that had A4 bentgrass greens that were fast as lightning. All of a sudden it became a problem.

"The greens committee wanted to know two things: What is the most appropriate green speed for our golf course, and what is

Continued on page 11

Rounds dip, revenues flat

By DEREK RICE

JUPITER, Fla. — According to the National Golf Foundation (NGF), two out of every three golf facilities in the United States reported a decrease in rounds played in 2002. In addition, the NGF said, revenues at facilities were flat, thus creating a potentially dangerous mix for the golf industry.

The research study, conducted in conjunction with several industry organizations, showed rounds played dropped three percent from 2001 levels. Revenues increased, but only by 0.9 percent, according to the NGF. These numbers came from a January 2003 survey of 2,191 golf

Continued on page 22

SUPPLIER BUSINESS

Bayer ES keeps Chipco line

Continued from page 1

"It is a very strong product line and it gives us a good strong position in South with fire ant control and mole cricket control," said Jim Fetter, director of marketing for Bayer ES. "We are clearly the leader in terms of insecticides and this helps us maintain our strong leadership position there. These products are new, patented, proprietary products and are rapidly growing because they have been introduced within the last five years. They are on a strong growth curve."



Jim Fetter

The deal ends months of speculation about how the back-license of fipronil products would be structured.

"There was negotiation going on," Fetter said. "It has been up in the air because it is a complicated deal. You have to work out all the details about which assets go, which plants are included and all that kind of stuff. It has taken time to work out the details." ■



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