PBI/Gordon, Mitsui Team Up
Kansas City-based PBI/Gordon made an agreement with Mitsui Chemicals Agro Inc. of Tokyo that gives PBI/Gordon marketing rights to dinotefuran in the United States golf market, as well as certain rights in other professional turf and ornamental markets. Mitsui Chemicals Agro is a subsidiary of Mitsui Chemicals. Dinotefuran is a neonicotinoid insecticide that will be marketed by PBI/Gordon in two formulations, a 20SG (soluble granule) for turf and a 10SL (soluble liquid) for ornamental insect pests. Product availability is expected in 2010. The trade name and pricing of the product will soon be announced. “As a United States marketing partner with Mitsui, we are excited to bring dinotefuran to the U.S. golf and professional turf and ornamental markets,” said Tom Hoffman, vice president of product development for PBI/Gordon.

Valent Appoints Blome as EVP, COO
Jim Blome was named executive vice president and chief operating officer of Walnut Creek, Calif.-based Valent U.S.A. In his new role, Blome will oversee all day-to-day operations of the company’s agricultural, professional and consumer products business units in the United States and Canada. In his new position, Blome will work closely with Valent’s leadership team to continue the company’s growth, which in recent years has included several introductions of new products and active ingredients.

Industry Will Miss Mike Daly
Mike Daly, whose industry career spanned more than 20 years, passed away in April. Daly was the executive director of the Professional Grounds Management Society at the time of his death.

LEBANONTURF'S MIKE SISTI
MOVED BY PARTICIPATING IN RENEWAL & REMEMBRANCE EVENT AT ARLINGTON NATIONAL

By Mike Sisti

There are more than 330,000 men and women — veterans and military casualties from every war our nation has fought since the Civil War — buried on the 624 acres of Arlington National Cemetery. One day each year the green industry has the unique privilege of rolling up its collective sleeves and paying its respects.

This was the first year I participated in the event. I thought I was prepared for the emotion I would experience, but I was wrong.

My work group, which included several veterans, was assigned the liming detail for 255 acres of turf. Other groups were deployed to different parts of the cemetery to aerate, plant and prune, as well as cable and brace trees and install lightning protection.

We had been working for only a short time when we heard the sounds of a funeral procession. First the band members; then the caisson team of seven white horses, one with a soldier’s boots turned backward in the stirrups; and a horse-drawn carriage holding a casket draped with an American flag.

We stopped our work, turned off our machines and removed our caps. We stood in silence for several minutes as one of 29 funeral processions passed through the cemetery. As we stepped back into our work, I was humbled by the honor and sacrifice of those who protect our freedom.

Editor's note: Mike Sisti, marketing manager for Lebanon Turf, was among more than 400 members of the green industry who spent July 13 in Washington helping maintain the grounds at Arlington National Cemetery as part of the 13th annual Renewal & Remembrance event conducted by the Professional Landcare Network. Many of the landscape and lawn-care professionals also visited lawmakers on Capitol Hill on July 14 to discuss issues facing the industry.
Off The Fringe

Genuine Jim

NICOL HOSTS A SECOND PGA CHAMPIONSHIP, BUT, NO, HE’S NOT MORE RELAXED ABOUT IT

It seems like just yesterday we profiled Jim Nicol in Golfdom as a preview for the 84th PGA Championship at Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minn. But it was seven years ago! The 57-year-old Nicol and Hazeltine are back this year to host another PGA Championship, set for Aug. 10-16, at the Robert Trent Jones Sr.-designed track.

Nicol is a Minnesota boy, who grew up in St. Cloud, about 75 miles northwest of the Twin Cities. He began his golf course maintenance career when he was 14, mowing greens part-time at St. Cloud Country Club. Nicol joined the course’s maintenance crew full-time soon afterward. He enjoyed the job and loved working outside. He began to entertain thoughts of a career in the field when he graduated from high school.

“Every year [after the season], I watched the [St. Cloud] superintendent get in his car and drive to Florida for the winter,” Nicol said. “I thought to myself, ‘This guy has it figured out.’”

Times have changed, and Nicol might not head South every winter, but he’s enjoying life as a superintendent. Golfdom caught up with him recently to talk about hosting his second PGA Championship.

Are you a little more relaxed preparing for the tournament this time around? Not really. There is always some new challenge, and one should never relax under these circumstances.

What’s the key to preparing for a tournament like this? Surrounding yourself with good people, which I believe I have.

What’s your biggest agronomic challenge on the golf course in getting ready for the tournament? Making sure the course will be able to handle the intensity for seven days in August.

Last time the PGA Championship was held here, you had an uncooperative and cold spring to grow grass. How was the spring this year for growing grass? Not good. We have winter damage that is slow to recover due to the cold, dry spring. We have been too dry as Beth page was too wet.

In 2002, the course played 7,350 yards. What will it play this year, and what changes have occurred to the course? The course

Continued on page 16

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“Only 18 percent of golfers have registered handicaps. So I ask you, ‘Who are we building golf courses for?’”

— Golf Course Architect Bobby Weed on the misguided direction the golf course industry has taken by building courses that are too difficult for average players.

“It’s hard to believe I was swinging a club at that age. But she certainly has my temper. ... She doesn’t like for me to help her hold a golf club. She’ll figure it out for herself. Sounds very familiar.”

— Tiger Woods on his daughter Sam, who recently turned 2 years old. Tiger admits Sam is a chip off the old block.

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Looking ‘Fine’ and Dandy
FINE FESCUES MAKING THEIR MARK, ACCORDING TO SEED RESEARCHERS
By Ron Hall

Until recently, fine fescues have, to some extent, been the forgotten stepchild in the turfgrass picture. Bluegrasses, ryegrasses and turf-type tall fescues have generated the most excitement regarding breeding advancements and new varieties. But these popular cool-season species now have to share the spotlight with fine fescues. The fine-leafed, bunch-type grass, known for its cold tolerance and environmental benefits, has boosted its popularity.

“The idea of looking at alternative grasses that use less fertilize and water is what we’re looking at,” said Wayne Horman, at the recent Scotts Professional Seed/Pure-Seed Testing Field Day in Rolesville, N.C. “These are attributes of fine fescues, along with their ability to survive and look good in moderate shade.”

Horman, national accounts manager for Scotts Professional Seed, said golf course superintendents especially are getting the message, often taking out five to eight acres of other species and replacing them with fine fescues because of the savings to their fertilizer and water budgets.

“We’re going to try to take these grasses a step further,” said Horman about the breeding and selection program at the North Carolina research farm. “We’re going to try everything with them.”

Kevin Turner, who heads Scotts Professional Seed Oregon program, reiterated Horman’s comments regarding fine fescue’s usefulness. “Fine fescue is an under-utilized grass,” he said.

One visitor to the field day said fine fescue is a grass that “really wants to be left alone and ignored, and generally doesn’t like a lot of fertilizer, water or even a lot of maintenance.”

As an interesting side note to the field day, David Huff, Ph.D., associate professor of turfgrass breeding and genetics at Penn State University, said there is confusion surrounding the identification and marketing of the various types of fine fescues, generally broken down into creeping red, chewings, sheep and hard fescues.

Huff suggested renaming the types as blue hard fescue and American sheep fescue to tell them apart and to aid architects and others when they specify a particular type of fine fescue for a project.
PRIVILEGE Continued from page 8
sions scheduled for this day moved past us and to
the gravesite of another American hero. Then we
turned on our machines and got back to work,
reminded that, on this most hallowed ground, we
were united as a team, united as an industry and
united as Americans.

The next day, many of us traded our work
clothes for coats and ties to visit lawmakers on
Capitol Hill. I had meetings with Pennsylvania
Congressman Jim Gerlach and with aides for New
Jersey Congressmen Rush Holt and Rob Andrews.
I wish I could say I left Washington feeling that
our messages concerning pending water legislation,
health care for small businesses and immigration
labor laws were heard loud and clear. There are ob-
viously some lawmakers who understand the
issues and others who just don’t get it when it
comes to the contributions of our industry and
the corresponding need for their support. It was a
strong reminder we need to continue the education
process, and that the 13th Renewal & Remem-
brance event can’t be our last.

JIM Continued from page 10
will play somewhere around 7,650 yards. There are too many
changes to list since 2002. We repositioned 18 bunkers, added
10 bunkers and added length on 12 holes.
In 50 words or less, describe how the course’s greens will play for the
tournament? They will be at championship speeds and fairly
firm. They are bentgrass/Poa (until next summer), and our
main goal is have them smooth. There are subtle breaks, which
make them a little tricky when the speed is up.
Has Jim Nicol changed at all since the last PGA Championship?
My hair is a lighter color, and I might have mellowed some.
How do you handle the pressure that comes with staging a tournament
like this? Stay focused and remain true to what the mission is.
Get some sleep and take a little time for family and friends.
You also need to depend on the lead crew members.
Who’s your favorite player on the PGA Tour and why?
Tim Herron is a great guy who I have followed since his high school days. He
calls me “Jimmy” and gives me a cigar once in a while when he is
out here. Tom Lehman is also very kind but no cigars.
What will you do Sunday night after the tournament?
Have a short
celebration with the crew and get ready for the outing on
Monday morning. I’m going to take the following weekend off
(I hope) to fish and ...

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