

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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INSIDE

Buyer's Guide

The inaugural *Golf Course News* Buyer's Guide will land on your doorstep next month 8

On the green

Having a problem with the build-up of clay silt, even on sandy soil? Check the water source 38

Summit summary

Representatives of the golf industry descended on Orlando last month. We've got the highlights 3



Photo: Golf Course Designers

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

Lou Cappelli tackles a natural obstacle while shaping Ventana Canyon Golf and Racquet Club in Tucson, Ariz. Find out about the life and art of shaping on page 21.

COURSE MAINTENANCE

Canadian supers in Halifax — a show preview 11
Peers provide practical advice on HydroJect 11
In Focus: Canada's Superintendent of the Year 12

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Reclaimed water issues in Florida and Arizona 19
Developers hope tourists find The Lost City 17
New course listings 20

COURSE MANAGEMENT

Investment pools growing as funding sources 25
ClubCorp looks for electronic exposure 25
Wild Dunes aids Florida course in Andrew's wake 27

SUPPLIER BUSINESS

Giving seed a seal of approval 29
Deere honored for form, rather than function 30
What's new in the marketplace 32

Congress controls fate of military courses

By PETER BLAIS

The battle brewing over control of the military's 240 golf courses could be settled in early 1993.

That's when Congress is likely to act on Sen. Dennis DeConcini's (D-Ariz.) bill to turn operation of the facilities over to private management companies and open them to the public.

Management companies, most notably American Golf Corp., are lining up behind the idea, claiming DeConcini's Senior Government Officer Benefit Limitation Act will provide public golfers with more places to play, improve services at the government layouts and make more money for a fiscally strapped federal government.

The Pentagon is generally opposed, arguing that opening the courses to private managers and public play would jeopardize security at sensitive military installations, deprive service men and women of a well-deserved benefit and reduce funding for non-profit activities currently subsidized by golf course revenues.

"Golf courses are something the military is involved in that they don't need to be," said Shannon Brown, a DeConcini staffer.

Countered David Moffett,

Continued on page 28



Rogers Innovative Inc. created this wax-cast image by shooting molten wax into the ground, then washing the soil away to illustrate how pressure fractures the ground. While this cast is 18 inches deep, chemicals would be injected 1-2 inches below the surface.

Subsurface injection

The race is on!

By MARK LESLIE

Gentlemen, start your engines. From Saskatchewan to Nebraska researchers are racing to market the first workable piece of equipment to inject liquid chemicals below the surface of the turf.

Ransomes America of Lincoln, Neb., displayed a prototype of its Liquidator at the last international golf conference, and hopes to have a working model at January's show. Rogers Innovative Inc. of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, is testing its Liquid Pulse Injector (LPI) at the University of Guelph and intends to unveil it at the Green Industry Expo in mid-November in Indianapolis. And Pattison Brothers Agro Ltd. in Lemberg, Sask., hopes for positive test results so that it can display its Spoke Injector at the Canadian Turfgrass Conference and Show in late November.

Meanwhile, Toro has made adjustments to its HydroJect aerifying unit to render it useful for injecting chemicals just below the surface.

Continued on page 13

BIG-small partnerships in vogue

By HAL PHILLIPS

Aeromix Systems Inc. of Minneapolis and Otterbine/Barebo Inc. of Emmaus, Pa., have a lot in common. Both firms are members of the golf course industry, providing complete lines of water aeration products. Both are small — Aeromix has 24 employees, while O-B counts 27 on the payroll. And both have been approached by The Toro Company to form partnerships, whereby Toro would mar-

'Toro doesn't have five years to develop an aeration line. They need it today.'

— Peter Gross, president Aeromix Systems Inc.

ket and distribute their products.

Here the similarities end, however. Otterbine/Barebo turned down the offer and

Aeromix accepted it. Last spring, Aeromix and Toro agreed to offer a line of aquatic systems products and services under the Toro brand name. Financial terms were not disclosed.

This sort of BIG-small relationship has become increasingly common in the golf course industry, as petite companies seek the marketing and distribution power offered by megafirms — and these

Continued on page 30

Fazio part of \$10 billion Malaysian deal

By MARK LESLIE

A \$10 billion theme park, centered around eight golf courses, is about to be undertaken in Malaysia, according to sources.

An Italian developer reportedly has brought together the Italian and Malaysian governments and private money to build the facility.

It is expected to eventually include 24 hotels with 1,000 rooms each. Develop-

ers, who have been working on the project for the past 18 months, expect the park to draw 150,000 people a day.

American golf course architect and builder Jim Fazio of Juno Beach, Fla., has been contracted to organize the golf construction. He will design two courses and sign others to design the six remaining layouts on the 300,000-acre

Continued on page 20



Jim Fazio

Privatizing military courses

Continued from page 1

golf program manager for the U.S. Navy: "DeConcini is very misinformed. His bill is not in the best interest of military golf."

Security is the major sticking point with the military, even though the fall of communism makes it harder to sell the "national security" argument for limiting access to military installations, Moffett said.

"They [military] already open bases to the public for things like air shows," Brown said. "If there are courses needing new roads or fencing to improve security, that

cost could be included in the bid process for management companies."

But Moffett said the added expense could be so great at high-security bases that management firms may not be interested in bidding.

The military also bristles at charges its courses are mismanaged and private companies could generate more than the \$20 million profit service courses reported in 1991.

Items like cart fees going uncollected have held down revenues, Brown said.

In defense of the military's management ability, Moffett pointed out that all base courses are self-supporting. The only exceptions are facilities in isolated areas that Congress has agreed to finance with appropriated funds, amounting to \$6 million annually. Golf course profits help subsidize non-profit programs, like day care and youth sports, whose funding has been slashed by Congress, he added.

"Mismanagement is not a rampant thing," Moffett said. "We have good internal controls. We have an annual seminar for our

golf managers on how to better run their courses. The portrayal that we are inefficient is being driven by management companies like American Golf Corporation. It's just not true."

The bill's proponents say opening military facilities to the public would help alleviate the shortage of tee times in areas suffering from a lack of golf courses.

But many base layouts are "already saturated" with military golfers, Moffett said.

'Opening military courses to the public is a big concern for nearby course owners.'

— NGCOA Director Michael Hughes

Having servicemen and servicewomen compete with civilians for scarce tee times would hinder the military from "offering one of the few quality-of-life benefits we can give military personnel," he added.

The handful of under-utilized facilities tend to be in remote areas, where little demand for extra capacity exists, Moffett explained. Commanding officers at each base should be allowed to make the decision whether to allow additional public play on a case-by-case basis, he said.

Allowing more public play would also put military courses in competition with the private sector, which military regulations forbid, noted *Military Clubs and Recreation* magazine editor Paul Reece.

"Have you considered the impact this may have on the local golf course owner, who generally is a small businessman, when the government begins to take his business away?" he asked DeConcini in a recent editorial.

"Opening military courses to the public is a big concern for nearby course owners," said Michael Hughes, executive director of the National Golf Course Owners Association. "It isn't fair for them to have to compete against courses with no start-up costs and that don't have to pay taxes. We've heard from members already about military courses that have become more accessible to the public. I'm sure we'll hear more if this bill is passed."

DeConcini hoped his bill, which was introduced in June, would be a rider on appropriations legislation this fall, Brown said.

But military objections slowed the process. It will instead be voted on as a stand-alone bill by the new Congress next winter, she added.

DeConcini has offered some modifications to his original bill based on feedback from the military, Brown said.

They include:

- returning 10 percent of profits to the individual base

- giving military employees priority over civilians for tee times.
- helping hold down greens fees for retired enlisted personnel through subsidies.

But the Office of Management and Budget is holding fast to its recommendation, which is reflected in DeConcini's bill, that management companies take over operation of the courses, Brown said.

"That's still not acceptable," Moffett said.

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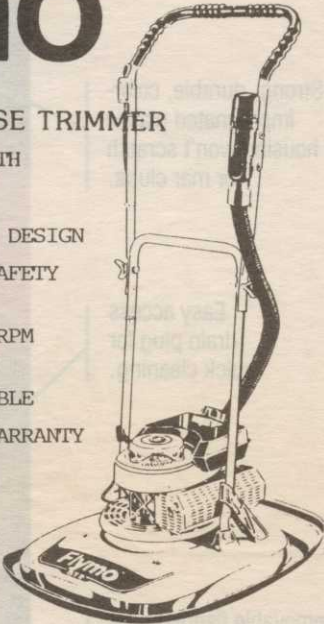
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