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GOLF COURSE NEWS

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INSIDE

Jones Trail Shuffle

Ownership of the Robert Trent Jones Trail in Alabama has been transferred to the state pension system, which provided the project's \$100 million funding 4

Just Fine, Thank You

Tough and environmentally friendly, fine fescues have carved themselves a niche in northern golf industry circles, above the transition zone 22-24



STILL GOING...

Geoffrey Cornish — seen here (left) conferring with Fred Licht, wetlands expert at a Cornish project in Bath, Maine — is still cranking out golf courses and literature. For a Q&A with one of architecture's grand old men, see page 25.

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Slow, arduous recovery foreseen

By HAL PHILLIPS

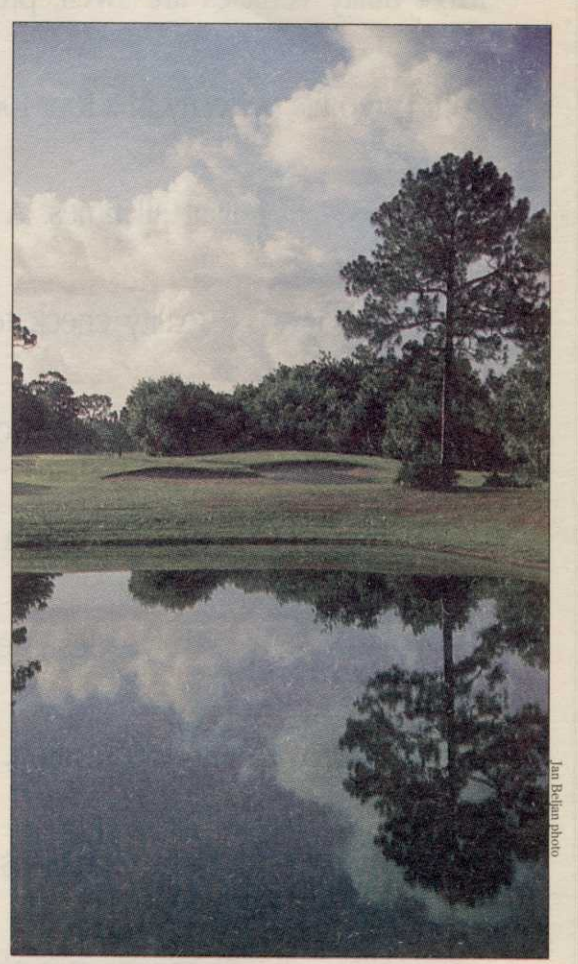
DAVENPORT, Iowa — Long after the rains have stopped and the flood waters subsided, superintendents in the upper Mississippi River basin will be dealing with the lingering effects of the heaviest summer rains since 1965.

"We get one day of sunshine and three days of rain, and that's the way it's been for three weeks," explained Tim Westland, superintendent of Thunder Hills Country Club in Peosta, Iowa. "I've been in this business for 22 years and I've never seen anything like it."

Hardest hit were river-side golf courses in the Quad Cities area of Iowa and Illinois. As thunderstorms swelled tributaries in Wisconsin and Minnesota, levies were pushed to their limits further downstream. As flood walls gave way and creeks swelled over their banks, fairways sat beneath several inches of muddy water which, after it receded, left thick layers of silt.

Though the river peaked somewhere around July 11, many superintendents in the region are now faced

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Jan Reijnen photo

EXECUTIVE REFLECTIONS

Once hailed as golf's hot, new design trend, executive courses — like Tom Fazio's River Bend Golf Club in Tequesta, Fla. (above) — seem to have lost their appeal. Why? Experts agree that much of the problem has been poor perception and even worse marketing. For a special report on executive courses, and how they might be saved, turn to page 31.

Turf experts: 'Advances on all fronts!'

By MARK LESLIE

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — Major progress has been made on many research fronts but additional, more thorough studies are needed in such areas as biorational insecticides and integrated control of turfgrass diseases, according to scientists gathered here from around the world.

While research studies gave golf courses high grades for environmental soundness, farms and homelawns didn't fare as well, according to the 11 keynote addresses, 15 symposia and 121 papers presented at the 7th International Turfgrass Research Conference held in late July.

Continued on page 30



Auctioneer Don Kennedy recognizes an early bidder during the proceedings on Carmel Valley Ranch.

Newcomer KSL Recreation the big winner at Landmark auction

By HAL PHILLIPS

DALLAS — The long-awaited Landmark auction proved a coming out party for the year-old KSL Recreation Group Ltd., a Colorado-based management firm that snapped up the two most expensive properties up for bid here at the Fairmont Hotel.

In purchasing PGA West for \$140 million and La Quinta for \$136.4 million, KSL — backed by the Wall Street firm of Kolhberg, Kravis, Roberts & Company (KKR) — made an impressive debut in golf industry circles. KSL further enhanced its standing less than a week before the July 14 auction when it purchased the troubled Fairway Group, the nation's fourth largest operator of golf facilities (see story page 35).

In other sales, Club Corp. of America paid \$35.6 million for Mission Hills Country Club in Rancho

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Budget squeeze takes toll on hardware sales

By MARK LESLIE

Whittled-down capital budgets, the sluggish economy and increasingly specialized, expensive new equipment are causing golf course superintendents to hold onto their hardware longer and rush for parts to keep it tuned.

"A lot of superintendents are under budget constraints. They are holding onto equipment a little longer than they'd like," said Steve Nelson, Jacobsen Textron's manager of parts and accessories and supply. "And that's good for parts sales."

Most experts agree the recession has caused clubs to postpone capital purchases and to buy parts instead. While Jacobsen, Toro and other major manufacturers report positive sales in new equipment and parts sales, golf course superintendents say they're keeping used gear longer simply because their budgets are smaller.

"There's no question people are buying fewer

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Flood taxes supers along Mississippi

Continued from page 1

with the prospect of removing the mountains of silt left behind by the receding Mississippi.

"First of all, it's important to get that silt off as soon as you can," said Don Armstrong, head agronomist for Golf Resources Inc. in Dallas. "The best way is probably dragging it off with a tractor and box-plate. Then you can wash the rest of it off with a high-pressure hose.

"Then you should aerify as soon

'We lost lots of small equipment, all of our fertilizer and our oil barrels floated away. It was pretty devastating.'

— John Newton
Veenker Memorial GC

as possible; fertilize, then reseed. Verticutting is also a good idea.

That will help you get silt out of the surface layer."

If courses weren't closed altogether, constant rain — and threat of it — has made it difficult to control the proliferation of pythium blight and brown patch.

"We can't attack disease because we can't spray," explained Scott Azinger, superintendent at Davenport Country Club. "I've never seen anything like it. We can't mow fairways because it's too soggy in places. It's plain tough to keep up

with the grass because it's been so wet. In fact, it looks like it's gonna pour right now."

"We're fortunate because we're on a bluff. It's much worse in other places."

• Case in point: Rock Island Arsenal Golf Club, a private club in Rock Island, Ill. The course sits on an island in the middle of the Mississippi, a former military outpost now leased from the government. Rock Island Superintendent John Scott has watched the water rise to within one foot of the levee crest. He's watched as sandbags are piled up to support the earthen barricades, which keep the Mississippi

from completely flooding the front nine. The government has forced Scott to move his chemical and fertilizers off site.

"We've had problems with heavy rains, but we've never seen anything like this," Scott reported in mid-July. "The government closed the front nine last week, but for some reason they've given that responsibility back to me. As long as the dike holds, we'll be okay. If it doesn't, it could be a very long fall."

• At Credit Island Municipal Golf Course here in Davenport, the July rains brought a cruel *deja vu*. In April, the Mississippi rose four feet over flood stage, inundating six holes and leaving a one-foot layer of silt in its wake. When the water subsided, crews regraded the silt and prepared to reseed the six holes. Then the latest flooding began anew, putting several holes back under water.

• Not all the problems are directly related to the Mississippi. Flash flooding providing another maintenance nightmare. At Timberline Golf Course in Pocahontas, Iowa, all the bridges were wiped out by a flood-possessed creek that measures just four-feet wide in dry times. The rains left four inches of silt on some of Superintendent John Pitz's fairways.

• Perhaps no one's story can match that of John Newton, superintendent at Veenker Memorial Golf Club in Ames, Iowa. He was preparing for the Iowa Masters tourney on July 8, when tornado sirens sounded. A twister pulled up 12-15 trees on two holes and two inches of rain fell in 20 minutes. Between 11 p.m. and 1:30 a.m., five more inches fell.

Newton had experienced serious flooding in 1975, 1984 and 1990, so he knew the procedure: Stacking supplies on shelves four feet off the ground, etc. But by 7 a.m., there was nearly seven feet of water in his shop.

"When it receded there was two to four inches of silt on everything," said Newton. "We lost lots of small equipment, all of our fertilizer and our oil barrels floated away. It was pretty devastating."

Meanwhile, Squaw Creek overflowed its bank and swamped 120 acres with anywhere from three to 15 feet of muddy, silty river water. Newton's crew — aided by a host of volunteers from nearby Royal Oaks Country Club and Iowa State University — blew silt off the putting surfaces, each green taking nearly five hours, he said.

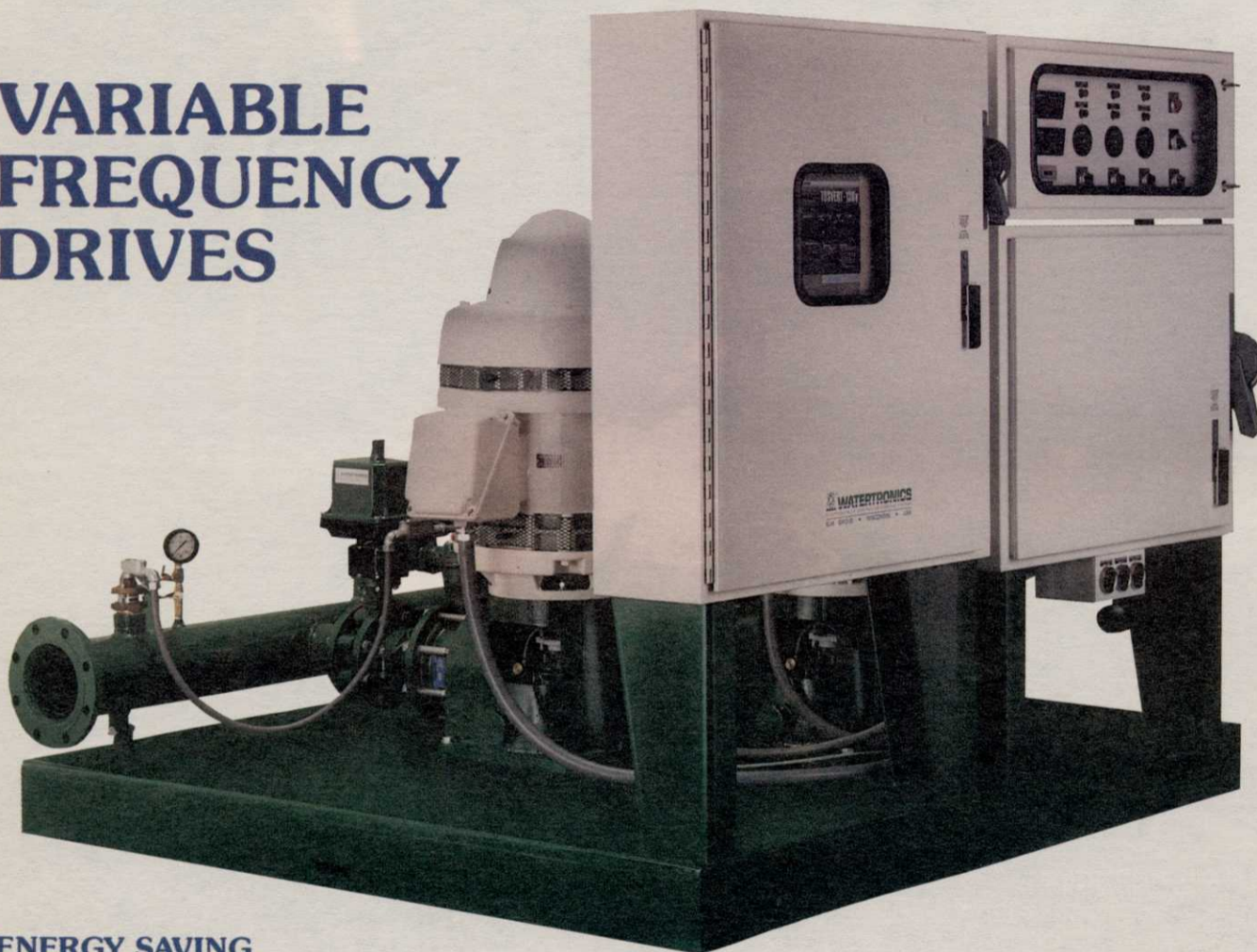
The following Sunday, July 11, another flash flood submerged nine greens. Two days later another flood swamped five more greens. Between the July flooding and a very wet spring, Newton foresees a 30 percent loss in revenues this summer.

Needless to say, the Iowa Masters tournament was canceled.

"It's kind of amazing," said Newton, who appears to have kept his sense of humor. "It was the same way in 1975. We had a huge flood just prior to the Iowa Masters. So Squaw Creek won this tournament in 1975 and 1993."

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