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GOLF COURSE NEWS

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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

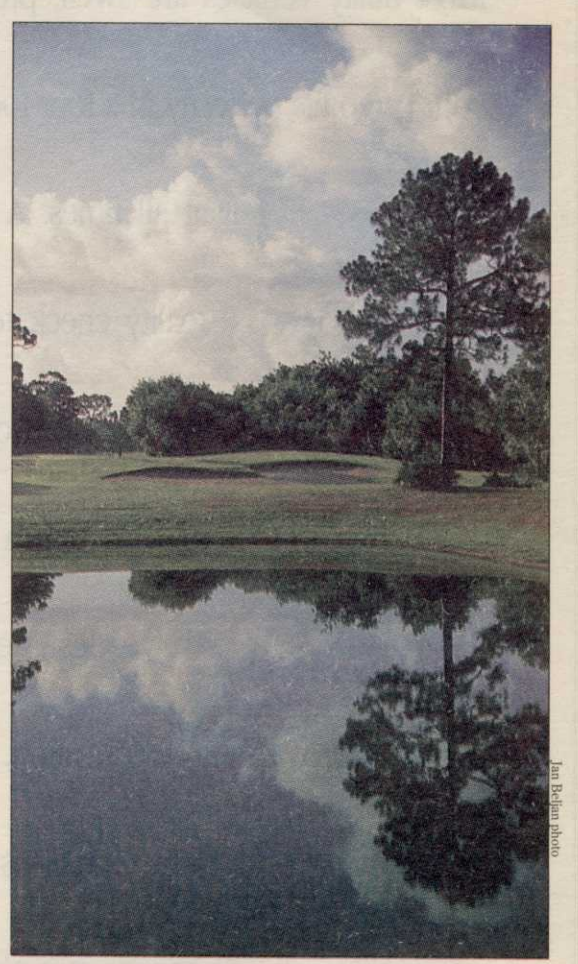
DAVENPORT, Iowa — Long after the rains have stopped and the flood waters subsided, superintendents in the upper Mississippi River basin will be dealing with the lingering effects of the heaviest summer rains since 1965.

"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.

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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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Less iron, more parts

Continued from page 1

new pieces and more parts," said Kevin Downing, superintendent at Willoughby Golf Club in Stuart Fla. "The equipment side is taking a beating."

"You only have so much to spend," said Roger Gill, superintendent for 21 years at Pine Lake Country Club in Orchard Lake, Mich. He added: "I think the replacement value of equipment is getting out of hand. We spend \$60,000 to \$70,000 a year for replacement equipment and that's not enough."

"At least 50 percent, and maybe 75 percent, of the people are starting to feel the capital budget crunch," said Don Tolson, superintendent at Fox Hollow in Colorado. "Equipment is being asked to work more hours, longer, harder, and it probably will

get worse before it gets better."

Distributors seed the same trends: The recession is taking its toll on new equipment sales, said Bob Brown, president of Sawtelle Brothers in Lawrence, Mass., a major distributor of Jacobsen, Ransomes, Cushman/Ryan, Smithco, National, Turfco and Rain Bird products.

Bill Barnett, owner Used Turf Equipment Co. in Hobe Sound, Fla., agreed: "I'm 95 percent sure it's the recession. I can't predict anything good for the rest of this year. I thought it might pick up again in October or November. But, this is the cutting season down here. If anyone were buying something, it would be now."

The high cost of equipment has fostered the phenomena of contracting out such jobs as verticutting and aerifying. The long-term ramifications of this increased specialization will not relieve the budget strain.

"When you start spending \$20,000 to \$40,000 for an aerifier and you can get the job done for \$3,000 a year from an independent contractor, it's better to have your money in the bank," Gill said. "But the different types of equipment we're using is what makes it so costly. We used to mow fairways with seven-gangs that cost \$10,000 and lasted 15 to 20 years. Today the [triplexes] cost \$25,000 and you can't get over 10 years out of them."

While Gill said public courses are even more squeezed by budget constraints than private clubs, Downing said all are "watching every expenditure and having to make things last a little longer than normal. People are trying to get a little more out of their dollars and keep the dues in line."

"Capital items — equipment — are usually thing first things to go [when budgets are cut]."

"The old rule of thumb of 10 to 12 percent of operating budget going toward capital expenditures doesn't hold any more," Downing added. "That percentage has dropped down in the last 18 to 24 months."

Barnett, who normally sells 250 to 300 pieces of equipment annually, said the bottom fell out last fall. There is little equipment to sell because superintendents aren't selling their old pieces, he said. "I'm getting calls from people all over the United States looking for used equipment. But I visited 11 superintendents in Myrtle Beach recently and no one had anything to sell. This is the slowest I've seen it in my six years in business."

From an optimistic outlook at mid-year 1992, "the closer we go to January the more [clubs'] budgets were whittled down," Barnett said. "Then, in February, when they would normally buy new equipment, their budgets had been cut back. And in-

stead of buying new equipment, they were putting money into parts, fixing up their equipment and keeping it."

"I think the market for good used equipment is pretty strong right now, where it was unheard of prior to five years ago when only the really poor guys bought it," said Tolson. "More are buying it, or wanting to. I know that for a fact because it's hard to find."

"A couple fellows who work for Jake and Toro told me the biggest part of their business right now is parts," Barnett said.

Pointing to problems in parts supply before Nelson joined the Jacobsen staff, Vice President of Sales Harold Pinto said he attributes the stronger demand in parts "to the fact the demand was a little [undersupplied] in the past."

Nelson met with the seven-member Dealer Advisory Committee at the end of June and reported a 10-percent jump in parts sales across the country — "as high as 15 percent in some areas."

Toro's Mike Anderson, director of commercial sales for Toro, said he has not seen a significant shift in sale of either parts or new products.

Kyle Evans, superintendent at the private Waterville (Maine) Country Club, said that although the recession hasn't affected his club he normally makes his equipment last longer with replacement parts.

"There are some good replacement parts out there," he said. "There are some motors at reasonable prices. And lubricants are better now that help equipment perform better longer."

Sawtelle's Brown and Anderson said financing purchases, rather than paying cash, is a trend that will be seen more in the golf industry.

"It only makes sense," Anderson said.



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Fighting pond scum

Continued from page 37

sulfate and diquat are highly toxic, according to AquaTreat literature. They cause dead algae to settle to the pond bottom feeding future algae blooms. They also kill beneficial bacteria that are important to the pond environment.

AquaTreat, on the other hand, digests only nitrogen and phosphorous. Deprived of its natural food source, algae can't grow or grows slowly.

The dry powder can be broadcast over the water's surface or slurried with warm water and poured around pond edges. The initial application rate is 6 pounds per acre foot, followed by a maintenance dosage of 1 pound per acre foot every two weeks.

Cost ranges from \$13.50 to \$15.95 per pound, depending on quantity purchased.

It can be stored for at least five years at temperatures less than 85 degrees.

Steve Bradley, head superintendent at Hopewell Valley Country Club in Hopewell, N.J., has battled algae in a particular half-acre pond for years. This man-made lake is shallow, unlined and fed by a stream which originates at a nearby farm.

"So there's a lot of nitrogen in there," said Bradley, who started applying AquaTreat in early May. "So far, I've seen major improvement. There's still a little algae left, but it's made a big difference."

"We had tried everything with this pond. We tried dredging, and that worked for a while. But it didn't solve anything. I've used algicides but, to be honest, they make me sort of nervous."

"This product is definitely working for me. And this year has been a good one for experimentation because it's been so hot."

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