

Canadian firm eyes affordable public-access niche

By PETER BLAIS

TORONTO—Providing affordable public golf is the goal of a newly formed management company started by a well-heeled businessman from this Canadian city.

Elliot Lewis recently founded Granite Golf Course Development Inc. to acquire, develop and manage low-cost, daily-fee courses, according to company spokesman Bruce Stephen. Lewis has recruited numerous investors and a major credit-equity firm, Stephen added.

Granite is negotiating pur-

chase agreements on several courses, primarily in the U.S. Sunbelt, and is close to signing a deal to develop a new layout in the Southwest, Stephen said. Plans are to announce the acquisition of several courses and a development contract by late winter or early spring.

"We're looking to provide quality golf in the low- to mid-price market," Stephen added. "We don't want to exceed the \$50 to \$60 level anywhere. Here in Pittsburgh [where Stephen's office is located], for instance, the top

price we'd consider would be about \$35."

In their rush to develop upscale, daily-fee layouts, Lewis believes management companies have largely overlooked the low- and mid-range courses or left them to Mom-and-Pop operators who have owned their facilities for many years.

"We think we can deliver a course with the same quality of the upscale layouts, but at a much lower price," Stephen said. "There is a lot of waste in courses being built today and more

money spent than necessary on middle management.

"We're not going to build a Pine Valley or Shadow Creek and charge only \$40. But we can deliver a good course for a low price."

Lewis has been involved in many businesses, but this is his first venture into the golf industry, according to company spokesman Bruce Stephen.

The Canadian businessman has recruited several impressive individuals to his advisory board including PGA Tour professional and course designer Dan Pohl,

who will represent the company on the Tour and act as a design consultant; Jim Von Ehr, founder of the Altsys Corp. (which Micromedia purchased last year for \$69 million), will advise Granite on integrating the Internet with golf course management, development and acquisitions; and Carol "Mickey" Norton, part owner of the Chicago Bulls of the National Basketball Association.

The for-profit Special Services Group of the Arizona Golf Association will provide consulting services ranging from agronomic issues to course operations.

"We've contracted with some of the best people in the golf business to consult on our courses," Stephen said. "That will allow us to run them with lean staffs on lean budgets."

Calendar of events

March

7 — GCSAA Technician Training Seminar on Reel Mowers and Grinding Methods in Farmington, Conn. *

7-8 — GCSAA seminar on Basic Turfgrass Botany and Physiology in Farmington, Conn. *

11 — GCSAA seminar on Lake and Aquatic Plant Management in Cincinnati. *

12 — GCSAA Technician Training Seminar on Reel Grinding and Turf Equipment Maintenance Scheduling in Galena, Ill. *

12 — GCSAA Technician Training Seminar on Calibration and Safety of Pesticide Application Equipment in York, Pa. *

12-13 — GCSAA seminar on Disease Identification and Control in Philadelphia. *

14-15 — GCSAA seminar on Design, Construction and Renovation for IPM. *

14-15 — Tree Health Management Seminar, Phoenix. Contact Artistic Arborist Inc., 602-263-8889.

16 — Ecological Landscaping Association and UMass Extension Winter Conference in Boxborough, Mass. Contact M.L. Altobelli at 508-874-1373.

19 — GCSAA Technician Training Seminar on Calibration and Safety of Pesticide Application Equipment, Grand Rapids, Mich. *

19 — GCSAA Technician Training Seminar: Small Engine Maintenance and Repair, Woodbridge, Ill. *

20 — GCSAA seminar on Practical Tree Management in Buffalo. *

21 — GCSAA seminar on Negotiating in Springfield, Ill. *

22 — GCSAA seminar on Wildlife Management and Habitat Conservation in Springfield, Ill. *

26 — GCSAA Technician Training Seminar on Calibration and Safety of Pesticide Application Equipment in East Alton, Ill. *

27-29 — Western Pennsylvania Turf Conference and Trade Show in Pittsburgh. Contact Penn. Turfgrass Council at 814-863-3475.

* For more information contact the GCSAA Education Office at 913-832-4430.



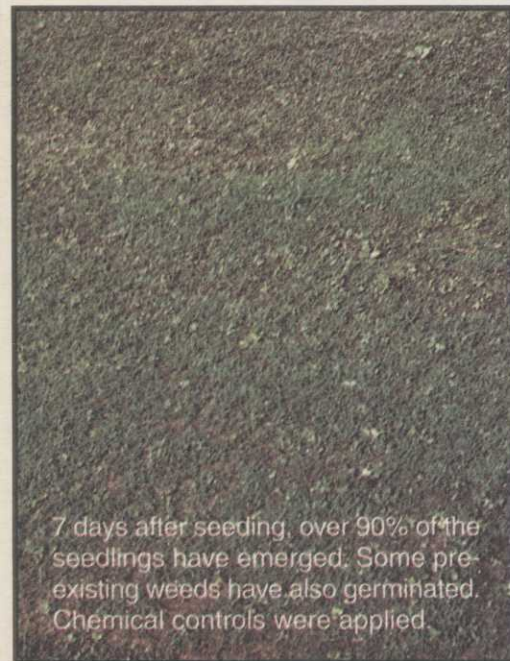
BEFORE: Stadium Miguel Grau, Piura City, Peru. Piura City has maximum summer temperatures of 86° to 100° F (30° to 38° C) with little to no precipitation.



Field was sprayed with Round-Up® to kill existing grasses and weeds, then cultivated to prepare the soil for planting new improved turf-type bermudagrass seed.



Seeding via hand-held spreader at a rate of 1.5 lbs per 1000 ft² (.75kg/100m²). Light raking and rolling were done afterwards.



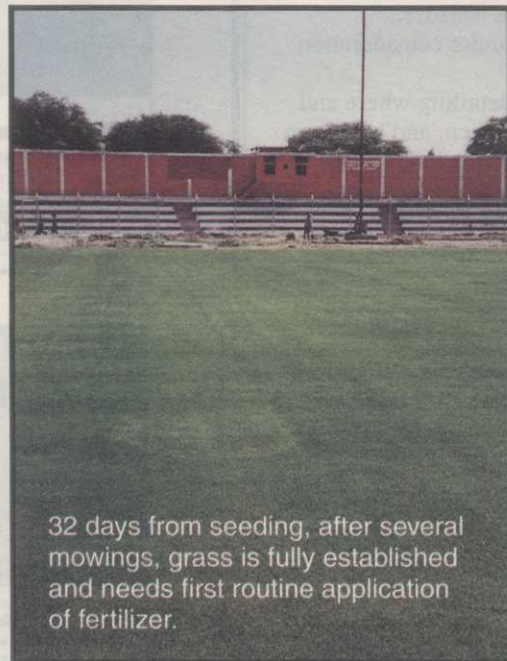
7 days after seeding, over 90% of the seedlings have emerged. Some pre-existing weeds have also germinated. Chemical controls were applied.

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32 days from seeding, after several mowings, grass is fully established and needs first routine application of fertilizer.



42 days from seeding, grass is dark green and ready for full-time use. Later this same day, a soccer match was held on this field.



2 days later, little damage is noted. The field was rolled as part of routine postgame maintenance.



Ing. Agr. Carlos Benavides Puertas fully satisfied with a successful SEEDS WEST turf-type bermudagrass renovation.