

## Champions Bermuda gets a real-life test at south Texas golf course

WESLACO, Texas — Golfers will get to test the new mini-dwarf Bermudagrass Champions when Tierra Santa golf club, three miles north of the border, opens here between December and February.

The grass was sprigged, but was slowed by unusually wet weather.

Developer and attorney Zeke Reyna agreed to using the mini-dwarf.

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Meanwhile, Reyna has guaranteed the town the course will remain public for at least seven years. It was built on family land and designed to country-club quality, course architect Jeffrey Brauer said. The property includes 210 acres for the

18-hole course and 150 acres for housing.

The dead-flat tract of land was transformed moving 650,000 cubic yards of dirt and building several lakes, with an elaborate drainage system.

Tierra Santa has water rights from the irrigation district, and will switch to effluent when a wastewater treatment plant goes on line in a few years.

## Bermuda search

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tions than earlier challengers. And some of those new grasses, categorized as "mini dwarfs" or "ultra dwarfs," are now being evaluated on putting greens.

"Jeff Krans at Mississippi State released some very good grasses last year. They are really doing very well in our plots," Dudeck said, referring to Mississippi Choice, Express and Pride. He also noted Tifton's new TW-72, and grasses released by Jacklin and Lesco.

"Our own FloraDwarf also is showing up well," he added. FloraDwarf did poorly at a few NTEP locations "but that was due to management practices inconsistent with the grass," Dudeck said. "They were mowing at 3/4 inch and FloraDwarf stops growing at a half, so it really wasn't being mowed.

"A lot of grasses that weren't entered in the NTEP are looking very good," Dudeck said. "I don't know if we'll ever find the holy grail, but we'll surely find some new Bermudagrasses that will find their place on the market. Several of our Hawaiian selections (of which FloraDwarf was the first to be released) are looking very promising."

The possibility of cheaper grasses is not entirely facetious. The most interesting development in Bermudagrass science is the emergence of seeded varieties that are performing comparable to vegetative varieties.

"A seeded fairway could cost as little as 10 percent of the cost of sprigging," Dudeck said. He noted that seed has a long shelf life compared to sod and the establishment time for Bermudagrass would be about the same as for sprigging.

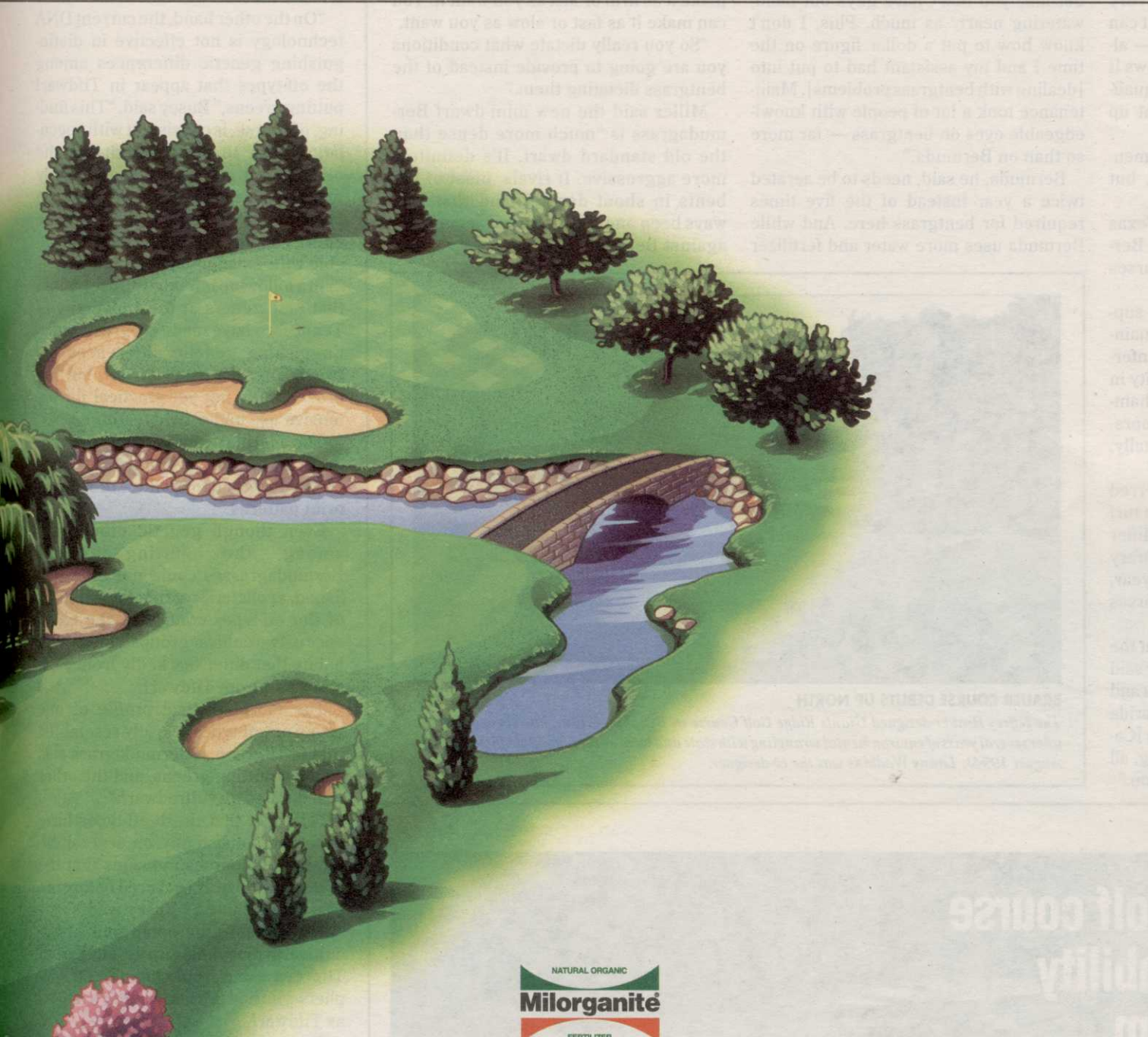
The principal disadvantage to using seeded varieties is the danger of weed competition from an improperly prepared seedbed, and erosion "from one of our infamous violent Florida thunderstorms."

The possibility that a fairway planted to a Bermudagrass that produces viable seed could contaminate a green planted to a different cultivar is slight, Dudeck claimed.

"From the time flowers first appear, there is a period of about two or three weeks before the seed is viable," he said. "If you mow at least once every two weeks, you won't contaminate your greens."

In addition to the development of new seeded Bermudagrasses that will rival or exceed existing Bermudagrasses, Dudeck sees three other major trends:

- exclusive releases to a few growers;
- patented vegetative releases; and
- plant variety protection for seeded releases.



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