

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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INSIDE

Special Report: Winter Prep

Don't forget to apply the potassium when you're preparing for the cold months ahead..... 31

It's a Small (Turfgrass) World

International scientists share findings on latest agronomic research 13, 20

ROUNDS PLAYED BY FACILITY TYPE — 1996



PUBLIC ROUNDS ON THE INCREASE

From 1986 to 1996, approximately two out of every three rounds were played at public-access golf facilities. The most growth occurred at daily-fee facilities, where the number of rounds increased by more than 23 percent.

COURSE MAINTENANCE

- Elkington steps to forefront of AI campaign 13
- The tale of the portable bunker crew 22
- Hurdzan explores a special kind of marriage 24

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

- Applegate: Cut the clutter of golf course design 10
- First course architecture class takes form 35
- Russians rush to judgment: Golf is good 39

COURSE MANAGEMENT

- When it comes to people, patience pays 41
- Shadow Creek agrees to take tee times 42
- Starwood Lodging lands four more courses 43

SUPPLIER BUSINESS

- Could ryegrass be banned in Arizona? 45
- Rhone and Maruwa are big in Japan 46
- Flowtronex spreads wings in the Middle East..... 47

Audubon jumps into course development

By MARK LESLIE

SELKIRK, N.Y.—When Audubon International (AI) entered the world of golf, no one would have dreamed of the heights it is about to reach — no one except, perhaps, President Ron Dodson.



Ron Dodson

AI has created the Audubon International Golf and the Environment Land Trust to accept "real property interest" that will be used to facilitate development of Audubon golf

courses as environmental research and demonstration centers.

"We asked, 'Who better to implement our beliefs than us?'" said Dodson. "One of the criticisms we've had about our Cooperative Sanctuary System is that we

have no assurance that our

Continued on page 17

One-stop equipment deals on rise

By M. LEVANS

BLOOMINGTON, Minn./LINCOLN, Neb. — As the industry sees more courses gathering under management umbrellas, the number of exclusive provider deals between management companies and manufacturers — including equipment, equipment maintenance and ancillary services — appears to be following suit.

In the past month, both the Toro Co. and Ransomes America Corp. have added substantial new agreements to their growing list of exclusive arrangements.

Toro cut a five-year deal with Whitbread/Marriott

Continued on page 48



ROLLIN' ROLLIN' ROLLIN'

A crew unrolls sod along a fairway of The Links at MonteLago at Lake Las Vegas Resort. Story p. 36.

TAKING GOLF TO THE STREETS

MetroGolf Inc., a Denver-based developer of golf learning centers in major metropolitan areas, has unveiled renderings of MetroGolf New York, a golf center to be built atop the Port Authority Bus Terminal located in the heart of midtown Manhattan at 42nd Street and 8th Ave. See story page 40.

Public Golf Forum sessions take shape

Maintenance Track: Technology steps into the spotlight

By MARK LESLIE

OAK BROOK HILLS, Ill. — Pioneering technology for quickly "mapping" a golf course to optimize irrigation and chemical and fertilizer applications is one of several topics in a full package of maintenance sessions planned for the 1997 Public Golf Forum here, Oct. 27-28.

Golf course superintendents around the country, taking advantage of special registration offers, are ex-



A NATIONAL BUSINESS CONFERENCE AND EXPO FOR SUPERINTENDENTS, OWNERS, MANAGERS, AND DEVELOPERS OF PUBLIC-ACCESS GOLF FACILITIES

pected to attend the forum at Oak Brook Hills Resort for public-access golf course superintendents, owners, operators and developers.

Along with a half-day session on "Biological Controls: Current Status and Future Prospects," led by Dr. Eric Nelson of Cornell University, they

Continued on page 19

Development Track: Player development can't be overlooked

By M. LEVANS

OAK BROOK HILLS, Ill. — Public-access golf courses are being developed in record numbers while player participation numbers remain stagnant.

Now, how are you going to develop a public course that will allow you to establish a solid customer base — and keep those customers coming back for more, giving you a faster return on your investment?

Continued on page 54

Toro, Ransomes

Continued from page 1

Hotels to be exclusive provider of turf equipment and maintenance for Whitbread's eight existing courses and two currently in development. Ransomes will be the exclusive manufacturer and maintainer for the eight courses under the watchful eye of Myrtle Beach National Co.

Toro already has agreements on the books with Canadian Pacific Hotel Group and Valderrama, the home of this month's Ryder Cup matches. For Ransomes, Myrtle Beach is its fifth contract.

From an administrative standpoint, the deals seem to make sense. From the management side, companies get a total package which helps cash flow and the company's yearly budgeting process. From the manufacturer's side, the company can easily track equipment maintenance records, allowing the equipment maker to take a piece of equipment back and keep it in circulation with more confidence.

Outside the financial benefits, the deals create "a mutually beneficial comfort level" between the two parties, said Peter Whurr, director of marketing at Ransomes. "When you put a deal together,

the customer benefits because he knows he now has a direct route into the company. It's more of a business partnership, even though he's still the customer. We can now say, 'If you want some help, just call us.'"

"It allows us to put together a total package," said Don Masini, managing director of international sales at Toro. "Following that, it's easier for us to follow up and keep in contact with the customer in order to meet all their needs," Masini said.

According to Masini, the exclusive provider deal was an American concept that



is growing, and will continue to snowball, overseas, where management group ownership is skyrocketing.

"Outside the U.S., there're aren't that many that are pay and play. So funding is getting more difficult," said Masini. "If you don't have the funds then you can't improve the golf course, and the members don't want to increase the dues they're paying."

"It's about achieving a comfort level for everyone involved," said Whurr. "We sat with them [Myrtle Beach National Co.] around a table, asked them what they needed and how we could get there. It was the first stage of a closer relationship."

For Myrtle Beach National, the issue boiled down to cost and time savings. "We realized we were spending too much time and money on the repairs of equipment we had kept too many years," said Clay Brittain Jr., chairman of Myrtle Beach National. "This caused a lot of downtime. When we decided to bring our equipment up to date, Ransomes came to us with an exceptional package."

"When a management company enters into one of these agreements it's almost like leasing a car," added Toro's Masini. "At the end of the agreement, they can walk away and get a new one or they can purchase it. Either way, it keeps new or well-maintained equipment on the course."

Masini believes exclusive partnerships are simply going to snowball. Whurr heartily agrees.

"There's a much better relationship between the two parties," said Whurr, who added that Ransomes currently has a number of deals in the pipeline.

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IMC Vigoro

Continued from page 45

demanding better quality products, more innovative products. To improve the profitability of the business, we're going to take that money and plow it into R&D as well as additional quality improvements."

Vigoro said that its Professional Products Group will now only market through a network of 70 worldwide distributors supported by a veteran sales team.

"Our link to the customers will now be through the distributors," said Pasztor. "We believe that to be a much more efficient way to do business. These are established distributors, so nothing will skip a beat," Pasztor said.

In addition, the company has stopped manufacturing its "low-volume, marginal products." This, the company said, will permit it to concentrate on its most popular products, those responsible for more than 90 percent of its net sales, such as Par Ex and Woodace.

"The products eliminated were high specialty products that accounted for less than 10 percent of total sales," said Pasztor. "The lionshare of what a golf course superintendent has come to count on from IMC Vigoro will continued to be produced."

"These actions are expected to improve the Professional Products Group's profitability and enable it to more aggressively pursue new product development and quality improvements," said Frank Wilson, IMC Vigoro's president. "Our objective is to serve our customers better, reduce our costs and position the business for long-term industry leadership. We believe this restructuring will accomplish that goal."