

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

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#### PRESIDENTIAL SWINGER

President Bill Clinton (left) receives some tips from Maroon Creek Club (MCC) Director of Golf Todd Williams during a presidential visit in August to the exclusive Aspen, Colo., golf facility. Photo by Dick Durrance II.

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#### GCN JANUARY • DEVELOPMENT

### The First Tee takes a giant step forward

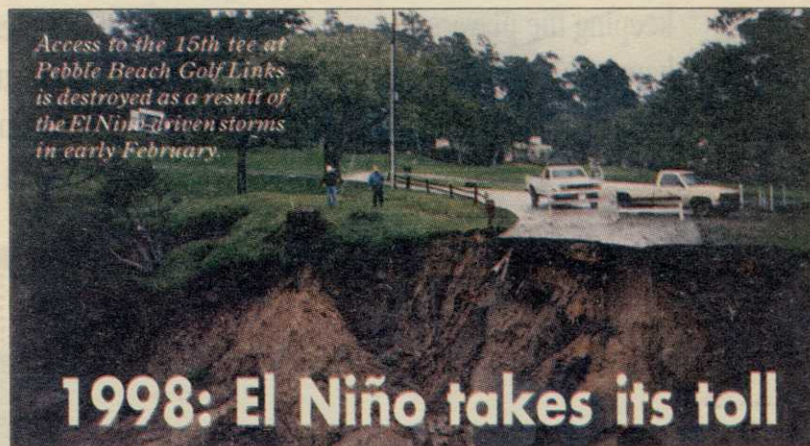
By MICHAEL LEVANS

ST. AUGUSTINE, Fla. — The First Tee, launched in November in a national publicity wave headlined by George Bush and Earl Woods, has managed to pull together the golf industry's heaviest hitters in what is being called the most significant concerted initiative to create accessible golf facilities for minority and junior golfers.

According to The World Golf Foundation, The First Tee's founding organization, the initial focus will be on developing financial support to acquire locations for the facilities. To supplement

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Ice-laden limbs and entire trees crashed to the ground on the fairways of Springbrook Golf Club in Leeds, Maine.



### 1998: El Niño takes its toll

April: California golf courses take a huge hit

By DAVID WILBER

The winter's intense El Niño-driven storms have hammered California golf courses, highlighted in early February when a series of weather-related records were broken. Several areas of the state recorded the lowest barom-

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April: Rains, tornadoes wreak havoc in Florida.

By JOEL JACKSON

Florida's golf courses escaped El Niño's big wind, but the rains are causing serious problems.

A winter storm attributed to El Niño raced across central Florida in the early morning of Feb. 22, unleashing a cluster of tornadoes that

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PHOTO OF THE YEAR: Golfplan will design 18 holes here at the Sparreboosch Clifftop Estate in Knysna, South Africa.

#### GCN MARCH • SUPPLIER BUSINESS

### Textron/Ransomes: The dust settles, new structure emerges

By TREVOR LEDGER

IPSWICH, Suffolk, England — Now that the dust has settled on Textron

Inc.'s takeover of Ransomes PLC, a clear picture of the group's strategy and structure is emerging.

The new company is called Textron Turf Care and Specialty Products and is headed up by the former president of Ransomes, Peter Wilson. As president of the new worldwide organization, Wilson is based in the company headquarters here in Ipswich. The

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#### GCN NOVEMBER • MANAGEMENT

### KollStar plans to double size by 2000

By PETER BLAIS

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. — KollStar, a major operator and developer of golf courses, has acquired seven courses on the southwest coast of Florida, giving the Newport Beach-based firm a dozen courses nationwide.

KollStar purchased six of the courses from National Fairways Ltd. The acquisition includes Sunrise Golf Club (GC), Rolling Green GC and Sarasota GC, all in Sarasota; Hibiscus GC in Naples; Port Charlotte GC; The Tides GC in Seminole; and Eagle Ridge GC in Fort Myers. Each is an 18-hole,

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## Deere/Player

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plan because it's getting bigger and bigger," said Phillips. "Due to all the possible applications, we really can't get our arms around it."

At the heart of the Player Systems deal are two components: Precision Turf Care and Sky Links. Precision Turf Care controls the precise spraying of wa-

ter, fertilizer and pesticides and is being marketed as a tool for general turf care management.

SkyLinks is mounted on golf cars and acts as an electronic caddy, giving the player distance measurements, tips and graphical representations of greens and fairways. It can also be used to send messages from clubhouse to cart and vice versa while allowing the course operator the chance to monitor speed of play.

"The founders of the company realized that the potential of GPS within golf is much more than yardage," said Richard Beckmann, director of sales and marketing for Player Systems. "It's truly information technology."

Where will this all lead? "Anything is possible," said Beckmann. "You're going to see this technology on every course in some shape or form very soon."

## LawnNibbler

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estimates the LawnNibbler can run several hours before needing a recharge.

A graduate student, Kevin Hakala, added sensors and a guidance system last year.

The buried wire acts as an obstacle that the LawnNibbler cannot cross. Just 24 inches high, the LawnNibbler is just under 24

inches long and just over 12 inches wide. It weighs 35 pounds.

"The microprocessor control allows it to spin on itself, left, right, back, forward," Doty said. The navigation system uses a trilaterization process, like a Global Position System (GPS) using a satellite, from three poles placed to define the LawnNibbler's territory.

"The game plan is to have a robot dog house — the LawnNibbler would go to the dog house and recharge itself whenever it needed to," explains Doty.

The prototype has been tested in conditions ideal for golf course care — wet grass up to six inches high, on a 12-degree slope, even over tree roots. No problems. The LawnNibbler uses a weed trimmer-like nylon cord to cut a six-inch swath with, not a blade.

Doty projects that the initial cost of producing working models of LawnNibbler would place the price at about \$2,000 per unit.

The market originally conceived for the LawnNibbler was as a machine to prune the grass around Florida's orange groves.

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## Textron

Continued from page 1

American arm of Textron Turf Care and Specialty Products is based in Racine, Wisconsin, with Jacobsen's Phil Tralies as president. Tralies will report to Wilson.

Peter Wilson is naturally excited with the developments at what is now a very well placed market competitor.

"It creates a very strong company from both a financial and technical viewpoint," said Wilson. "It gives us a wonderful range of products and we obviously have a leading range of brands."

## Crisis in Canada

Continued from page 25

"At this time it appears that U.S. products will increase in cost more than those from Europe. As a result, many golf clubs may choose to lease equipment manufactured in the U.S. rather than buy new equipment outright. As for the rest of the products, we will have to budget an extra 15 percent for our next budgetary year. Some courses will delay purchases until the spring in the hope that the Canadian dollar rebounds. However they choose to deal with the situation, the low dollar is sure to negatively impact profits in the coming year."

The effects of Canada's struggling dollar may be somewhat offset by this year's increased play at Canadian courses, according to Nolan Duke of G.C. Duke Equipment Ltd. of Burlington, Ont. "The exchange rate," Duke said, "has caused our prices to go up 7 to 8 percent, which really would have screwed up budgets."