

GCN JANUARY/GCN NOVEMBER

BRIEFS



SUPPLIER BUSINESS '98:

News of the Textron acquisition of Ransomes was dancing off the wires from the very beginning of this 1998, ushering in a year that has seen many changes, consolidations and new hope for technological advances.

The new face in the market is Textron's Golf, Turf Care and Specialty Products group that will now be headed up by Carl Burtner effective January 1, 1999. Burtner will oversee nine global operations, 3,600 employees and revenues exceeding \$700 million.

There were four new single rider car offerings put on the market. The companies involved claim the single-rider is the golf course's answer to speeding slow play, while the concepts detractors say that maintenance costs may work against the new one seaters.

The future is now

January: LawnNibbler acquires taste for turf

By FRED WRIGHT

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — A robot lawn mower called LawnNibbler, created at the University of Florida, may soon be pruning the tees and greens of the neighborhood golf course.

Designed by the university's Machine Intelligence Laboratory, the prototype can cut grass intelligently — avoiding dogs, kids, trees and golfers. It uses a radio wire buried at the perimeter of its work area and a navigation beacon system using sonar and infrared emitters and detectors that tell it where it is in its environment.

The LawnNibbler has four wheels, a chain drive, electric motor and lead acid battery and it works on the principals of a tank: It can turn on a dime — or a divot.

"We've done no engineering to date in terms of endurance," explains Keith Doty, director of the lab that designed the original model two years ago, but he

Continued on page 26

November: John Deere looks skyward

By MICHAEL LEVANS

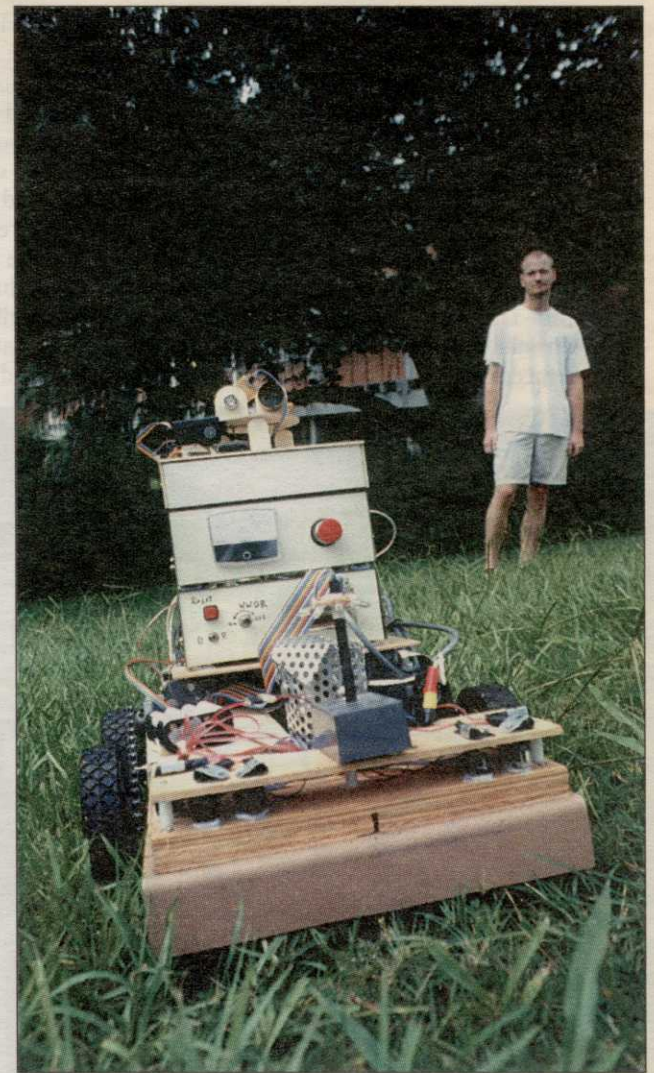
RALEIGH, N.C. — With its recent acquisition of Charlestown, Mass.-based Player Systems Corp., manufacturer of the SkyLinks golf course management technology that utilizes the global positioning system (GPS), John Deere has taken a long look up into the future.

"John Deere now has the ability to leverage the GPS technology across different applications," said Shawn Phillips, new general manager of Player Systems. "The GPS technology has been limited to the golf car. Now we have a chance to help the golf course owner justify this technology across various applications."

Just where John Deere can go with this technology married to its turf equipment line is anyone's guess. According to Phillips, the plans for exactly how Deere can take full advantage of this new acquisition are constantly evolving.

"Every time I turn around we're re-writing the business

Continued on page 26



LawnNibbler technology could be coming to a shed near you.

GCN APRIL /GCN JUNE

Single-rider market heats up

April: Ortho-Kinetics jumps in with Fairway 8000

By JOHN FARRELL

WAUKESHA, Wis. — Fairway Golf Cars, a division of Ortho-Kinetics, Inc., is introducing the Fairway 8000 Single-Rider. In development for four years, the Single-Rider features a dual motor drive, a 48-volt power system with transaxle, maintenance-free AGM batteries, and a dynamic braking system which offers smooth deceleration as well as continuous recharging during braking action.

"Twenty years ago, getting on and off a course in four hours was a bad day," said John Perez, director of sales and marketing for Fairway, "now it's a miracle."



Ortho-Kinetics new Fairway single-rider. GOLF COURSE NEWS

June: Pride enters market in a big way

By MICHAEL LEVANS

EXETER, Pa. — Pride Golf, a new division of scooter and liftchair manufacturer Pride Healthcare, has entered the single-rider golf-car market with quite a bang.

It was recently announced that Pride Golf's car, the second single-rider to enter the golf market from the home medical equipment industry, will be the vehicle of choice for disabled golfer Casey Martin, should he earn a berth in this year's U.S. Open at The Olympic Club in San Francisco.

Pride was chosen following a recent testing session held by The United States Golf Association (USGA) in Denver. "They [USGA] were looking for a cart for Casey and if your's met certain specifications they invited you to send a cart out of testing," said Pride spokesperson Craig Otto.

"We sent one out, they put it through the paces and it turned out that it was the most suitable cart for him. It's a great way to get started," Otto added.

Waukesha, Wis.-based Ortho-Kinetics Inc., one of Pride's chief competitors in the home medical equipment field, is ready and waiting to take Pride on the golf market. Ortho-Kinetics launched its Fairway division at the beginning of this year.

GCN OCTOBER

Crisis in Canada puts clamps on course spending

By PETER BLAIS

TORONTO — The cry of the Loony — as Canadians call their one-dollar, bird-imprinted coin — has been a mournful sound for superintendents and suppliers of U.S.-manufactured course equipment as the plummeting Canadian dollar has made those items increasingly expensive for Canadian course managers.

By early August, the Canadian dollar had fallen to a record low, an equivalent of approximately 65 cents in U.S. currency. That represented a 15-percent decline from a year earlier and was forcing some superintendents to consider cutting back, or at the very least delaying purchases of U.S. and other foreign-made supplies.



"It's no wonder that people who make large purchases in the U.S. would be backing off or reducing them this year," said Vince Gillis, executive director of the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association (CGSA).

Added CGSA President Doug Meyer of Cedarbrook Golf & Country Club in St. Sophie, Quebec: "This will definitely affect our capital budgets when we are buying new equipment, as well as other course supplies such as chemicals, fertilizers, seed, parts and course supplies. The only products that will not be affected are those produced in Canada."

Continued on page 26

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