

GOLF COURSE NEWS

THE NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

A UNITED PUBLICATION
VOLUME 12, NUMBER 8
AUGUST 2000 • \$7.00

INSIDE

BASF closes Cyanamid deal

With the deal done, BASF is now working on integrating American Cyanamid's product line 3

Old Brockway certified

1924 layout becomes first nine-hole course west of the Mississippi to win Audubon certification 11



IRRIGATION AND PUMP STATION FOCUS

As existing courses (including Pebble Beach, above) strive to keep up with new competition, irrigation upgrades and retrofits are at the heart of most renovation work. See pages 17-18 for a complete look at what's new in the irrigation renovation marketplace.

COURSE MAINTENANCE

- Improved topdressing techniques 7
- Tools of the Trade at Geller's Cedar Point 8
- Ga.'s Maple Ridge completes renovation 9

COURSE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

- Cal Olson on hot streak out West 11
- Wencel opens Eagle Hills in Nebraska 12
- ClubLink and Couples team up in Canada 13

COURSE MANAGEMENT

- American Golf's new leaders outline strategy 19
- White to head Diamond Players Club 20
- Additions to annual management company list ... 30

SUPPLIER BUSINESS

- Higgins takes on new role for PTI 23
- First 'Gator' rolls out of new Deere plant 24
- New products abound 26

PERIODICAL

Simplot consortium wins bid for ABT's assets

By A. OVERBECK
HENDERSON, Nev. — The bid for AgriBioTech's (ABT) Professional Turfgrass Division submitted by a consortium led by J.R. Simplot Turf and Horticulture was approved here June 10 in federal bankruptcy court.

However, the deal, which reportedly closed for less than the original asking price of \$65 million, required a lengthy day of negotiations after Central Garden and Pet (owners of Madison, Ga.-based Pennington Seeds) submitted a rival bid for this parcel of ABT's assets.

"After the overbid we left the hearings and spent the rest of the day in meetings with Development Special-

Continued on page 25



The 12th hole at the Ritz-Carlton managed White Witch Course at Rose Hall in Jamaica

Ritz-Carlton barrels into course management with high-end clubs

By JAY FINEGAN

ATLANTA — There's a new player in the competitive field of golf course management, and this one comes loaded with cachet: the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, headquartered here.

For now, the company has only three courses in its portfolio, but that will grow to at least 17 over the next few years, as the number of Ritz-Carlton hotels grows from today's 37 to 63. Fourteen of the 26 new properties will feature courses ranging from 18 holes to 45. "We're basically doubling the size of the company over the next three years," said Stan Waterhouse, a Ritz-Carlton vice president and head of the club and golf division.

Waterhouse, formerly with ClubCorp, said he hopes to bring to the courses the same levels of quality and service that distinguish the company's famous hotels. "We believe we'll be the benchmark in the industry," he said. "By extending the Ritz-Carlton imprint of excellence to man-

aging existing and new golf facilities, we have an opportunity to make an impact on the market and deliver a product with a difference."

Waterhouse plans to employ a three-pronged growth strategy. First, his division will manage courses affiliated with Ritz-Carlton hotel and resort properties. It also will enter into management agreements with independent, top-caliber country clubs. And, third, it will look to develop an interest in courses not yet built. "We'll work with residential developers who have an interest in having a golf club to enhance their residential community," he said.

WHITE WITCH IN JAMAICA

In the first case, an example is the White Witch Course at the Ritz-Carlton, at Rose Hall, Jamaica, which opened in June. It sits near the company's new 428-room resort, 10 minutes from Montego Bay.

The White Witch, designed by architects Robert von Hagge and Rick Baril,

Continued on page 22

Pete Dye finds gold at Lost Canyons

By MEGHAN FOLEY

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. — Take one look at the vast array of hills, slopes, meadows and rolling canyon floors, and it is no wonder why Lost Canyons Golf Club could become one of Pete Dye's greatest design achievements. Despite the fact that the famed architect does not like to compare his courses, he does admit that Lost Canyons is going to be special. The sheer terrain will see to that.

The 36-hole layout is currently in the final phases of construction and grow-in in the Santa Susana Mountains here, just north of Los Angeles. Landmark National, one of the leading golf real estate investment



The rugged terrain at Dye's Lost Canyons design near L.A.

companies, provided 1,600 acres of land, located on a portion of the historic Big Sky Ranch, and commissioned Dye to create two 18-hole public golf courses.

Continued on page 16

Supers in Southeast coping with drought

By JAY FINEGAN

HILTON HEAD, S.C. — How bad is it?

Here in the southeast corner of South Carolina, only 10.3 inches of rain had fallen as of mid-July. A normal year would have brought 36 inches

by Independence Day. And that's after a dismal 1999, when the area came in 10 inches below normal.

"We're real dry," said Steve Wright, superintendent at the Long Cove Club, a private, 18-hole, Pete Dye

facility here on Hilton Head Island. "The greens are fine but the green banks are burnt. The edges are bad. We have effluent and water from the lagoon, where we trap rainwater. But now the

Continued on page 10

Simplot/ABT

Continued from page 1

ists, Inc. [the company in charge of the ABT sell-off] going back and forth," said Chris Claypool, senior vice president of marketing for the Jacklin Seeds business unit of J.R. Simplot. "At the end of the day it was decided that our consortium group was the final bid winner."

According to Claypool, the deal is expected to officially close by the end of July. "Right now we are working out the final details on the financial issues," he said.

Also at hand is how the Simplot group will divide the ABT varieties and distribution locations with the other members of the consortium, Kenneth Budd and Oregon-based Pro Seeds.

"ABT had more than 500 varieties and Simplot will condense these down to a manageable figure and different members [of the consortium] will represent the varieties and locations," said Claypool.

While he declined to comment on which varieties will be represented by which members of the consortium, Claypool did confirm that Jacklin Seeds will get Lofts' L-93 creeping bentgrass. To increase the reach of its BEST fertilizer division, Simplot will also take over distributors Las Vegas Fertilizer, Phoenix-based Garden West and Florence, Ky.-based George W. Hill.

"Our main interest [in ABT] was a few distribution locations to better service the market as well as our current distribution and to complement our current turfgrass program," Claypool said.

The deal marks the end of ABT's bold market share-driven slash-and-burn acquisitions strategy, by which it acquired 35 turfgrass companies in less than four years. Failure to consolidate eventually doomed ABT to bankruptcy, leading industry insiders to speculate that its business plan was focused more on running up its stock numbers in hopes that an outside company would buy them out. By the time the company began to consolidate, it was too late.

How will Simplot avoid a similar fate?

"We are looking at servicing our distribution with a complemented product line," said Claypool, "but we are not picking up ABT in its current stage. We are not picking up all the employees, operational charges, debts and accounts."

Simplot has been on the move lately, signing an exclusive distribution agreement for POLYON fertilizers with Sylcauga, Ala.-based Pursell Technologies, Inc. and purchasing TurfPartners, the distribution arm of Rancho Bernardo, Calif.-based Eco Soil

Systems, Inc. As part of the Turf Partners deal, Simplot will pay Eco Soil \$23 million and assume nearly \$17 million in bank debt and liabilities.

However, Simplot is continuing to scour the marketplace for more companies that fit into its strategic growth plan.

"There are a number of acquisitions that we are working on at the moment," said Claypool. ▶

Novartis, Compass

Continued from page 23

Mark Hill. "One of them is a Zeneca product and one of them Novartis' FLINT. With the proposed merger, Syngenta would have both of these products, so the FTC has required us to sell the FLINT business. This is why we have announced that this business is for sale."

The planned sale comprises the entire worldwide FLINT business, including intellectual

property rights, patents, trademarks and registrations as well as the relevant production facilities in Muttentz, Switzerland. Novartis also expects the buyer to employ all of the approximately 90 FLINT employees.

"The product will not disappear," said Hill. "It will be transferred to a buyer who would be expected to take over the whole business."

The sale of FLINT will not take place until the merger is approved by the shareholders of Novartis and AstraZeneca and antitrust authorities. ▶



IRRIGATION RENOVATION IS HIS SPECIALTY BUT LISTENING IS HIS STRONG POINT

Toro distributors are experienced renovation specialists. And with experience comes the knowledge that listening is the most important part of a system renovation. After all, you know your course better than anyone. Once you've shared your plans, goals and concerns, your Toro distributor will work closely with you during every step of the renovation process. Then, you can count on them to be there throughout the life of your irrigation system. The world's number one irrigation renovation experts are ready to listen when you're ready to talk. Call your Toro distributor today.



IRRIGATION