

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

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## 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

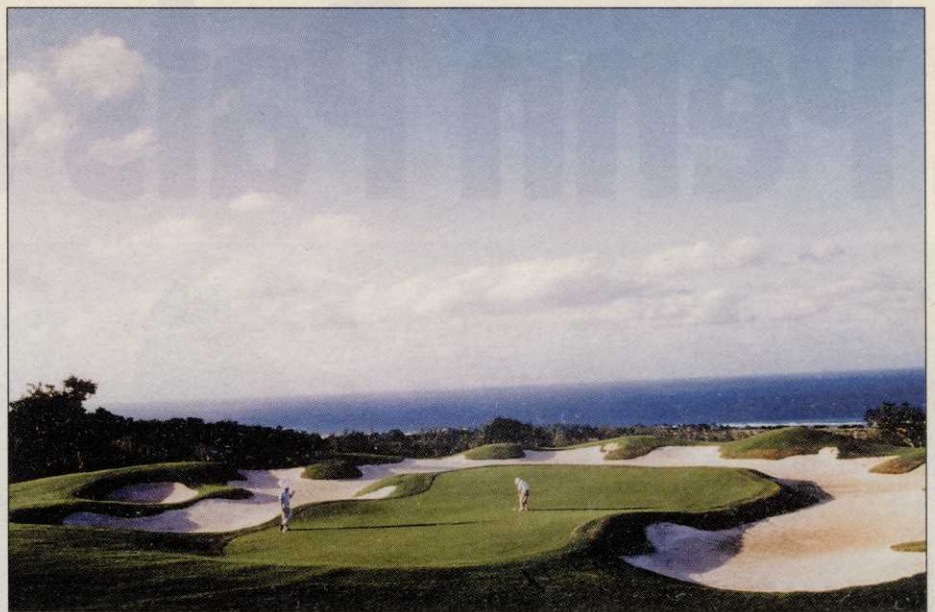
By A. OVERBECK

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



## S.E. drought

Continued from page 1  
lagoon is getting pretty low.”

That's the way it is across the Southeast, where a weird post-La Nina weather pattern has put the region into an unusually severe and prolonged drought. Superintendents are doing everything in their power to conserve what water they have and still keep their courses presentable.

Still, the situation is grim, and there's no relief in sight.

Agronomist Pat O'Brien, southeastern director for the Green Section of the U.S. Golf Association, has visited more than 100 courses in the region this year. Wherever he goes, he said, watering bans of some sort are in effect. "Some guys are restricted to even or odd days, or certain hours of the day," he said. "I'm seeing a lot of new strate-

gies. The superintendents are working hard to keep their courses playable and the presentation excellent, but these are certainly tough times.

"I've seen some courses reduce five to 10 acres of what used to be maintained turf and turn it into areas that don't need water," O'Brien said. "They put down shredded bark or pine needles and turn the sprinklers away. I've seen guys take out all

the grass around the teeing areas and just keep it on the tees and the tee banks. The ground is so hard that they're not aerating fairways and doing standard summer practices. Some sod projects have been delayed, along with fairway sprigging and row planting, because they just don't have the water. It has impacted a lot of capital projects."

Random thunderstorms have pelted the hardest hit states —

South Carolina, Georgia, and eastern Alabama — but in the mid-summer heat the moisture is short-lived. When storms do roll through, they sometimes wreak heavy damage. Said Steve Wright: "My friend Tom Alex down in Grand Cypress [Orlando] got 7.5 inches of rain last weekend, and 7.25 inches of it fell in 90 minutes. He got destroyed. Lake banks and bunker faces just washed away. If we get that kind of heavy rain, we'll have some real issues to deal with, due to the lack of rooting."

On Hilton Head Island, only two courses are permitted to draw water from wells. Everyone else is on treated wastewater — effluent — but even that can grow scarce.

"Some of the big resorts have three courses coming off one waste-treatment plant," said Wright. "They might get two million gallons a day, but if they run high for three or four days, all of a sudden they're down to 400,000 gallons available to them. It takes a while for the effluent to build back up, especially in the advanced-technology plants that make the wastewater so clean that they'd be drinking it in places like India."

### AQUIFERS DEPLETED

A little further south, on a barrier island off the Georgia coast near Savannah, the Landings Club picked up only a half-inch of rain in May, and just 3.5 inches in June.

"We had drought conditions last year, but this year has been particularly bad," said Dave Kyle, business manager for the 72-hole complex. "We water from lagoons, which capture storm water run-off, and all of our lagoon levels are down real low."

The Landings courses also draw some water from two deep wells, but the amount is capped at a certain level. "We've had a lot of communication from the state Environmental Protection Division," Kyle said. "The wells pull from the Floridan Aquifer, which runs under a large part of southeast Georgia. The Floridan has been badly depleted, and we're concerned about salt-water incursion into it."

The club's permits to draw from the deep wells expire in a few years, and already the management is planning for alternate water sources.

"We're looking at trying to develop shallower wells, 40 or 50 feet versus the 400 feet into the Floridan," Kyle said. "Also, a lot of courses in this area have gone to effluent wastewater. We've been running a pilot project for that, and that will be the next thing that happens down here. We're also moving to more sophisticated irrigation systems as another way of saving water." ▶



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