

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

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### PERIODICAL

## Simplot, Budd make offer for ABT assets

By ANDREW OVERBECK

HENDERSON, Nev. — AgriBioTech (ABT) has reached an agreement in principle to sell its turfgrass seed assets and Professional Turfgrass Division to Kenneth Budd, former ABT president and chief operating officer, and Post Falls, Idaho-based J.R. Simplot for approximately \$65 million, plus assumption of liabilities. The two parties are also expected to assume ABT's obligations under contracts with its growers. The exact details of the Budd/Simplot deal were not disclosed.

For the past two months, Development Specialists Inc. (DSI) has been overseeing the reorganization of ABT and taking bids on the company's assets. DSI expects the deal to close by the end of June, but stresses that it must first be approved by the bankruptcy court and that competing bids may still be submitted by other parties.

Simplot has been aggressively expanding its reach in

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## Irish golfers open new Stephen Kay links in New York

By JAY FINEGAN

UNION VALE, N.Y. — A little touch of Ireland has sprung up in New York's Hudson River Valley, thanks to the financial backing of 500 golfers of Irish descent and the talents of golf course architects Stephen Kay and Douglas Smith. The Links at Union Vale, just now opening, undoubtedly ranks as one of the most unusual golf course development projects in recent years.

The par-72, 18-hole, links-style layout is the brainchild of the Irish Golf Association (IGA), comprised of about 30 clubs clustered in the New York metropolitan area. "Much like bowling leagues, these are

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The 7th hole at The Links at Union Vale.

## EcoAegis changes modern hydroseeding rules

By A. OVERBECK

NORTH OXFORD, Mass. — Growing turf on bunker, tee and green surrounds was once a job that was best suited to sod. That, however, is changing.

EcoAegis, a bonded hemlock fiber mulch and seed mixture, produced by Canadian Forest Products

(Canfor) of Vancouver, British Columbia, is becoming more widely used in steep sloped areas as a seeding agent and an erosion control device.

Hydrograss Technologies, based here, is the exclusive East Coast distributor of EcoAegis.

"We first used it on landfills. Engineers used it on 3-to-1 slopes in lieu of erosion blankets and had great success," said Robert Arello, president of Hydrograss Technologies.

EcoAegis combines hemlock fiber with a guar bonding agent creating a matrix cover that prevents erosion by absorbing the

Continued on page 14

## Manufacturers eye total course Global Positioning technology

By ANDREW OVERBECK

In today's information-crazed society, satellite-driven Global Positioning Systems (GPS) are becoming more widely used as the technology improves and costs come down. GPS systems are being used as navigational devices by back-road weary and, yes, even 300 courses in States have in-systems on golf age speedier players to pin-shot distances food and beverage revenues.



Not to be left out of the GPS revolution, large maintenance equipment manufacturers have teamed up with "clubhouse based" GPS companies to develop a total course solution that would bring the satellite technology to superintendents.

### PARTNERSHIPS

John Deere acquired Boston-based Player Systems in

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Arnold Palmer (foreground) and M.G. Orender at the groundbreaking for The Golf Club of North Hampton.

## Hampton Golf, Orender cater to beginners

By ANDREW OVERBECK

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — M.G. Orender's new management firm, Hampton Golf, is moving ahead with its beginner-friendly club management philosophy.

"The concept is simple," said Orender. "The first club I was a pro at, we had sluggish business, so I started a junior program. We started with six kids and grew to 160 kids in about three years. In that time, our gross receipts doubled and that happened because when you get kids out there, you get the parents involved too. I learned that if the beginner is comfortable and is treated well, they won't go anywhere else."

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## Hampton Golf

Continued from page 1

Orender, secretary of the PGA of America and a former partner in Granite Golf, formed Hampton Golf in 1999 with longtime friend Ed Burr who owns the Landmar Group, a property development firm. Hampton Golf is the course management arm of Landmar and manages all courses that Landmar acquires or builds.

Orender opened the Mark McCumber signature designed Golf Club at South Hampton near St. Augustine in January

and work is progressing on its sister course, the Arnold Palmer signature designed Golf Club at North Hampton in Yulee. That course is due to open in December. The group scored a third layout May 5 when Landmar bought Grand Haven, an 18-month-old Jack Nicklaus signature-layout that will have 1,100 home sites.

At South Hampton, Orender built what he calls "a bunny slope for golf."

The course has six sets of tees. The championship tees play at just over 7,000 yards and the front "family tees" play to 2,800 yards. This "course-within-a-course"

allows beginners to have their own layout, complete with different pars, while still playing on a real golf course.

"No ski instructor would expect you to go out on a ski slope the first time and go down the black diamond run," said Orender. "But that's what we do in golf. We send a

*"No ski instructor would expect you to go out on a ski slope the first time and go down the black diamond run. But that's what we do in golf."*

— M.G. Orender

beginner out there, he plays badly, the ranger is telling him to hurry up all day and the best part of his afternoon is when he gets back to the clubhouse and gets a cold beer. The guy leaves and never comes back again—and everyone wonders why we have a high attrition rate in golf."

Instead of trying to lure golfers away from other facilities by cutting back on service and reducing rates, Orender is concentrating on offering a better product and better staff.

"Service and added value does two things," he said. "One, it takes existing golfers and makes the time they spend more enjoyable. Two, we reach out to the community and segments of the population who are interested in golf and have either been disenfranchised or not embraced before. We bring them out and let them have fun and join the party. It doesn't make sense not to do it."

### SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS

Orender, who was part of the National Golf Foundation's (NGF) "Future of Golf" panel, said course operators need to take a closer look at the demographics of golf.

In addition to the 41 million golfers who have played golf, want to come back to the game or play more, according to the NGF study, Orender said that: "On any given Sunday you have 20 million people watching golf that don't play. These are kids, Generation X, minorities and women that would play if there were more user-friendly courses."

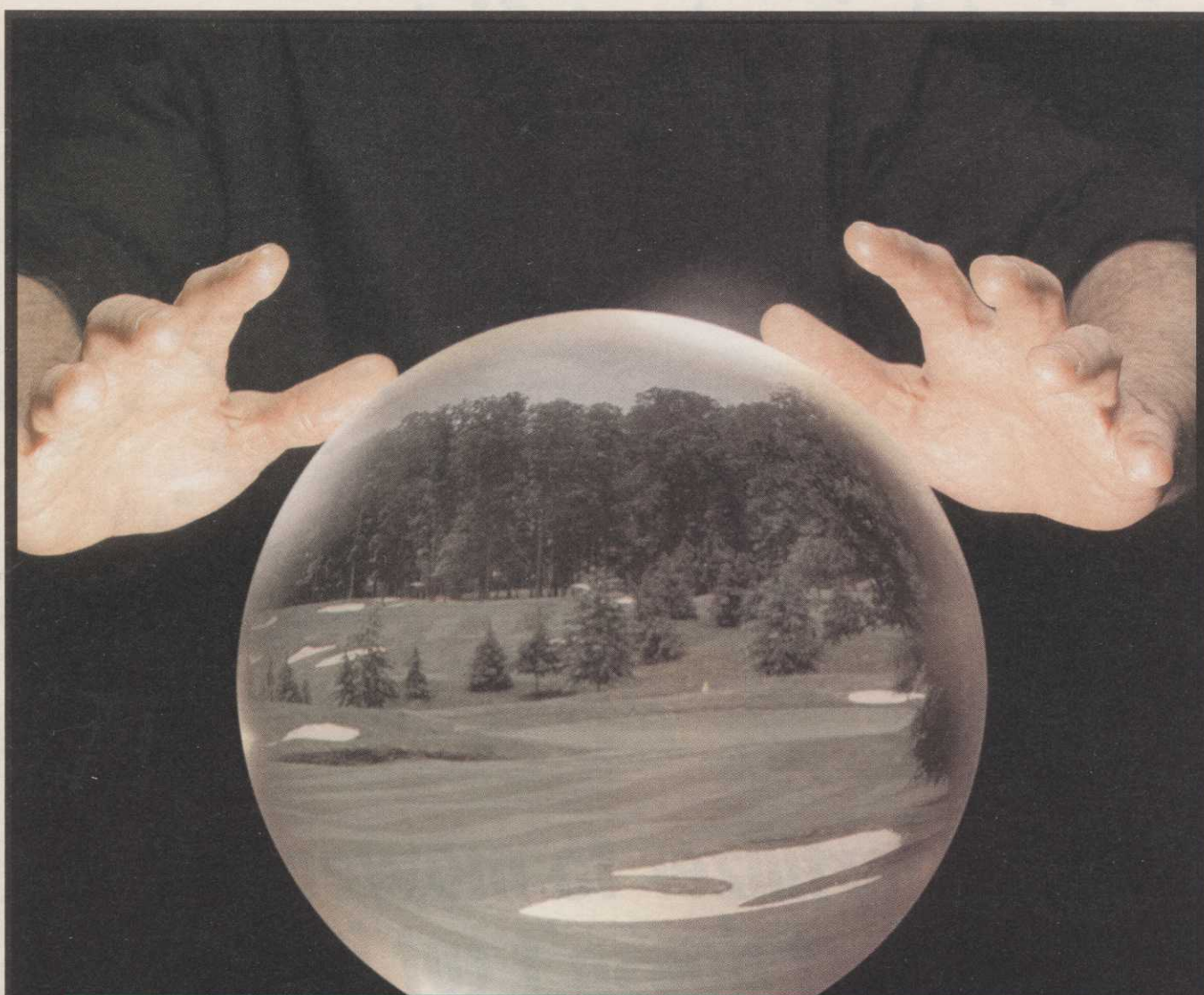
"A lot of people don't want to think about this, but the kid who has his hat on backwards, wearing the baggy shorts—that's your customer. So you can't sit around waiting for the baby boomers to hit 50 and get bitten by the golf bug," said Orender.

So far the strategy has worked at South Hampton. Orender's first member was an African-American father and his nine-year-old daughter. People are also driving great distances every Sunday to come out and play with their kids because they can play free with their parents after 1 p.m.

However, Orender is pragmatic. At North and South Hampton, courses that he built and that are centered in family-oriented communities, it was easy to institute the beginner-friendly strategy. "But at a course like Grand Haven, it might not be possible," he admits. "It is more of a resort course catering to retirees. But, if I go out tomorrow and buy a public daily-fee course, I would figure out how to build another set of tees. It is a small investment to make."

Hampton Golf and Landmar are also eyeing future growth.

"We are looking at doing brand new communities with golf courses in Tampa and Camden County, Ga. Tampa is a departure, but we want to stay along I-95 between Daytona to South Georgia, if we can," said Orender. "If an existing golf course community comes up we'll do it, but we are not looking just to do golf outside of a community development unless the deal is right." ▶



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