

# 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

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## 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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## Irish & Kay

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golf leagues," said Smith, who managed the on-site work. "They all just got together, out of frustration, and decided to build their own course. It had been a dream of theirs for years."

The difficulty of obtaining starting times at public courses in Westchester and Dutchess counties sparked the move by

IGA. When new president Phil O'Meara came on board in 1996, he led a campaign to find a suitable piece of land, sell memberships, and build a semi-private course. Under the plan, members would have tee-time priority and the general public would be welcome. "We all agreed to try this, and it has worked out," O'Meara said. "We now have a golf course."

Some 500 IGA members pur-

chased shares ranging from \$10,000 to \$13,000 each, raising about \$5 million. O'Meara hired the L.A. Group, of Saratoga Springs, N.Y., to find the land and handle permitting issues, and selected Stephen Kay Golf Course Architects, of Bronxville, N.Y., to design the layout. The 200 acres IGA purchased – part of a working dairy farm until then – are just outside of

Poughkeepsie. The maintenance building sits where cattle pens once stood, and two grain silos were kept to add character.

"When the architect saw the land, he said it would be an ideal spot for a links-style course," O'Meara said. "It's a wide-open piece of rolling terrain, with few trees and with quite a breeze most of the time. You're hitting over a big pond on one hole and

alongside a stream on another, and on four or five holes you're hitting over some wetlands."

O'Meara said the combined cost of the real estate and the construction came in at around \$3.5 million, including irrigation but not counting the cost of the clubhouse, which isn't yet finished.

"We did it very inexpensively," said architect Smith. "Our office is only an hour away, and we had already done The Links of North Dakota, so we knew what the heck we were doing – we had a model. They got a lot for what they paid. Looking at the course, you'd assume their budget was twice what it was."

Head professional Ciaran Carr, who came here from Myrtle Beach, S.C., said the course is strongly reminiscent of his "home course" in Ireland – Baltray, also called the County Lough Golf Club.

"I've been in America for 15 years, and I've seen a lot of so-called links-style courses over here," he said. "Although they might be in great condition, with nice layouts, they don't remind you much of Ireland. With this course, if I could take away the Catskills and put the Irish Sea there, I'd be at home again. It really is like having a wee bit of Ireland in Dutchess County. And a lot of the members have moved here from Ireland, so you hear all the different brogues."

At just over 7,000 yards from the back tees, the Links at Union Vale has respectable length. "There are no blind shots – that's the only difference from our courses at home," Carr said. "It's a liability issue."

Fairways average 45 yards wide, slightly above the norm, to give players a fighting chance of hitting the short stuff despite the wind. "Given the wind and the changing conditions, it's a course that people can play every day and not see the same course twice," Carr said. "Although there are flat lies, you also have shots playing from downhill and uphill lies. You'll get a lot of different looks. We're trying to make it a true links course, with Chris Strehl, our superintendent, where you can actually bump and run the ball up to the greens, where there are openings and you don't have to always fly over bunkers."

The layout, he said, offers plenty of challenge. "After the short rough comes the high fescue – the Shinnecock look. That's when you might think you're back in Ireland or Scotland, because good luck, my friend, trying to find a ball that you fire into that stuff. You will go through some golf balls here."

O'Meara said greens fees will be in line with courses in the area – \$33 during the week and \$47 on weekends. †

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