

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

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PERIODICAL

## US-UK study: It is greener on the other side of pond

By ANDREW OVERBECK

SANTA ROSA, Calif. — The top American golf courses earn twice as much and spend twice as much on maintenance as their U.K. counterparts, according to a survey by novice architect Bettina Schrickel.

Following a year comparing the maintenance practices of 25 of the top golf courses in both the United States and the United Kingdom for her graduate thesis in golf course architecture at Merrist Wood College in Surrey, England, Schrickel has published the findings of her study.



"Some of the numbers really surprised me," said Schrickel. "For example, the large gap between the financial income of the clubs, the maintenance budgets and the number of greenkeepers."

Of the American courses that she visited, the average income was \$2 million, the maintenance budget was \$970,000 and the number of greenkeepers was 18. Comparably, U.K. courses had an average income of \$800,000, a maintenance budget of \$340,000 and an average of eight greenkeepers. Further, annual member-

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## Simplot to buy Turf Partners

By A. OVERBECK

RANCHO BERNARDO, Calif. — Eco Soil Systems Inc. has accelerated its original February deal to sell the assets of its Turf Partners subsidiary to Post Falls, Idaho-based J.R. Simplot Co. Instead of buying \$20 million of convertible Eco Soil stock and enduring a 12-month valuation period before definitively purchasing Turf Partners, Simplot has agreed to buy out the distribution channel this summer.

"The stock deal was scrapped because Simplot didn't want to focus on our technology," said Max Gelwix, president and chief operating officer of

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### NEIGHBORING THE OLD COURSE WITH AN OLD COURSE HERO

Longtime St. Andrews Old Course head greenkeeper Walter Woods, right, served as a turfgrass consultant for course architect Kyle Phillips, left, on Kingsbarns Golf Links whose 1st green sits in the far background. Kingsbarns, a public course, will have a grand opening the weekend following the British Open in July.

## SubAir & Soil Air do patent combat in court

By MARK LESLIE

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — A battle about patents — spiced with added allegations of fraud, misappropriations and false advertising — will begin to be played out in U.S. District Court here in June between SubAir Inc. of Munnsville and Soil Air Technology of Middlefield, Conn.

The skirmish revolves around technology developed by Ferris Industries and



### BIOLOGICAL CONTROLS

The world of biological controls is changing rapidly and GCN's special section, on pages 21-28, provides an in-depth look at the new research and products that are driving the industry. As government regulations and local legislation continue to take chemicals away from golf courses, the industry is primed for growth and many superintendents are starting to take notice. Also inside, a report on two ground-breaking research projects that use burrowing owls and wasps to fight pests on courses.

## Certification the goal of CMAA env'l audit

By PETER BLAIS

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Audubon International (AI) hopes to develop a certification program within the next 12 months for clubs, club managers and superintendents, using the recently developed Club Managers Association of America (CMAA) Full Facility Environmental Audit for Clubs (see March issue).

"Audubon and CMAA are discussing what to do next with this information," said AI Executive Director Ron Dodson, referring to the self-audit that CMAA began mailing to its members in late March. "What we

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its subsidiary, SubAir Inc., starting in 1994 that uses subsurface piping to add air or remove water from the root zone of golf course greens to enhance root health; and a method developed by Soil Air Technology to measure pressure differentials and soil-gas concentrations to optimize soil growth.

But it gets much more personal than

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## J.R. Simplot accelerates Turf Partners purchase

continued from page 1

Eco Soil. "They are more interested in Turf Partners and wanted a simple buy-out for the purpose of distributing their fertilizers."

The financial performance of Eco Soil, which lost \$13.8 million in the fourth quarter, also contributed to the restructuring of the deal.

"The financial situation was a bit more tenuous than what we thought it was," said Wayne Burk, senior vice president at Simplot. "Now it is going to be a straight \$20-million investment, taking on some of their debt and essentially acquiring Turf Partners."

Simplot will pay a \$20-million down payment for Turf Partners

in July in addition to assuming \$17 million of liabilities and debt. The initial \$20-million payment is subject to adjustment based on Turf Partners' 2000 financial performance. In March 2001, Simplot will pay the balance of the purchase price, equal to six times the company's 2000 earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization. Ac-

ording to Gelwix, if Turf Partners hits its 2000 goal, Simplot could wind up owing Eco Soil at least another \$7 million in March.

Simplot has already moved in with a management team to facilitate the transition and ensure that Turf Partners is financially healthy when the acquisition is finalized. In addition to their other roles at Simplot, Burk is now general manager of Turf Partners and Mark

Howland, CPA, will become the chief financial officer.

"I will be taking an oversight role," said Burk. "We are obligated to try to run the business and help them as much as we can. But I can't go in and make a lot of changes because the purchase agreement is predicated on the performance of Turf Partners. If I go in and do some things and impact that [sales] negatively and the value drops, Simplot could then buy it for less money. Eco Soil won't stand for that."

Simplot is taking this cautious

*'We'd like to be in a position to be up and running in the Midwest and East by the fall selling season.'*

— Wayne Burk, Simplot senior vice president

approach to ensure that it is taking over a viable operating entity.

"We don't want to see another AgriBioTech," said Burk referring to the beleaguered seed company that grew too much too fast and is now bankrupt and selling off its assets.

This is not to say that Burk and Simplot aren't excited about adding to the firm's distribution network.

"We'd like to be in a position to be up and running in the Midwest and East by the fall selling season," said Burk. "So we need to get something in place and get going."

What does the Turf Partners sale mean for Eco Soil?

"We learned through the negotiations process that our mission is to be a technology company," said Gelwix. "This gives us the opportunity to focus on our technologies which we think will serve us well in the future." Gelwix projects that they will be able to grow proprietary products at 20 percent a year.

Despite losing Turf Partners, which racked up \$97.1 million in revenues in 1999 — a sizable portion of Eco Soil's \$123.5-million total revenue, Gelwix is confident that Eco Soil will continue to perform.

"Eco Soil as a stand-alone, with the reduction of corporate overhead and debt, will be profitable in 2000," he said.

Eco Soil also signed a five-year deal with Simplot to continue to have exclusive distribution of its proprietary products through Turf Partners.

"We will accomplish everything we want by staying independent," said Gelwix. "We get an injection of cash by selling off assets, while at the same time having guaranteed distribution channels for our products." ▶

**WETTING AGENT**

**SURF-SIDE**

**IS SURF-SIDE FOR THE BIRDS ?**

**IS THE "NEW CHEMISTRY" GOING TO REPLACE THE "SOAPS" OF YESTERYEAR ?**

**STAY TUNED FOR 20 YEARS OF GOOD LIVING**

**Bob DeMarco**

**THE LETTER** I've been a regular user of Surf-Side wetting agent for well over 20 years. Having tutored under the "Bill Smart" school of turfgrass I can only say that the new materials haven't convinced me. I'm a bit different than Bill, in that I don't experiment as much as he did (tip burn is not my favorite look). Surf-Side has performed wonderfully for all my turf inconsistencies. When salespersons come knocking at my door wanting to know if I'm familiar with "wetting agents", I ask them where have they been for the last millennium. It makes me think of one of Bill's favorite lines in the summertime "Should have been a mason, bricks don't wilt". That's why the spray rig never leaves the shop without Surf-Side 37. I've used Surf-Side with just about every chemical on the market - NEVER HAVE I BURNED WITH IT !

**YEARLY PROGRAM** Generally, my first application is late March / early April. My last application is around Thanksgiving (have to go skiing after that)!

**POWELTON CLUB**  
NEWBURGH, NEW YORK

**GREENS & TEES** 4oz / M Surf-Side on a regular basis, that being every 2 to 4 weeks depending on the time of year, disease pressure (Little League Practice) etc.

**FAIRWAYS** 2-oz / M on a regular basis, that being every 3 to 4 weeks depending on time of year, disease pressure, etc.

**DISEASE PROGRAM** We average 5 to 7 fairway sprays a year and put 2-gals Surf-Side in the 160 gal. sprayer. On greens & tees we average 8 to 10 sprays a year and put 1-gal. Surf-Side 37 in the 100 gal. sprayer.

**HYDROPHOBIC SOILS** Any area of the Golf Course not up to par gets a DRENCH of 5-gals. Surf-Side in 160 gals. water put out with a hand gun watered-in. This brings the areas under control and enhances rewetting dramatically.

**LOCALIZED DRY SPOTS** I've put up to 12-oz Surf-Side 37 in 2-gals. water and poured it on the LDS. It's best to first core the area with a soil probe. Follow with lots of water, and VIOLA !!! No more problem. It's a "no brainer" for Superintendents fighting LDS.

**SUPERINTENDENTS MUST ADAPT RATES TO INDIVIDUAL GOLF COURSE CONDITIONS**

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