

SUPPLIER BUSINESS



BRIEFS

LESCO REALIGNS SALES TEAM

CLEVELAND — Lesco has appointed Steven Cochran to senior vice president, sales. Cochran previously held the position of senior vice president, marketing and strategic sourcing. He will now lead the company's sales organization. Dana Wilson has also assumed a revised role with responsibility for the opening of new stores and other sales and growth opportunities. The company has not yet named a replacement for the marketing and strategic sourcing position.

BECKER UNDERWOOD ACQUIRES TWO

AMES, Iowa — Becker Underwood has purchased rhizobium inoculant producer Urbana Laboratories and seed coating specialist Seedbiotics. Terms of the acquisitions were not announced. Urbana Laboratories, based in St. Joseph, Mo., produces nitrogen-fixing rhizobium inoculants for legume crops. Seedbiotics' coating and polymer operations in Caldwell, Idaho, are strategically positioned for the forage and grass seed industries.

HOWARD FERTILIZER ADDS SIX

ORLANDO, Fla. — Howard Fertilizer & Chemical Co. has enhanced its business strategy by adding six new sales representatives during the past year. Howard's new sales professionals include: Bob Hess and Chris Brown, who handle the central Florida area; Tom Price covers northeast Florida; Brent Chapman manages southwest Florida; Cris Cook oversees the Tampa area; and Mike Rinaldo serves the Sarasota market.

AIR-O-LATOR GETS ONLINE

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Air-O-Lator, a manufacturer of fountain and aeration products for the professional golf maintenance industry, has joined the GCSAA's Golf Super-Market with a fully e-commerce-enabled storefront. Air-O-Lator and 35 other industry manufacturers have a presence on the site that allows customers to view, research and buy products online.

Lesco to strengthen sales, add stores-on-wheels

By ANDREW OVERBECK

CLEVELAND — When Michael DiMino replaced Bill Foley as president and CEO of Lesco in April, he outlined a simple strategy for bringing the company back into the black. DiMino immediately focused on leveraging the large amount of capital that Lesco had invested in manufacturing facilities by improving the company's selling and distribution capabilities.

The new CEO is in the process of implementing a new hub-and-spoke distribution system that will allow for overnight or next-day delivery to its 227 service centers and 77 stores-on-wheels. DiMino has also bulked up the sales staff by adding 54 representatives and plans to add even more services centers and stores-on-wheels in 2003.

So far DiMino is optimistic that the new structure will pay off in the

long run. Despite flat sales, third quarter 2002 results showed improved earnings, up to \$9.1 million from \$2.0 million in 2001.

"Although sales are flat, we are hitting all of our financial objectives," said DiMino. "Lesco is doing well from an overall profitability standpoint which is vastly improved from last year."

According to DiMino, superintendents will hear more from Lesco in the coming months.

"We have set up five zone vice presidents and our sales team is moving together again,"

said DiMino. "We are going to add more stores-on-wheels and 20 to 30 stores. And we have added golf sales representatives who will have a truck and a laptop and will be able to service golf courses. They will see more of Lesco."

The beefed-up sales force will

focus on the underserved areas on the West Coast, and in the Midwest.

Adding salespeople, stores-on-wheels and service centers is central to the company's success, added DiMino. The company expects that adding to sales

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According to president and CEO Michael DiMino, Lesco will be adding to its 77 stores-on-wheels.

2002 NEWSMAKERS

Adaptive car makers await final DOJ ruling

By ANDREW OVERBECK

When the U.S. Access Board released revised programming guidelines regarding golf course accessibility in early September, it did not include a provision requiring golf courses to supply adaptive golf cars for handicapped players.

The Department of Justice will eventually adopt the guidelines of the U.S. Access Board and then issue regulations regarding adaptive golf cars. In the meantime, whether courses have to provide the special cars remains voluntary, unless they are forced to by a lawsuit.

The fact that there are still gray areas in the interpretation of what courses are required to do under the American with Disabilities Act has not put a damper on some adaptive car makers' enthusiasm for the market.

Roger Pretekin, president of SoloRider, the company

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2002 NEWSMAKERS

Foam marker, Toro 4500-D top new product list

Editor's note: Back in February, Golf Course News asked intrepid contributing writer Kevin J. Ross, CGCS, to scour the GCSAA show floor in Orlando, Fla., for innovative new products. The list he compiled appeared in our post-show issue in March. Ross has revisited his picks to see which products made the biggest impact in 2002.

By KEVIN J. ROSS, CGCS

While you certainly could not label 2002 a banner year for equipment debuts, some pieces of new equipment remained very hot topics throughout the year.

The neatest product of the year was the miniature foam marking



Salvarani North America's foam marking kit for walk spreaders

kits for walk spreaders from Salvarani North America. This foam marking kit technology has been available for years for use

with boom sprayers, but this was the first year that the technology was miniaturized for use with

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2002 NEWSMAKERS

YGC to unveil new vehicles in '03

By ANDREW OVERBECK

NEWNAN, Ga. — After opening its new \$31 million manufacturing facility in June and rolling out its new G-MAX golf car, Yamaha Golf Car (YGC) is gearing up for another set of new product introductions in 2003.

"We are more than surprised

with the results of the new G-MAX line," said vice president Bill Szarowicz. "It has been a difficult year, but we have had a great response based on where the market is now."

"But we built the factory not just for golf cars," he added. "We will be rolling out some exciting new products that will expand

the Yamaha Golf Car business. We will be introducing new vehicles in June 2003."

Six new models are slated to be introduced next year and utility vehicles will be included in the product mix.

"We will be expanding our utility vehicle line. We feel we have a good medium-duty vehicle in the G21, but there is a spot in our lineup where we

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2002 NEWSMAKERS

Turf-Seed continues research on male sterile and naturally Roundup tolerant turfgrass

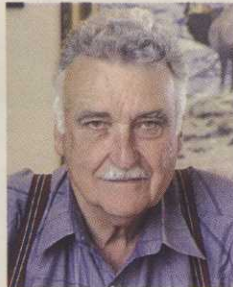
By ANDREW OVERBECK

HUBBARD, Ore. — The development of Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass by Scotts and Monsanto has been a contentious issue, as detractors here in the Willamette Valley contend the transgenic turf will ruin the country's primary bentgrass production region.

Bill Rose, president of Turf-Seed, has been the most vocal, predicting earlier this year that the Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA) approval for open pollination of Roundup Ready bentgrass in an 11,000-acre control area in Jefferson County would be a "disaster" (GCN, Sept. 2002).

"As a result of this control area, I expect to see genetically-altered turfgrass banned in the United States," he said. "My goal is to try not to get it banned."

Rose is concerned that production fields in the Willamette Valley could be contaminated, jeopardizing exports to Japan and Europe, which have strict regulations on genetically modified organisms.



Bill Rose

There is also resistance from groups in the United States like the International Center for Technology Assessment, which is pressing the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to deny Scotts' and Monsanto's petition for approval of Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass. In a petition filed in August, the group called Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass a "superweed" and

said the transgenic turfgrass has the potential to cause ecological and economic disruption because it could contaminate other stands of turf. The organization is also petitioning the USDA to list Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass as a noxious weed.

Rose, however, is trying to avoid the above scenarios by developing Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass that is male sterile, reducing the chances of any cross-contamination. In October, researchers said that they had a male sterile bentgrass plant.

"We found a number of plants that are

transgenic that are proven to be male sterile," said Rose. "The results in October look very good, but we will wait until January or February for another generation to confirm it."

After confirmation, Rose said, the next step will be to conduct field-testing and that will require getting a permit from the ODA.

Rose's company Pure Seed Testing is also working on getting a turf label for its naturally Roundup tolerant Aurora Gold hard fescue and Pure Gold and Tomahawk RT tall fescues that are already on the market.

According to Pure Seed president Crystal Rose-Fricker, the company is waiting for an approval from Monsanto so it can release recommended safe Roundup rates that can be applied to the turf without harming it.

Rose-Fricker said work is also progressing on naturally Roundup tolerant creeping fescue, chewings fescue, slender creeping fescue, perennial ryegrass, Kentucky bluegrass, and bentgrass.

Scotts, Monsanto preparing to resubmit Roundup Ready bentgrass petition

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process hit a snag in September when APHIS issued a "letter of deficiency." The request for more information prompted Scotts and Monsanto to withdraw their petition for approval Oct. 3.

According to officials from both Scotts and APHIS, the withdrawal is an expected part of the approval process. Neither side, however, could specify exactly why the petition was withdrawn.

"We anticipated that they [APHIS] would request more information and additional data," said Scotts spokesman John Bosser. "They have asked for more data for a couple of the trials and tests concerning the biology of the plant. So we have withdrawn the petition and we will resubmit with additional data early next year. It is just a formality and we are still looking at an introduction in 2004 or 2005."

Bosser said since 1998 close to 40 percent of the petitions to APHIS have been withdrawn in order to submit additional data and then resubmitted. In fact, Monsanto's original petition for Roundup Ready corn was withdrawn in October 1997 before finally being resubmitted and approved in September 2000.

COLLECTING GOLF COURSE DATA

While Scotts and Monsanto work on

gaining additional data for APHIS, Wayne Horman, director of seed sales and marketing for Scotts, is overseeing testing at individual golf courses across the country. In addition to university testing, APHIS allowed 12 courses to begin on-site testing in 2001 and approved 18 more testing locations this fall.

"We added 11 more courses this fall and we will add seven or eight more next spring in areas where it was too late to seed because of cold weather," said Horman. "Courses are placing the turf in their nurseries so they can compare it to varieties that they are using today. The data we have gotten so far is favorable."

"The courses that started testing last year are monitoring the grandparents of the variety that will eventually come to market," he added. "The new courses are testing turf that is more like the variety that will come to market."

In addition to on-site testing work, Horman is also conducting education sessions with superintendents.

"The educational phase is moving forward and we have done sessions explaining the technology and what it can do," said Horman. "There is interest from superintendents, some have already asked me when they can buy it. But we can't sell or market it until APHIS approves it." ■

Ross reviews new products of the year

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walk spreaders. One has to wonder what took so long for us to have these.

When it comes to iron, the debut of the Toro 4500-D/4700-D was probably the most talked-about new mowing unit. By learning from the faults of previous large out-front turf rotaries and increasing engine horsepower, this unit has performed very well for many courses.

Another mower which drew high interest this season was the Jacobsen LF 1880 fairway unit. Although not available for the better part of the season, demo units were out in force, and the feedback among superintendents was generally positive. The concept of this fairway mower falls between the triplex and fiveplex. It was being marketed toward high-end facilities with close-cut fairways. It has 18-inch cutting units that are very similar to a greensmower, and follows turf contours very well. We will have to wait until next year to see whether this machine will make a true splash in the fairway marketplace.

Although not new, two pieces of equipment still seem to be the talk of the industry.

The Toro Flex 21 may still be the hottest mowing unit on the market. In its second full season, this mower started to dominate the walking greensmower market. One major reason for this (besides the concept of the machine) was the lack of

mechanical problems since its debut. This season, Toro also offered attachments for the unit, from brushes to groomers. These additions now offer even greater benefits for this mower.

The second unit that seemed to be on



The Toro 4500-D out-front rotary mower tackles the rough.

the tip of everyone's tongue, especially those with newer bentgrasses, was the Graden Dethatcher.

As superintendents increasingly scrutinize their thatch management plans, this unit seems to fit into that plan. It offers the use of one-, two- and three-mm blades and adjustable depth of up to one-and-a-half inches, all depending upon the level of aggressiveness desired on green surfaces. Some courses even combined the Graden with the aerification operation to achieve very high thatch percentage removal. ■

Bayer divests fipronil

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developed for the greenhouse industry, the fipronil divestiture will directly impact the golf market. Current fipronil products include Chipco Choice, Top Choice and Fire Star.

"We have the right to negotiate licensing back the products, but there is no guarantee," Carrothers said. "But the opportunity for a co-exclusive is part of the negotiations."

If licensing back the products doesn't pan out, Carrothers said Bayer ES would still have a very strong product line.

"It is not critical to our business model," he said. "Our portfolio is still extremely strong. We have products like 26GT, Merit, Compass and Bayleton that will make a huge impact in the golf market."

Bayer ES also has three insecticides, two

herbicides and four fungicides in development right now.

Three of the new products are currently in the registration process with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Those being reviewed include: Triton, a broad-spectrum fungicide; Lynx, a sterile inhibitor fungicide; and Revolver, a post-emergent herbicide that removes cool-season turf from warm-season turf.

"When we look at our project review, we look at what diseases and pests are controlled and what the unique selling proposition is," said Carrothers. "Then we look at whether the active ingredient is compatible from an EPA perspective. All of this is being looked at to make sure we come out with new technology that our customers want and need. We need to bring new solutions to superintendents to help them more effectively manage their courses." ■