

Pursell Technologies' FarmLinks taking shape

By ANDREW OVERBECK

FAYETTEVILLE, Ala. — FarmLinks, a groundbreaking golf course project, is taking shape here on the sprawling farmland surrounding Pursell Technologies Inc.'s (PTI) corporate campus.

The 18-hole, Hurdzan/Fry designed FarmLinks, the central focus of Pursell Farms, is two-thirds of the way complete and seeding at the course began in April. President and CEO David Pursell is pressing superintendent Tim Lacy and builder Landscapes Unlimited to have the rolling parkland layout ready for unofficial play in October in time for the bi-annual Pursell Cup charity golf tournament.

Pursell Farms, however, is much more than a golf course. The company built the facility as a testing site for its own controlled-release Polyon fertilizer and other insecticides utilizing its Precise technology. Pursell said there

will be numerous environmental test sites on the property in addition to areas such as the putting green that will be constructed in thirds using three different construction methods.

"One third of the green will be the standard USGA green, one third will be a California green, and the other third will have a sand/Profile soil amendment mix," said Pursell. "The green will also feature 12 different types of bentgrass."

While construction is ongoing, PTI has been bringing in superintendents from across the country to receive product training and indulge in Southern hospitality. Guests now stay in a well-appointed guest lodge that overlooks FarmLinks' 17th green.

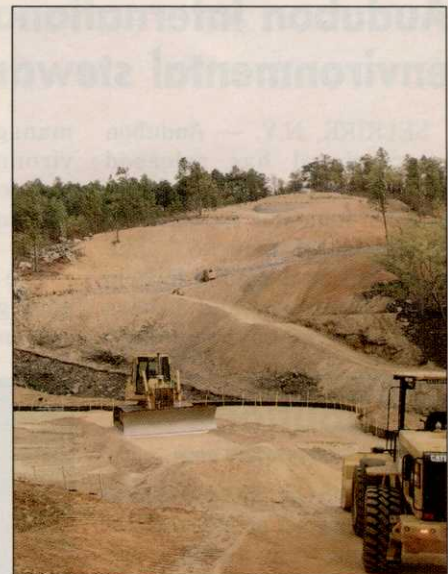
The company, along with its formulators and distributors Simplot Partners and Harrell's, is on track to bring 850 end users to the facility this year.

Last year it brought in approximately 700 end users. Superintendents currently receive .45 continuing education units from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America for participating in the training session and Pursell hopes to up the credits once FarmLinks opens.

In addition to the education and marketing programs, PTI has aligned itself with several top golf suppliers and in the process defrayed the total construction and operating cost of the facility. In return, key sponsors such as the Toro Co., Club Car and Flowtronex will have the ability to bring down end users and use the facility to test new products.

"So far Toro has been helping with the irrigation installation, Flowtronex has provided the pump station and Club Car has provided equipment," said Pursell. "It has been a great collaborative effort so far."

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Bulldozers shape the green on FarmLinks' fifth hole, a 200-plus-yard par three that drops 150 feet from the tee. Pursell will use the course, which is the centerpiece of Pursell Farms, as a testing ground for its products and technologies.

Harding Park renovation on track

By DOUG SAUNDERS

SAN FRANCISCO — After four years of debates, proposals, and false starts, the City of San Francisco has finally developed a plan to take on the renovation of city-owned Harding Park Golf Course located on the shore of Lake Merced, just across from the renowned Olympic Club.

In April the San Francisco Board of Supervisors approved a \$15 million renovation plan that will transform the 80-year-old course into a championship-quality venue that will host the 2006 PGA Tour Championship. The approval of city and state funds to finance the much-needed upgrade will allow work to begin in June on an optimistic plan that was first proposed by San Francisco resident and former United States Golf Association president Sandy Tatum in 1998 (GCN April 2000).

The plan to rebuild the neglected course has been a labor of love for Tatum. His first concept was to find a way to make the project economically feasible by securing the presence of the PGA Tour to use the course. The city signed a 35-year lease of the course with Arnold Palmer Golf Management in January 2000 with the intent to let Palmer Golf do the renovation work and allow them to recoup expenditures through a sliding greens fee schedule over the period of the lease.

MANAGEMENT COMPANIES RETREAT

Palmer Management backed out of the agreement in January 2001 when continuous wrangling with city officials, concerned golf groups and environmental activists caused project delays making it economically unfeasible. City officials attempted to attract other

management companies, including KemperSports Management of Chicago, to step into the deal but had no success.

In the past year, new members of the board of supervisors looked



The 18th hole and clubhouse at San Francisco's Harding Park, where renovations are finally underway after years of delays.

more favorably upon the idea. As a result, the project will be paid for with a combination of \$2 million of city funds and a \$13 million grant from California State Parks bond fund that will be paid back over time through greens fees. The Harding Park complex includes the 18-hole layout, the Fleming Nine executive course, and a driving range and generates close to 160,000 rounds annually.

Board member Tony Hall created the Golf Fund to finance the project and has made it clear that all revenues from greens fees will go back into Harding Park and toward the operations of the other city-owned courses.

"We are going to turn Harding Park into a world-class venue that all the residents of San Francisco can be proud of and we will maintain municipal control over the golf courses," Hall said.

This guarantee addresses a concern voiced by local golf groups who feared that an outside management firm would eventually shut out local players from a rebuilt course. Now a citizens advisory committee will recommend a new fee structure and the parks and recreation

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A CLUBHOUSE 78 YEARS IN THE MAKING

In 1924, architect Frank Lloyd Wright was commissioned to design a clubhouse for the Nakoma Country Club in Madison, Wis. However, the building was never completed — until now. The building, known as Nakoma, was recently completed as the centerpiece of the Taliesin Architects-inspired Gold Mountain Community and the Dragon Golf Course, located 50 miles north of Lake Tahoe. Owners Darrel and Peggy Garner, worked in conjunction with Taliesin Architects, the architectural practice Wright established in 1893, to ensure that the 22,000-square-foot clubhouse, which pays homage to Native Americans, was faithful to the drawings Wright produced 78 years ago.

Southeast Partners rolls out low-cost distribution model

By ANDREW OVERBECK

LAGRANGE, Ga. — In a move to improve distribution efficiency and service to golf courses in the Southeast, Butch Gill has teamed up with other industry professionals and suppliers to form Southeast Partners.

In Florida, where the company is established, the alliance brings together suppliers Simplot Partners and Turf Merchants and distributors Sunniland Fertilizers and Vopak. Gill has taken those core competencies and paired them with quality sales representatives and industry notables such as Billy Griffith and David Barnes.

The business arrangement allows for high quality products, represented by

knowledgeable salespeople, to be delivered to superintendents quickly and efficiently. Southeast Partners has been able to jump right into the business cheaply because its model does not require it to purchase any distribution facilities or trucks.

Gill has worked in the seed business for the last 25 years, most recently as a representative for Turf Merchants. He and Turf Merchants president Steve Tubbs came up with the idea for Southeast Partners as an alternative distribution and sales model.

"When AgriBioTech went bankrupt and our largest distributor Terra was bought by Land O'Lakes, we had to find another way

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Audubon International releases environmental stewardship guide

SELKIRK, N.Y. — Audubon International has released its 2002 edition of "A Guide to Environmental Stewardship on the Golf Course." The guidebook is designed to help superintendents and others interested in environmental

management to blend environmentally responsible practices into the day-to-day operations of golf course management.

The book incorporates knowledge gained through Audubon International's 10 years of

work to help golf courses serve as ecologically valuable green spaces throughout North America, while reducing potential environmental impacts associated with golf course operations. The 128-page guide covers a variety of topics, including environmental planning, wildlife and habitat management, chemical use reduction and safety, water

conservation and water quality management, and how to build support through outreach and education activities. Project plans, case examples, and reference materials are included to help golf courses achieve their environmental goals.

"The guide was written to serve as a resource for turf professionals, students, and

golf course members of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program," explained Jean Mackay, Audubon International's director of educational services and principal author and editor of the guide. "We hope it helps people take action to ensure that more and more golf courses are managed with sensitivity to the environment."

Distribution

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to do it," said Gill. "In 2000 I broke away and we set up independent agents like Billy Griffith, and teamed with Nick Spardy with Simplot Partners which was looking to come into the Southeast. A lot of companies had products they wanted in the market, but didn't have ability to put salespeople in the market.

"We realized that if we knew who the customer was and we had good representation to that customer, then we could outsource his supplies through the best vendors," he continued.

The key to the deal was hooking up with Sunniland, which delivers large bulk items such as seed, fertilizer and soil amendments to Lowe's and Home Depot, and Vopak, which delivers smaller items to the pest control industry and Ace Hardware stores.

"These companies already have trucks running and they drive past golf courses every day," said Gill. "They were looking to add more freight to make their delivery systems more economical. With these partners on board we can get products to golf courses at the right time and still be cost effective."

With Florida set up, Gill is now focusing on finding partners in other parts of the Southeast.

"If we can get this model up we will expand to Georgia, South Carolina and Alabama and the rest of the Southeast in the next 18 months to two years," he said. "We are already looking for partners in each area that will work with us." ■


PTI FarmLinks

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Pursell said the marketing strategy of bringing superintendents and other end users to the facility for training has been worthwhile.

"The positive reaction presses us on to continue what we are doing," he said. "It is fun to be able to do something different. When we can do this we are not competing on the same page as a Lesco or some of the other larger companies."

FarmLinks, which will play from 7,544 yards, is scheduled to open in mid-April 2003. ■



The best time to stop so
it's still in the ea