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Reduce water use

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Technology to the rescue

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RENOVATION WORK SURGING

Superintendent Rick Holanda at Aronimink Golf Club in Newton, Pa., took advantage of a mild winter to complete his renovation project a year ahead of schedule (work on the eighth hole is pictured above). His story appears on page 16 in the refocused Development & Renovation section, along with the first in a continuing series of articles by Kevin Downing detailing his experience renovating Willoughby Golf Club in Stuart, Fla. (see page 15).

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COUNTERPOINT

Editorial Focus: Mowers

Mower makers shelve new technology

By ANDREW OVERBECK

While mower manufacturers continue to develop GPS, electric motors and autonomous capabilities, they have yet to incorporate these technologies into any new products. Instead of testing the waters with risky and expensive technology, manufacturers have concentrated their short-term efforts on improving and tweaking existing products.

"A lot of the excitement over new technology was fed by the Internet euphoria that you could do anything," said John Wright, director of marketing for Toro. "A lot of companies have spent money trying to do anything and it didn't pay off. Superintendents have told us that they don't want more technology. They want stuff that works and makes their jobs easier—not more complicated."

Toro and other manufacturers have not given up on the promise of new technology (see story page 11), but they are cognizant that any breakthrough product will have to offer



John Wright



Gregg Brenningmeyer

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NGP, AGC merger to go forward

Investors, analysts question combined company's viability

By DEREK RICE

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — Nearly two months after announcing its intent to merge with American Golf Corp., National Golf Properties (NGP) announced the two companies would merge into an as yet unnamed corporation.

As part of the deal, NGP will absorb American Golf's \$126 million in debt and would cease to be a real estate investment trust (REIT).

In the days following the announcement, financial firms seemed underwhelmed by the news, and investors were left to ponder the future of a company that is willing to assume so much debt.

"I'm unhappy to see this, but I'm not surprised," said Dan Boyle of Schwerin Boyle Investments, which is an NGP shareholder.

PricewaterhouseCoopers, which is the independent auditor for both NGP and American Golf, has raised concerns about the viability of both companies in light of their financial difficulties

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Rutgers gains rights to PureIntro technology

By ANDREW OVERBECK

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. — Rutgers University has reached an exclusive agreement with Japan Tobacco to develop and commercialize transgenic turfgrass varieties using a pioneering plant transformation technology.

Japan Tobacco's PureIntro employs plasmids derived from Agrobacterium tumefaciens, a bacterium that has the unique

ability to insert a portion of its DNA into the cells of plants. According to officials at Rutgers,

PureIntro technology is more precise than the Scotts Co.'s "gene gun" and it will allow turfgrass producers more access to transgenic varieties.

"Agrobacterium has been used by researchers for years in

transforming dicots but it has never been used in monocots," said Jim Costagano, manager of technology and licensing at the Center for Turfgrass Science and the Biotechnology Center for Agriculture and the Environment at Rutgers.

Dr. Barbara Zilinskas, a plant scientist at Rutgers, received permission from Japan Tobacco in 1997 to begin work with PureIntro in turfgrass and was

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Dr. William Meyer

First National expands Native American lending

By DEREK RICE

MARTINSVILLE, N.J. — Rumors of the demise of funding for golf course development projects are greatly exaggerated, according to Jerry Sager, managing director at First National, who said the departure of some of the bigger names has led to that perception.

"I keep hearing that and I think it's focused because Bank of America left and Daimler Chrysler Credit quit and GMAC stopped doing [golf course loans]. I don't think that's fair," he said.

Along with First National, Sager said, other key lenders have been in the golf business for many years.

"Textron's certainly been around a long time and we've been doing golf course loans for 20 years. I don't think we've changed to the market at all," he said. "Quite frankly, I don't think Textron has either. I think we've both been quite consistent."

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