

# NEWS OF THE INDUSTRY

## **SUPER SPORTS INTERNATIONAL SPONSORS AMATEUR PUTTING CHAMPIONSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL GOLF CLASSIC**

NEW YORK—Super Sports International's president, Bobby Carrigan, announced his company's sponsorship of two major golf events for 1974, one for amateurs and one for professionals. A \$125,000 first-prize national putting championship for amateurs will be held at Iron Shore Estates and CC, Montego Bay, Jamaica, from June through December, with a total championship purse in excess of \$200,000. In addition, SSI will sponsor a \$50,000 Golf Classic in Jamaica the second week in December, with total regional purses amounting to \$256,000.

For the amateur championships, Carrigan says, "We're attracting the many golfers who feel they have the ability for that last crucial stroke—the winning putt—and offering the amateur the chance to putt for more dough than the pros.

"In a pro golf tournament," he added, "a lot of money rides on a short putt, and watching on TV can be a frustrating experience for those who play golf, but have never felt capable of trying for the top. The National Putting Championship gives them their chance." Carrigan also stated that the 18 greens for the amateur event were designed by Bill Glenn, former director of golf course design and construction for Arnold Palmer Enterprises.

Super Sports International has divided the eastern half of the United States into 64 tournament areas. All participants, regardless of their areas, will be flown to Jamaica as guests of the company. Each area will have its own qualifying tournament at Iron Shore. According to SSI, the top five from each qualifying tournament will return to Iron Shore to compete before a national television audience for the \$125,000 first prize.

Local club professionals who sign up four or more amateur participants for the putting championship will get an opportunity to qualify in one of the 23 SSI-sponsored regional qualifying rounds. The low three qualifiers from these regions, according to the company, are entitled to participation in the SSI-sponsored Golf Classic.

In addition, the company will host a number of putting tournaments at country clubs country-wide, offering prizes worth \$100 per club. The prizes will be in the form of merchandise from the host professional's pro shop.

## **CELEBRITIES ASSUME CONTROL OF LOBO GOLF CORP**

ORLANDO, FLA.—A group of investors—including such celebrities as movie actor James Garner, quarterback John Unitas and former Masters champion Charles Coody—has assumed control of Lobo Golf Corp here.

The group, called Golf Investors Limited, is headed by Orlando oilman Bill D. Saxon, general partner, who was elected chairman of the board of Lobo.

Saxon said Garner and Unitas will be active in promoting golf clubs produced by Lobo, a growing two-year-old firm with \$4.8 million in contracted sales anticipated this year.

In addition to investing in Lobo, it is anticipated that Coody will promote the clubs and become active in actual club design, said Saxon. Touring pro Chris Blocker remains on the Lobo sales staff.

"We're quite enthused to have such a cast of personalities with us. This is a young, dynamic company and with the kind of people we have the company can't help but grow rapidly," said Saxon.

## **PROFESSIONAL GOLF REPORTS EARNING GAIN**

CHATTANOOGA, TENN.—For fiscal

1973, which ended September 29, 1973, Professional Golf Company reported sales of \$15.044 million and after-tax earnings of \$847,000 or 34 cents per share. Sales were up 25 per cent over fiscal 1972, while pre-tax earnings increased by 30 per cent. Earnings in 1972, which were only partially taxed due to tax loss carry-forwards, were 40 cents a share.

The Chattanooga-based company handles First Flight, Hotze and Arnold Palmer lines of golf equipment and the Duckster sportswear line.

## **STUDY SAYS CLUBS SHIFT CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS TO WAITING LIST**

NEW YORK—Why the building and renovation programs of many country clubs may not be as ambitious now as in the past is explained in the newly-released, "Clubs in Town and Country—1973," the 20th annual report on club operating results prepared by the international accounting firm of Harris, Kerr, Forster & Company.

Inflation is continuing to cause private, city and country clubs to experience declines in the amount of money available for debt service, capital improvements and replacements, according to the report. The sample on which the report is based consists of a total of 200 clubs—100 country clubs and 100 city clubs—selected to represent all sections of the United States. It includes clubs with fiscal years ending through June 30, 1973. Both the city club and country club groups are broken down into four subgroups based on geography and four subgroups based on size.

Dealing here with country clubs only, it was reported that combined revenue and dues income for the 100 country clubs increased by 5.1 per cent over a year ago. Operating costs and expenses rose by 5.5 per cent, however, and the balance available for debt service, capital improvements and other finan-

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cial charges was down by 8.7 per cent. During the last 20 years, country clubs, on a per member basis (all classes), have had an increase of 99 per cent in total revenue and dues, which was insufficient to offset the effects of a rise of 113 per cent in total operating costs and expenses. Therefore, in the period under review, the balance available for debt service, capital improvements and other financial charges was lower by 43 per cent than it was 20 years ago.

The group of 100 country clubs retained 4.4 per cent of its current year's total sales and income (exclusive of dues) for application against capital charges. Food and beverage departmental net income equaled 3.2 per cent of food and beverage sales. Net operating costs per country club regular member averaged \$816 in the current year.

There was an increase of .2 of 1 per cent over a year ago in the total membership of the country club sample and a rise of 5.2 per cent in the average annual dues rate per regular member, which was \$876 in 1973.

Payroll and related costs absorbed 88.0 per cent of the current sales and income (exclusive of dues) of the 100 country clubs.

The average expenditure per country club member (all classes) in the current year was \$883, exclusive of dues. Of that amount, \$445 was for food, \$198 for beverages, \$123 for sports activities and \$117 for all other charges.

Golf course maintenance costs for 100 clubs with a total of 2,151 holes were 4.9 per cent greater than a year ago, and net golf expenses showed an over-all advance of 7.8 per cent. Since 1954, course maintenance costs for the 100 country clubs (adjusted to reflect the trend disclosed by the latest sample) have advanced at an annual rate of 8.6 per cent.

### **MGA OUTLINES INCREASING ROLE IN "COMMUNITY SERVICES"**

**NEW YORK**—The Metropolitan Golf Assn. officials voiced what they hope to be a new trend toward "better service to the community" at their annual meeting held here this winter.

Some of the organization's objectives will be to see that course conditions are improved, insurance rates possibly reduced, golf courses uniformly measured for par and efforts made to diminish the effects of the fuel

shortage.

Edward Sulzberger, chairman of the steering committee, said that in World War II, horses and wagons brought members to his Quaker Ridge Club at Scarsdale from the Larchmont railroad station to play golf. Sulzberger did not anticipate such drastic measures now, but he warned that car pools might become necessary.

One of the speakers at the meeting, P. J. Boatright, executive director of the United States Golf Assn., assured everyone at the meeting that there would be no rule changes for golf in 1974 and possibly for 1975. The USGA and the Royal & Ancient of St. Andrews, Scotland, are the co-makers of the rules of the game.

### **WM. NORTON TO SELL MAJORITY INTEREST IN TORO FRANCHISE**

**PHOENIX, ARIZ.**—William S. Norton, president of the Norton Corp., franchised distributor for Toro power mowers, irrigation systems and related turf maintenance equipment in Arizona and Nevada's Clark County, has announced his agreement to sell controlling interest in his company to Roy W. Simpson, director of distributor relations for The Toro Company. Terms of the sale, which became effective January 2, were not disclosed.

Simpson plans to leave his present post in Minneapolis and take over as president and chief executive officer to The Norton Corp. here. He has been on the Norton board of directors for the past two years.

In 1972, he was named Mr. Toro, the highest honor that the Toro Company can bestow on any of its 66 United States distributors.

### **RYAN AWARDS PRESENTED AT TURFGRASS CONFERENCE**

**LOS ANGELES**—Watson Distributing Company, Inc., of Houston, has been named the 1973 Outstanding Dealer for Ryan turf equipment.

John R. Watson, president of Watson, accepted the award from Vern Worrel, Ryan's general manager, at the Busch Gardens here during the run of 45th Annual Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America turfgrass conference, held in Anaheim in February. Ryan hosted more than 50 dealers throughout the nation at the Busch Gardens.

rather than see a drastic and crippling reduction in the state's \$40 million a year grass seed industry.

Fields are burned after harvest to destroy weed seeds and diseases that would quickly reduce yields in most of the grass seed production. If open field burning is terminated, the addition of this problem to the present energy and fertilizer crisis would precipitate a tremendous seed shortage, resulting in even higher seed prices.

Joe Jacobs, manager of Normac, Inc., Tangent, Ore., told ryegrass growers at a meeting in Albany, Ore., that both growers and seed dealers would like to see a reasonable balance in supply and demand if nature would just cooperate. He said that the price of annual and perennial ryegrass is high compared to past years, but it is also the first time in recent years that growers have made a reasonable profit. He didn't feel that high prices were restricting the sale of ryegrass, because alternative seeds for overseeding were also high. He looked for little carryover of the 1973 ryegrass crop. The 1974 crop predictions must bow to the weather and the availability of fertilizers and fuel for validation, he said. He anticipates continuing higher prices for most grass seeds, if acreage is kept at the present level.

H. J. Ostland, district manager of the fertilizer division of Chevron Chemical Company, Portland, Ore., told the same meeting that the fertilizer shortage was caused by a Federal law, which placed fertilizer under price controls in 1972 at a level that discouraged the building of new plants. In 1973, he said, fertilizer was exported at higher prices and resulted in a low carry-over at the end of the year. The Government removed the controls in 1973 and prices went up by as much as 50 per cent, but carry-over at the end of that year was minimal. He said several new ammonia plants for manufacturing nitrogen fertilizer were under construction, but it will take three years to get into production.

Over-all, the supply of grass seed should be reasonably good, but prices will no doubt be above last year's. There will be shortages in some specialty grasses, although a bumper crop in 1974 could reverse the trend. It's doubtful that grass seed prices will drop below those of the 1973 crop year. □