

Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

Business briefs

Flint sale clears way For Novartis-Zeneca merger

Novartis Agribusiness sold its worldwide Flint business to Bayer Crop Protection, a subsidiary of Bayer AG, for about \$760 million. At press time, the sale opened the door for the proposed merger of Novartis Agribusiness and Zeneca Agrochemicals to form Syngenta AG, which was approved by European anti-trust authorities but was still subject to U.S. approval from the Federal Trade Commission.

Sale of the Flint fungicide line, manufactured in Switzerland, addresses an area of concern for the European commission and the FTC for the merger. "In finding a responsible buyer for our Flint products, Novartis Agribusiness has managed to maintain jobs in Switzerland, while fulfilling a condition of the merger," said Heinz Imhof, head of Novartis Agribusiness.

According to a recent report, Greensboro, N.C., will be the home for Syngenta AG's North American crop protection division. Delaware will be the site of the company's smaller U.S. corporate headquarters.

Golf Trust to sell or liquidate

Charleston, S.C.-based Golf Trust of America, a top U.S. golf course owner, announced in September that its board of directors will sell the company or liquidate its assets, including 47 courses in 17 states.

In February, the company retained Banc of America Securities LLC as its financial advisor to assist the board in a review of strategic alternatives and to contact potential investors/acquirers. As a result of information gathered in this process, the board concluded that it's the company's best interest to sell or liquidate.

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Daddy's Little Girl

SUPERINTENDENT WINS AWARD THANKS TO DAUGHTER'S INSPIRATION



WILL WALDRON

Pat Blum didn't create his environmentally friendly maintenance program for recognition. He did it for a more personal reason — his 5-year-old daughter, Samantha.

"I didn't want people to point fingers at her when I was dead and gone and say, 'Your Daddy polluted the environment,'" says Blum, superintendent of Colonial Acres GC in Glenmont, N.Y. "The world doesn't really need golf courses, so if we're going to exist we might as well do it right."

Whether he craved publicity or not, Blum received recognition recently for his efforts — from none other than New York Governor George Pataki. His efforts at managing the environment at the course won Colonial Acres a Governor's Award for Pollution Pre-

Colonial Acres' superintendent Pat Blum looks to his daughter, Samantha, for inspiration about the environment.

vention in the small business category. Blum's 9-hole, executive course is the first golf course to win the award, which has existed since 1994. Colonial Acres has also been an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary since 1998.

Pataki rewards companies annually that use pollution prevention strategies that exceed the legal requirements of environmental protection and successfully reduce or eliminate the generation of pollution at the source. There can be 10 winners or one. This year, there were five winners in four categories.

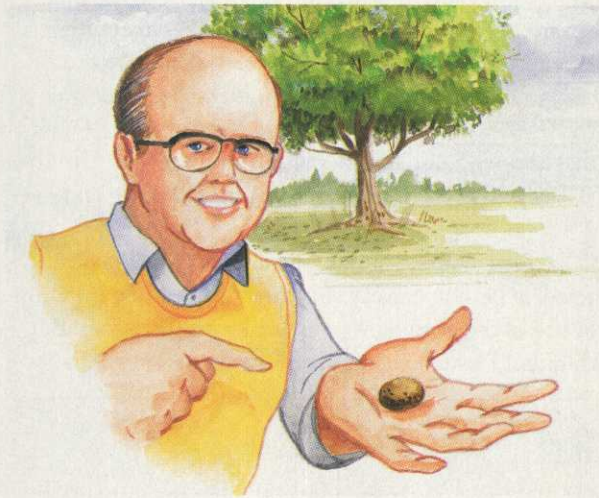
"People had been telling me for a couple of years that I should apply for the award, so I finally did," Blum says.

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Nutty Professor

TURF SCIENTIST HAS A PLAN TO BATTLE HUNGER

Professor Reed Funk is going nuts — but the world may be a better place for it. Funk, the Cook College/Rutgers University turf scientist who developed Manhattan perennial ryegrass and Rebel tall fescue, is lobbying to increase the world's supply of nuts to battle hunger problems at home and abroad. Funk is researching the issue and developing contacts in Asia for further development.



DAN ZOLA

"It's possible and likely that future generations will need more food," Funk says. "Therefore, we will need to substantially increase world food production."

The world is dependent on only a few major crops, including wheat, rice, corn, soybeans and barley, and needs to expand its selection, Funk says. "We need to develop a greater diversity of species," he adds.

That includes nutritious and palatable nuts, such as pecans, hazelnuts and chestnuts. "There are opportunities for substantial genetic improvement for a number of these underutilized crops," he adds.

In time, Funk says that nut species can be genetically improved to grow anywhere, despite their lineage. He points out that corn originally adapted in southern Mexico, but was growing throughout the New World when Columbus discovered America.

Funk stresses that the world will need more food because population is expected to increase by 3 billion in the next 50 years. He says nut trees can grow in rocky and steep areas where other crops, such as wheat, can't be planted.

"Many tree crops have been neglected, but we have the building blocks to do this," he says. "The genetic improvement of underutilized food crops is a win-win situation."

— Larry Aylward

Quotable

"The threat of losing your job causes more stress than you can imagine. And the threat is real. There's always a small group of people in every club that's clamoring for a guy's head."

— Frank Dobie, superintendent and general manager of Sharon GC in Sharon Center, Ohio, on job security.

"You get a free air show with every round."

— Certified golf course superintendent Dennis Lyon commenting on the jets from a nearby base that frequently fly over Murphy Creek in Aurora, Colo.

"We've all come to a point in our lives where we've been tested and hit adversity. And in golf there is no better sport to describe the equation of life. It's just you and a ball and nature; you against yourself."

— Robert Redford, director of "The Legend of Bagger Vance," explains his metaphor for life (*The Cleveland Plain Dealer*).

"Grandpa lived the evolution of golf architecture. He went from mules and pull scrapers in his early days to big earth movers, from basic watering to multi-million-dollar irrigation systems, and from fescue greens to improved varieties of bentgrass."

— Golf course architect W. Bruce Matthews III, reflecting on the career of his grandfather, W. Bruce Matthews, a well-known Michigan architect who died in September at 96.

Business briefs

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Lesco earnings down

Rocky River, Ohio-based Lesco said that revenues for the third quarter increased 6.6 percent to a record \$139.6 million compared with \$130.9 over the same period last year. However, earnings were \$4.2 million compared with \$5.8 million for 1999's third quarter. Impacting the third quarter were \$315,000 of non-recurring costs associated with an acquisition that was not completed. Lesco also said a drought in the South, unusually cool and wet weather in the North, and production inefficiencies at the plant that produces Novex, its new "smart" fertilizer, negatively impacted both earnings and sales growth.

In another matter, Lesco acquired assets of Southern Golf Products. Lesco was the exclusive distributor for Southern Golf Products since February 1999.

Monterey tops list

Six U.S. markets are in the top 10 of a *Golf Digest* magazine reader's poll of the 50 best golf destinations in the world. Monterey, Calif., home of Pebble Beach Corp., is No. 1. Pinehurst, N.C., is No. 3; Sheboygan, Wis., No. 7; Scottsdale, Ariz., No. 8; Myrtle Beach, S.C., No. 9; and Hilton Head, S.C., No. 10.

Bank changes financing structure

Charlotte-based Bank of America has discontinued its Golf and Marina Finance Group but rolled the division into a larger commercial finance operation.

KLAK buys Family Golf

KLAK Golf has closed on its sale of Family Golf for \$16.15 million. KLAK Golf is a joint venture among Lubert-Adler Real Estate Opportunity Fund, Klaff Realty L.P. and KemperSports Management.

KLAK spokesman Steve Lesnik, who is also KemperSports CEO, said 20 of the properties acquired from Family Golf have been turned over to AllGolf, a new KemperSports subsidiary formed to manage mid-market driving ranges and entertainment centers, golf practice facilities, and affordable executive and nine-hole golf courses.

'They Were Jumping Up And Down And Freakin' Out'

A MILLION BUCKS WILL DO THAT TO YOU

Russ Kelly will continue as club manager for Bent Pine GC in Vero Beach, Fla. He's not going to let a meager million bucks change his life.

"I'm not gonna make any changes now," says Kelly, who along with 25 employees at Bent Pine won the \$65 million Florida lottery in July.

The 26 employees, including two pros and a golf course maintenance worker, kicked in money to purchase 56 tickets for the lottery. Because the jackpot was higher than normal, the group bought more tickets than usual. One of the tickets, the only one in Florida, had the correct six numbers to claim the jackpot, which amounts to about \$1 million for each worker after taxes. Many of the winners were on the club's food and beverage staff.

"I wasn't at work the day they found out they won, but from what I understand it was mayhem," Kelly says. "They were jumping up and down and freakin' out."

The 34-year-old Kelly plans to invest most of the money, although he's building a swimming pool at his home. Kelly also has to help rebuild the Bent Pine staff because about 12 of the winning workers are leaving their jobs. But the millionaire isn't whining. "I have no complaints," he says.

Daddy's Girl

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"They put us in the small business category because they weren't sure where to put a golf course."

Blum says he uses a few vegetable-based hydraulic oils and category 3 synthetic pesticides, which are the least toxic synthetic products available. Even with those concessions to the environmentalists, Blum says he keeps his course in above-average condition.

Award applicants submit to a grueling process that starts with filling out a form detailing what measures were taken to reduce pollution and how much pollution has been reduced. The form is submitted to the Department of Energy Conservation's Compliance Counsel and the governor's staff, who narrow the applicants to the top 10. Then two members of the selection committee visit each finalist and make their recommendations to the governor, who picks the winners.

Blum said the awards dinner, where he brought the house down

when he told them the inspiration for his program, was intimidating.

"Here I am, the only turf guy there and the only representative from Colonial, amid these huge entouragees from these other companies," Blum says. "All the major environmental groups were there — and then I had to get up and give a speech."

He must have done something right because one of the governor's committee members pulled him aside and insisted that Blum enter Colonial again next year.

"I'm certainly going to consider it," Blum says. "We enjoy being touted as an environmental golf course."

And Blum still takes inspiration from Samantha whenever she visits the course.

"She's out here just about every day and I think about how my work affects her," Blum says. "Doing what we did here is definitely for her and the future."

— Frank H. Andorka Jr.

Scanning the Web

Frank Andorka reviews online golf games

I have come to love golf as much as the next addict. But when there's 10 feet of snow on the ground in Cleveland, even I eschew going outside (preferring instead to sit in front of a roaring fire sipping Bailey's Irish Cream). When I need a golf fix, however, I turn to free online golf games to get me through the winter. If you're looking to play free virtual golf, here are some sites you should visit (all sites start with <http://> unless otherwise noted):

***** — **Bookmark it and return frequently;**

* — **Look at only if absolutely necessary**

*****arcade.si.cnn.com/cnnsi_swgolf/public/home.html — CENSI Country Club provides nine holes of challenging golf that force you to hit every club in your bag. The graphics are realistic, down to the spray of sand when hitting out of bunkers and the wind that wreaks havoc with your shots. The controls are instinctual,



making it easy to learn and fun to play. Interestingly, par 3s are the hardest holes on the course to play.

***games.espn.go.com — This is a registration-only site. If you're looking for arcade action, this game suits your needs. You receive a bucket of 25 balls which you to hit at greens located on the driving range. You get points for each green you hit. It's not nearly as entertaining as playing an entire course, but it's an OK diversion.

****www.candystand.com/golf/default.htm — Looking for something a little different? Try this site, which offers three different golf games, including two miniature golf courses. Trust me, it's not as easy as it looks.

Scanning the Web is compiled by Frank H. Andorka Jr., Golfdom's associate editor, whose online golf game is no better than his real-life one. You can reach him at fandorka@advanstar.com with column suggestions.

Battling Bureaucracy

You think convincing your members to pony up money for new equipment is tough? Try selling an equipment purchase to government bureaucrats, and you'll realize how easy you have it.

John Fink tends two nine-hole public courses, Sligo Creek GC and White Oak GC, for the Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission. He says buying equipment for the courses is burdened by paperwork and bureaucracy.

"Since I'm spending taxpayer money, everything has to go out for bids," Fink says. "I can't just go to an equipment manufacturer and purchase the product I want. It has to be approved by the commission."

Fink took the job in June 1999 after working at private clubs for most of his career. He knew working for the government would challenge him.

"You learn quickly that working for a government agency takes a lot more planning," Fink says. "I lost \$70,000 out of my equipment budget last year because I didn't file my bids on time. I won't make that mistake again this year."

If he has an exact piece of equipment in mind, Fink says he asks his sales representative for the exact product specifications so he can submit them with his funding request. It narrows the field considerably and, if everything goes as planned, Fink can get the brand he wants at the price he wants.

Unless there is a compelling reason to purchase another brand, however, Fink is obligated by law to take the lowest bidder for the equipment. That's why submitting manufacturer specifications — down to such items as seat-cover color and tire width — is so vital to the process.

Once his request is submitted, it usually takes two weeks for the commission to respond with the bids. If Fink does not want to purchase the equipment from the lowest bidder, he can send a letter to the board explaining why, which usually involves showing that it doesn't meet the specifications he set out in his submission.

As you might imagine, the process takes time. Fink recently purchased a skid steer loader and it took him three months to receive it — two months for approval and a month for delivery. Meanwhile, the players at White Oaks complained about the 60 tons of bunker sand that sat in the parking lot over the winter because the course didn't have the loader necessary to move it. Fink says he understood their irritation, but he couldn't move the process any faster.

"I didn't realize the purchasing process was going to be as involved as it turned out," Fink says. "As with any government job, there's reams of paper involved. There's good job security with my position, however, and it gives me more time to spend with my family. It has its advantages."

Just don't expect a quick turnaround on purchases any time soon.

— Frank H. Andorka Jr.



ARTVILLE