

Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

Business briefs

GCSAA developing e-commerce site

GCSAA is developing an e-commerce Web site and expects to finalize its e-commerce division within five months. "We are moving in this direction as quickly as possible, but we also want to be sure we have a premium product ready before we unveil this service," said Robert A. Shively, GCSAA's director of corporate marketing.

ABT files for bankruptcy

Henderson, Nev.-based AgriBioTech Inc. and its operating subsidiaries filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy to implement an operational restructuring and financial reorganization.

Chairman and CEO Richard Budd offered six reasons as to why AgriBioTech has suffered significant losses and a lack of current liquidity:

- Oversupply of seed with a downturn in industry pricing;
- Difficulties with integrating the operations, culture and accounting systems of 34 companies into single operational units;
- Delays in bringing seed to market;
- Reduced revenues;
- Higher-than-expected expenses;
- Slow cash collections from a weak agricultural economy.

Unocal sells ag business

El Segundo, Calif.-based Unocal is selling its agricultural products business — ProDica LLC and Alaska Nitrogen Products LLC — to Calgary-based Agrium for about \$325 million and future considerations.

Unocal is an independent oil and gas exploration and production company. Agrium is a producer and marketer of fertilizer in North America.

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The Open: Youngsters Need Not Apply

By Larry Aylward, Managing Editor

You dream of hosting a U.S. Open, so you build the coolest and classiest championship-caliber course east *and* west of the Mississippi and invite the United States Golf Association there to hold its esteemed event. But the USGA rejects you like a maxed-out MasterCard.

Face it: The U.S. Open will only consider coming to your place if it was designed by Donald Ross during the silent-movie era. USGA chairman David Fay won't deny that — but with a little dance.

"We tend to go to courses that have had historic U.S. Opens and have a place in American golf," Fay admits. "While we're on the lookout for new courses — and we're sincerely on the lookout — the record shows that we haven't gone to many of them. It has been a long time."

Fay, who was speaking to a group of New Jersey superintendents late last year, also contends that USGA just doesn't go where it wants to go, such as Pebble Beach Golf Links this year. Fay didn't ring new Pebble Beach owners Clint Eastwood, Arnold Palmer and Peter Ueberroth last week to tell Dirty Harry and his

entourage "to get the course ready because we're coming in June."

"That's not the way it works," Fay says. "We have to be invited."

USGA receives several invitations each year from courses wanting to host a U.S. Open. "Most of them come from the usual suspects," Fay says, adding that USGA tries to announce sites five years in advance.

There are exceptions, however. Even if the USGA hasn't yet been formally invited, you can bet your titanium driver the U.S. Open will be held at the Country Club at Brookline, Mass., in 2013. The Country Club was the site of Frances Ouimet's stunning U.S. Open win over Britain's Ted Ray and Harry Vardon in 1913. The upset victory helped put U.S. golf on the map.

Despite USGA's romance with tradition, there are parameters for hosting a U.S. Open. Fay explains what USGA looks for in an Open course. "It's similar to what former Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart said about pornography — 'I can't define it, but I know it when I see it.'"

Fay admits USGA prefers "mature" courses. It staged U.S. Opens at new courses such as Chaska, Minn.'s Hazeltine National GC in 1970 and Georgia's Atlanta Athletic Club in Atlanta in 1976.

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Business briefs

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e2e acquires Smyth

Scottsdale, Ariz.-based e2e Golf Solutions purchased Smyth Systems, a software provider in the golf, club and resort industries since 1949.

e2e Golf Solutions says it can increase profits for golf course owners and operators by offering an integrated suite of software solutions and services that manage all aspects of course operation.

Kemper to manage Va. facility

Northbrook, Ill.-based KemperSports Management signed a long-term contract with the Virginia State Golf Association Foundation to operate its 27-hole VSGA Golf Center, designed by Tom Fazio and currently being built in Richmond, Va.

KemperSports will provide consulting services during the construction phase and assume management upon the center's opening in 2001.

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"But these Opens lacked something," Fay contends. "(The courses) were too young and immature."

While the USGA favors fabled courses, they must be capable of throwing one of golf's biggest shindigs. Consider:

- The site must accommodate a minimum of 25,000 spectators.
- The site must park at least 15,000 cars within 15 minutes of the course.
- The site must have enough hotel rooms nearby to accommodate the U.S. Open throng.
- The site must be close to a major airport, although Fay admits that Pebble Beach, near Monterey, Calif., and others are exceptions.

The final decision on a U.S. Open site rests with USGA's executive committee after input from staff and a preliminary recommendation from the championship committee. But the determining factor could be the person who lobbies the loudest.

"The difference comes when someone is a forceful advocate for one club over another," Fay says. "Someone might pound the table and say, 'We've got to go to this golf course.'"

But Fay says it's not easy to break the bad news to other clubs that applied for — but did not receive — a U.S. Open.

"It's a tough message to deliver," he says. "Golfers are very passionate about their courses. As C.B. Macdonald said, 'When a man is given a choice about saying something derogatory about another man's wife or his golf course, the prudent man always picks on the wife.'"

"There's a lot to be said for that."

Scanning the Web

As a guy who nearly failed mechanical drawing, the idea of completing architectural plans for a golf course not only intimidates me, it frightens me. For those equally architecturally impaired, these sites give some insight into creating a golf course (all addresses start with <http://> unless otherwise noted):

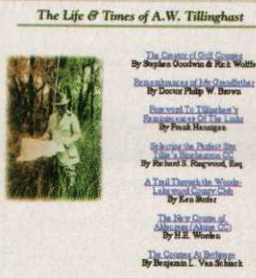
***** — **Bookmark it and return frequently; * — Look at only if absolutely necessary**

▶ ***** www.tillinghast.net - The Tillinghast Association wanted to create an elegant and charming site dedicated to architect A.W. Tillinghast. It succeeded. Not only does it list well-organized biographical informa-



tion on the architect and his courses, it includes his original sketches of some holes. Perhaps the most intriguing part of the site is a fabulous archive of golf photos, including one of Bobby Jones and his mother. It's a fascinating glimpse into the mind of a well-known golf course architect.

** www.golfclubatlas.com - It kills me not to rank this site higher (especially since a couple of Golfdom writers lurk there), but its occasional pomposity punctures its brush with greatness. It's a nice-looking site packed with information, but its two administrators, who admit they have "no knowledge of what is required to build a golf course,"



do nothing to alleviate golf's prevailing image as a snobbish sport. The site profiles 70 courses from around the world, with more being added daily. It also has an intelligent (though occasionally pretentious) discussion group.

INCOMPLETE www.traditionalgolf.com - This site, in its infancy, intrigues me. It consists of a collection of informal discussion groups, some of which are not terribly professional and have little to do with architecture. A couple of high-profile architects (and architectural critics) have posted notes, however, thereby elevating the entire site. The lack of postings leaves this site hard to evaluate, but its potential is endless.

Scanning the Web is compiled by Golfdom's associate editor Frank H. An-dorka Jr., who couldn't even draw a straight line with a T-square. Reach him at 440-891-2708 or fandorka@advanstar.com with future column ideas or sites you think he should visit.