

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Lesco admits violations

Cleveland-based Lesco announced that it has unexpectedly experienced "further deterioration in economic conditions" and is in violation of certain covenants as a result of the weaker-than-expected operating results.

"The third quarter of 2001 has been very difficult," said William A. Foley, Lesco's chairman, president and CEO. "We've been impacted by the declining economy. The environment in our industry has been especially fierce as competitors have fought for every piece of business."

Lesco's third-quarter sales of \$144.1 million increased 3.2 percent compared with the third quarter of 2000. However, net income was down to \$0.3 million from \$4.2 million.

Earlier this year, Lesco said it was optimistic that full-year 2001 earnings would exceed earnings in 2000 in anticipation of improved second-half results. Now the company believes that full year 2001 results will fall well short of 2000 levels. Lesco acknowledged it's in violation of a certain covenant with lenders. At press time, the company said it's in discussions with these lenders to obtain amendments or waivers of the covenants.

In other company news, Lesco is launching a new initiative to expand distribution of its products into geographic markets not served by its 228 Lesco Service Centers and Lesco Stores-on-Wheels. The company has formed an independent marketer program designed to allow its proprietary products to be sold in select markets by non-traditional Lesco-owned locations. With the new initiative, Lesco says it has identified an opportunity to establish independent marketing arrangements for its agronomic and

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Paint the Mowers Orange

TEXTRON GOLF ADOPTS COLOR TO UNIFY ITS BRANDS;
DISCONTINUES RANSOMES NAME IN UNITED STATES

The only thing missing was a case of Orange Crush to toast Textron Golf, Turf & Specialty Products' new business philosophy. On Oct. 26, Charlotte, N.C.-based Textron Golf held a press conference at the posh Bay Hill Club in Orlando, Fla., to announce a new strategic plan for its business. Orange banners with the names of Textron's brands draped from the ceiling with the saying, "Think Orange: The Primary Color of Golf." Florida oranges accompanied notepads and pencils for reporters on press row.

Textron's golf and turf brass were on hand to announce the company was adopting orange as its new flagship color to "visually unify" the company's golf equipment line. Textron has marketed its four major brands (Jacobsen, Cushman, Ransomes and Ryan) in various brand-identity colors since 1998.

The big news behind the orange, however, was that Textron was dumping the Ransomes brand name in the United States. Executive Vice President David Rivers said company research revealed that three times more superintendents would consider a Ransomes product if it were branded a Jacobsen. That's all the news Textron needed to paint selected Ransomes mowers orange and brand them Jacobsen. Now, all mowers will be



RON HALL

Textron Golf's Peter Whurr gives his take on a new Jake.

branded Jacobsen — something superintendents were undoubtedly clamoring for.

"Color can be a very powerful marketing tool," Rivers said. "By uniting our golf brands under the orange banner, we strengthen them by affiliation, without diminishing their individual leadership in their categories."

Cushman turf vehicles and Ryan aerators and seeders will also wear Jacobsen orange for sales to the golf market in the Americas and the Asia-Pacific region. Textron leaders say powerful brands are integral to its new strategic direction.

"This new strategy will strengthen the family identity of our products in

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Business briefs

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equipment product lines throughout the United States in more than 500 geographic markets. Under the program, independent marketers have access to all Lesco products.

Royster Clark ends effort to acquire Agro South, ProSource One

New York-based Royster-Clark announced that efforts to acquire Agro South and ProSource One from Agrilience LLC have been terminated. Agro Distribution LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Agrilience, retains ownership and operation of Agro South and ProSource One.

DTN changes name to Meteorlogix

Minneapolis-based DTN Weather Services changed its name to Meteorlogix. The company also appointed Robert Gordon as CEO. Gordon brings more than 20 years of experience leading emerging growth technology-based companies to Meteorlogix.

USGA commits \$2 million to golf associations

The United States Golf Association committed more than \$2 million in 2002 for assistance to state and regional golf associations and their programs. Nearly \$800,000 of the total will fund computer hardware, including office and tournament administration equipment for associations; education initiatives, including computer training sessions (and grants for an on-site computer assistant); and a USGA orientation session for staff members from state and regional golf associations, scheduled for Jan. 11-16 at the USGA headquarters in Far Hills, N.J.

In addition, more than \$1.3 million in grants will assist associations through the P.J. Boatwright Jr. Internship Program, which funds nearly 100 interns who work at various state and regional golf associations for three to 12 months.

Becker acquires RhizUp

Ames, Iowa-based Becker Underwood, manufacturer of Rhizobium inoculants, seed coatings, specialty colorants and other bio-agronomic products, acquired the RhizUp brand of inoculants from Eco Soil Systems.

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the minds of end users in the markets we serve," said Gregory Hyland, chairman and CEO. "That's very important to our plan of forging long-term supplier relationships wherever possible."

The Ransomes brand is not being discontinued in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. Rivers also said that parts support for Ransomes would continue in the United States. "We're keeping the engineering and manufacturing," he said. "The only thing that's going away is the Ransomes brand name in the Americas."

Some products, such as Cushman trucks, will remain available in their original color, per customer request. Cushman vehicles will be offered in green, but with new touches highlighting the family resemblance to Jacobsen and Ryan.

Golfdom Editor Larry Aylward contributed to this report.

A Regrettable First

CLUB CAR ANNOUNCES LAYOFFS FOR FIRST TIME IN 39-YEAR HISTORY

You know the economy is in a pickle if Augusta, Ga.-based Club Car is cutting back. Because of slow economic conditions in the golf and travel industries, Club Car recently announced the first personnel reduction in its 39-year history at its home office. The reduction affected 14 employees locally and 11 in branch operations.

"We regret having to take this action," said Phil Tralies, president and CEO of the Augusta-based manufacturer of transportation and utility vehicles. "Unfortunately, the severity and length of the economic downturn forced us to make the decision we wanted to avoid most."

Club Car's largest customers are golf courses and resorts that use its golf cars, hospitality and food-and-beverage vehicles. Tralies said the company recently had reduced expenses and instituted hiring restrictions in an effort to avoid reducing personnel. But things just kept getting worse.

"It's been an extremely challenging year for many of our customers, and the tragic events of Sept. 11 only made conditions more difficult for those that depend heavily on golf and travel to sustain their businesses," Tralies said. "Since Sept. 11, we've seen a number of accounts delay decisions to place orders because of the uncertainty of their business."

Club Car employs more than 1,000 people worldwide with the majority of those in the Augusta area.

Let us Explain

In our October story on themed courses ("Vegas Ain't Got Nothin' on Golf"), it should have been stated that Tour 18 Inc. sold two of its facilities to Arnold Palmer Golf Management and licensed rights to the name to APGM. A Tour 18 Inc. official also states that the only changes made to the courses as a result of legal chal-

lenges were to remove lighthouses similar to those at Harbour Town Golf Links. We regret any confusion the article may have caused.

Also, we misprinted Syngenta's Web site address in the November issue. The correct address is: syngentaprofessionalproducts.com. Sorry for the confusion.

Off The Fringe

The Package Deal

MANUFACTURERS DESIGN CONTAINERS
WITH SUPERINTENDENTS IN MIND

By Joseph DiPaola

As any maker of laundry detergent will attest, consumer decisions are often subjective and not based only on practical needs. Many times, we choose a certain product because we like the look or feel of its packaging. While that strategy may be appropriate in the grocery store, it



takes on critical importance for superintendents. When superintendents choose a fungicide, insecticide, herbicide or plant growth regulator, it's important to choose the proper packaging because an improper decision could affect worker safety, product performance and the health and beauty of their courses.

Companies decide how to package a new product or new formulation of an existing product based upon its use by

superintendents. Some companies actually send its packaging engineers to the field to discuss packaging concerns and product-use modes with end-users. Today, packaging is a science, complete with seemingly endless testing and evaluations conducted by packaging engineers with degrees in the field. Scientists must evaluate handling, stacking, accidental dropping, shelf life, among other factors, before a package enters the market place.

Manufacturers have entire departments dedicated to this task, which must ensure that packaging exceeds the legal requirements for labeling, transportation and storage. Often, the product itself will dictate a packaging decision. A particular packaging option might be chosen because it's the right weight for pouring or mixing. For example, the chemical's form (liquid vs. dry), its formulation and its stability during storage could limit liquids to small containers so superintendents can agitate the product easily before use.

Both manufacturer and consumer are concerned with a number of physical aspects of product packaging. Storage space can be a scarce resource around a golf course maintenance facility so manufacturers ask themselves: Are the storage requirements of space, temperature and humidity reasonable? Additionally, the packaging for some products must protect against exposure to air, moisture and temperature extremes.

Another consideration is, of course, the aesthetics, which

Quotable

"A narrow strip of mown grass that separates two groups of golfers looking for lost balls in the rough."

— *Steff Boe, wife of Florida superintendent Joe Boe, relating a definition of "fairway."*

"To a degree, I view my profession as a beauty contest. We grow roses."

— *John Szklinski, superintendent of Southern Hills CC in Tulsa, Okla., on his livelihood.*

"They have a hard time standing around when a foursome is playing through because they want to keep working."

— *Steve Campbell, director of agronomy at Las Campanas Sante Fe in Sante Fe, N.M., on his hard-working Hispanic employees.*

take into account the time constraints and labor issues of average superintendents. The clean and distinctive packaging of most chemicals should speed the recognition and location of them on the shelves. Clear labeling and instructions can also minimize the likelihood of someone making an application with the wrong product.

As with almost everything on a golf course, environmental considerations are important and influence packaging. In order to minimize potential spillage and worker exposure, packaging departments spend hours designing packaging that is easy to handle.

The final challenge in designing packaging is container disposal. The logistics of returning empties can involve significant expense, time and storage space. Container disposal is a challenge and expense, which has resulted in several product packages that are returnable and recyclable.

As consumers, superintendents may take much of this effort for granted. That's the point. When we design packaging for our products, we want them to be convenient. As a result, our customers spend less time thinking about the handling and disposal of chemical packaging and more time how to use the product successfully.

DiPaola is golf market manager for Syngenta Professional Products.

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Off The Fringe

Independents Day

REPORTS OF THE INDEPENDENT TURF DISTRIBUTOR'S DEATH HAVE BEEN GROSSLY EXAGGERATED

By Mike Fisher

There is nothing certain in life except death and taxes — and that someone will write another article about the inevitable disappearance of the independent turf distributor. Fortunately, nothing could be further from the truth.

Though the challenges facing the independent distributor mount, they also dictate a work ethic and creativity for the distributor to overcome. The winners are the distributor's customers: superintendents.

The history of the independent turf distributor goes back as far as the game itself. Everything from high interest rates to regulatory issues conspired to eliminate distributors who couldn't reduce their debt in the face of competition to operate profitably. The recent consolidation of turf companies has seen good regional independent distributors purchased by larger entities to form national distribution companies.

For example, AgriBioTech purchased one such independent, George W. Hill Co. of Florence, Ky., in its failed bid to corner the seed market. After ABT declared bankruptcy, Doug Hill, a minority owner of the George W. Hill Co., formed a new small, independent distribution company called Turfgrass South LLC. "The big corporations think they can be everything to everyone," Hill says. "I don't think they can."

**"The big corporations
think they can be
everything to everyone.
I don't think they can."**

— DOUG HILL

Competition from agricultural distribution companies with new turf divisions faltered because the agricultural companies assumed the

professional turf market wasn't much different from its other businesses. It took superintendents, of course, to remind them that their needs are far different from those who grow row crops.

In contrast, the independents typically focus exclusively on the turf and ornamental industry, to the advantage of their customers. Hill believes being small and independent enhances his ability to service his customers. "We provide service, and we make it easy for our customers to do business," he says.

The changing faces on the manufacturing side of the business offer a new set of challenges to the independent distributor. There are fewer chemical manufacturers today because of recent merger-and-acquisition activity. These new pressures force the distributor to exceed previous years' sales.

Despite the old challenges and new ones, such as e-commerce, many independent companies continue to grow. They provide superior service for their customers in the form of technical support, competitive prices and just-in-time delivery.

The expertise of the independent distributor allows superintendents to improve inventory management. It also provides them with a resource for unbiased advice about how to deal with common golf course problems. Independents will support superintendents as long as superintendents see value in the relationship and, in turn, support the independent distributors.

Mike Fisher is president of the Independent Turf and Ornamental Distributors Association and owner of Fisher & Son Co., an independent turf distributor in Malvern, Pa.

Anthracnose: The Classic 'Oops' Disease

Q For the first time, my course experienced a lot of anthracnose this year. Why?

A I don't know your specific situation, but here are some general thoughts: Anthracnose is caused by *Colletotrichum graminicola*. There are nearly 50 *Colletotrichum* species currently listed, several of which are important economic pathogens on a number of crops worldwide, including corn, potato, alfalfa, citrus and numerous tropical fruit crops.

Many cereals and grasses are susceptible to anthracnose during its favored environmental conditions, including bentgrass and poa annua. The first published identification of anthracnose on turfgrasses was apparently in 1930 in New Jersey. Bentgrasses most often get a foliar blight form of the disease, while poa, at least in Southern California, generally gets the basal rot form.

Anthracnose is a facultative parasite on turf, living most of the time as a saprophyte on organic matter in thatch. It's a relatively weak parasite compared to some other turf diseases, and Virginia Tech turfgrass professor H.B. Couch goes so far as to deny that it's a pathogen at all, calling it a "senecotroph," which can only colonize already-dying tissue.

Turfgrass pathologist J.M. Vargas describes anthracnose as an active pathogen, and part of the HAS (Helminthosporium/Anthracnose/Senescence) decline syndrome in poa. In his dissertation, The Ohio State University's Karl Danneberger presented an accurate degree-day model for anthracnose infection in bentgrasses in the upper Midwest.

In any case, it is undisputed that anthracnose can infect and finish off weakened and/or stressed turf, making

Been there, seen that

BY MIKE HEACOCK



a difficult situation much worse. It's a very stubborn disease, once you've got it, until environmental conditions change.

The key to anthracnose control is stress control on the turf. I think of anthracnose as an "oops" disease — one that you'll get when someone makes a mistake on the green during hot weather. A typical outbreak of anthracnose in Southern California occurs after the Fourth of July when many courses receive heavy play, the weather often turns suddenly hot, and the maintenance crew is short-staffed for three days in a row. With extra traffic and heat, areas of greens that receive less-than-perfect irrigation (too little or, more often, too much water) will be stressed, will start senescence, and within a week will have the classic and distinctive anthracnose fruiting bodies visible on leaf blades. Of course, the weather will remain hot

Getting It Straight

In my column on certified superintendents (August), I didn't make it clear that I believe acquiring the CGCS title is worthwhile and valuable. You'll learn a lot, be stimulated and feel good about that achievement. My qualms about the CGCS title and what it implies were in regard to the employer's perspective of job performance down the road, not the value to the individual of the initial experience. I'm sorry I didn't make that clear.

— Mike Heacock

the rest of the summer, and you'll be in for a long battle. Stress avoidance in hot weather is the key to anthracnose avoidance.

A number of heavily played public golf courses in Southern California have been successful in preventing anthracnose from taking hold by using an aggressive preventive fungicide program in combination with frequent green aeration. By "frequent," I mean biweekly through the summer, using a variety of equipment with smaller tines or blades. The idea is to keep soil aeration optimal to avoid root loss from anaerobic conditions. Topdressing is not applied after these aerations, and golf play is virtually uninterrupted.

Another critical factor is daily monitoring of salt levels in the root zone and frequent leaching as salts increase to not more than double the baseline level. As reclaimed water is utilized in more courses around the country, this practice may become more widespread.

Of course, fertility, irrigation, mowing and preventive fungicide programs all need to be appropriate if one is to escape anthracnose. However, preventing loss of roots by maintaining soil aeration and minimizing salt buildup has been the factor that has kept many of these courses essentially anthracnose-free for several years.

Naturally, these courses also practice an aggressive conventional aeration plus topdressing program, generally three or four times per year during the cooler months, including at least one deep-tining. Even if you've got relatively new greens, you can be susceptible to layering and begin to develop anaerobic and/or salty soil conditions.

Editor's Note: Mike Heacock, former vice president of agronomy and maintenance for American Golf Corp., fields your questions in his bi-monthly column. You can reach him at: mike.heacock@verizon.net or 310-849-5011.

For the Birds

Spotters for Audubon International's 2001 North American Birdwatching Open counted 349 species of birds on the 72 golf courses that participated in the day-long event last spring. The event raises awareness of bird conservation on golf courses.



Eagle eye

A good birder knows it takes a keen eye and a little luck to spot the rarest of our avian friends. Even eagles appear as rarely in golf course

skies as they do on your scorecards. Here's a list of federally threatened and endangered species, and the number of courses where they were observed:

1. Loggerhead shrike **23**
2. Sandhill crane **9**
3. Bald eagle **8**
4. Least turn **8**
5. Brown pelican **4**
6. Grasshopper sparrow **2**
7. Clapper rail **1**

Watch the Birdie!

26 most sighted species on golf courses

Rank/Species/ Number of courses

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|----------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Mourning dove | .72 | 14. Canada goose | .45 |
| 2. Northern cardinal | .63 | 15. Red bellied woodpecker | .44 |
| 3. Red-winged blackbird | .60 | 16. American goldfinch | .43 |
| 4. Blue jay | .59 | 17. Northern mockingbird | .43 |
| 5. American crow | .58 | 18. House sparrow | .43 |
| 6. Common grackle | .57 | 19. Brown-headed cowbird | .41 |
| 7. European Starling | .56 | 20. Red tailed hawk | .39 |
| 8. Mallard | .51 | 21. Eastern bluebird | .39 |
| 9. American robin | .50 | 22. Barn swallow | .39 |
| 10. Killdeer | .48 | 23. Eastern kingbird | .39 |
| 11. Downy woodpecker | .47 | 24. Purple martin | .36 |
| 12. Great blue heron | .46 | 25. Turkey vulture | .36 |
| 13. Northern flicker | .46 | 26. Tree swallow | .36 |



Species by the Numbers

| | |
|--|------------|
| Total number of species identified (all courses) | 349 |
| Number of courses identifying 50 or more species | 29 |
| Number of courses identifying 40-49 species | 15 |
| Number of courses identifying 30-39 species | 14 |
| Number of courses identifying less than 30 species | 14 |
| Greatest number of species identified (at one course) | 95 |
| Average number of species identified per course | 43 |
| Median | 42 |
| Number of federally threatened/endangered species identified | 7 |

ILLUSTRATION: DAN BEEDY

Dual Dedications

Superintendent Larry Powell (below right) always wanted the course his father, William Powell (below left), created in 1946 to be recognized for its historical importance. In a Sep-

tember dedication ceremony, Ohio rewarded the family's dedication to the cause by designating Clearview GC as an Ohio historical site.

William Powell designed, built and owned Clearview golf course after he returned to the United States after World War II. At the time, he discovered the all-white golf courses in East Canton refused to let him play because he was black.

Adams bridge

In McHenry, Ill., McHenry CC dedicated the bridge (upper right) on its signature No. 8 hole to Gary Adams, who changed the game of golf by success-

fully marketing the use of metal woods as an alternative to traditional woods.

Taylor-Made Golf Co., where Adams worked, approached the course's owner to build a bridge across the creek on the hole in memory of Adams, who died in January 2000. Adams' father was the former head golf professional at McHenry, and Adams learned to play the game at the club.



FRANK ANDORKA



PHOTO COURTESY OF MCHENRY CC