

Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

Business briefs

Bayer Acquires Compass

Bayer Professional Products recently acquired Compass fungicide from Novartis, which recently merged with Zeneca Professional Products to form Syngenta.

Kansas City, Mo.-based Bayer holds all patents, marketing authorizations, trademarks, and production and formulation expertise for the strobilurin-based fungicide line.

Toro, Disney extend, expand agreement

Bloomington, Minn.-based Toro Co. and Lake Buena Vista-based Walt Disney World have extended and expanded their agreement to make Toro the "official turf and irrigation company" of Walt Disney's Resort.

The new agreement applies to most Walt Disney World properties, including five championship golf courses. Disney will use Toro mowers, utility vehicles, irrigation systems and trimming products.

The Toro-Disney pact began in 1996 when it was announced that Toro would provide turf and irrigation expertise for Disney's then new Wide World of Sports complex. Details of the extension were not announced.

Deere receives ISO 9000 Certification

The John Deere Turf Care facility in Raleigh, N.C., recently received ISO 9000 certification. ISO 9000 is a voluntary system in framing procedures for manufacturing quality and is administered by the International Organization of Standardization in Geneva, Switzerland. The standards for manufacturing facilities cover multiple elements, from paperwork and tracking systems to parts inventory and the assembly process.

To Tell the Truth

SCOTTS FIGHTING MYTHS ABOUT GENETICALLY MODIFIED TURF

The product is still at least three years from the market, but the Scotts Co. is already waging a quiet communications war to combat myths about its plans to introduce Roundup Ready bentgrass to golf.

Even at this early stage, the Marysville, Ohio-based company is actively gauging superintendents' in-



Herbicide-tolerant Kentucky bluegrass (right) shows no effects from the same spray that killed greenhouse controlled Kentucky bluegrass.

terest in the concept, addressing concerns about the politics of genetically modified turf and attempting to counter what it feels is disinformation being spread by competitors.

In an effort to set the record straight, *Golfdom's* Pat Jones sat down with the man leading the charge for Roundup Ready turf, Bob Harriman, Scotts vice president of biotechnology.

Golfdom: Let's get right to the bottom line. Suppose I'm a superintendent. What's in it for me?

Harriman: First and foremost, selective control of *Poa annua* and *Poa trivialis*. Superintendents will finally be able to have bentgrass without any of the headaches of *Poa*. What does that mean? Better playability, improved aesthetics and reduced inputs.

Golfdom: You're doing lots of focus groups with superintendents. What feedback are you hearing?

Harriman: Primarily that Roundup Ready turf will be easier to maintain. You only have to take care of one species instead of two. It ends the age-old dilemma of, "I want bent, but I hate dealing with *Poa*." They also like the environmental benefits — like reduced pesticide and water usage — and they realize that glyphosate is ecologically friendly.

Golfdom: OK, but nothing's perfect and superintendents are always skeptical. What are they worried about?

Harriman: They're initially concerned about the broad use of Roundup and how they'll apply it. For example, they'll need to use different application equipment like injection rollers. They ask whether it will cross with crabgrass, but the two plants simply aren't biologically compatible — it's like trying to cross a cucumber and a tomato. Some have asked about yellowing or other damage to the bentgrass, but our testing shows that our variety is tolerant of even extraordinarily high rates of glyphosate.

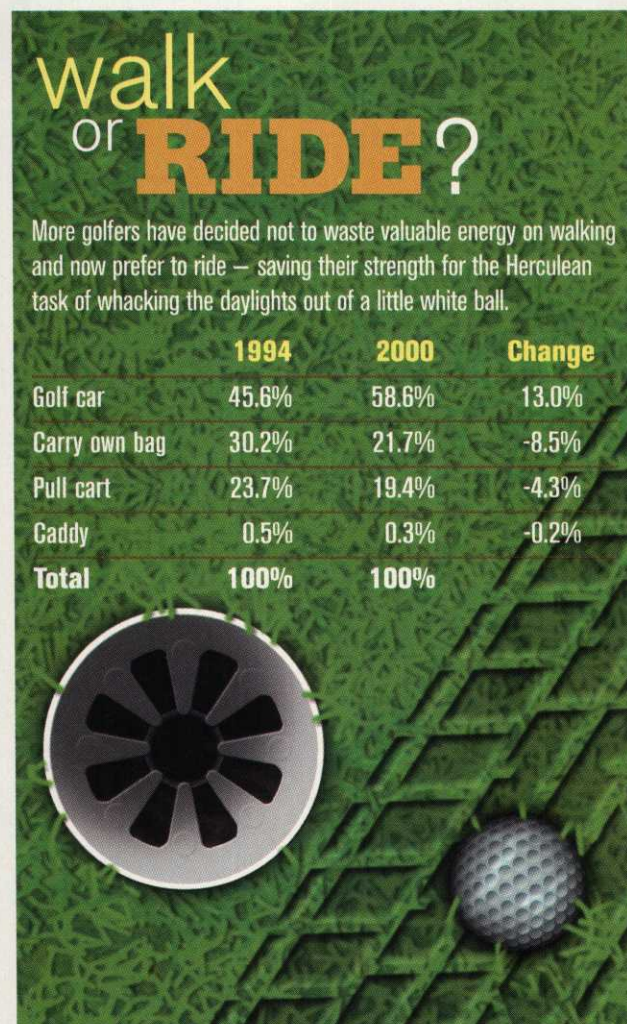
Golfdom: What about the possibility of resistant *Poa*?

Harriman: Remember that Roundup is the most widely used herbicide in the world, and there have been virtually no reports of resistance. Just to be safe, we'll still recommend preventative management programs, like product rotation and using combos of pre-emergents. Last but not least, we're projecting that it'll only take one to three Roundup applications per season to get optimum *Poa* control.

Golfdom: How soon will we see the famous glow-in-the-dark grass or purple lawns we've heard about?

Harriman: It's amazing how many myths have been started by misquotes in the media. This is new stuff, and new can be scary. Scary makes for good headlines. That's why we have to focus on educating the media, the public and everyone else. The story last year about monarch butterflies being killed by corn is a great example. The initial headlines were sensational, but the scientific rebuttal gets no attention. That's the battle we have to fight. It's no ac-

Continued on page 18



SOURCE: NATIONAL GOLF FOUNDATION
ILLUSTRATION: DAN BEEDY

Quotable

"It's going to turn golf courses into pitch-and-putt courses. ... Twenty years ago, a 420-yard par-4 was considered a tough test. But no longer."

John Viera, director of golf at Mission Inn Resort in Howey-in-the-Hills, Fla., on Callaway's new ERC II forged titanium driver. (The Orlando Sentinel)

"He is still on the team, but Arnold Palmer is not our star player right now."

A USGA spokesman on the continuing saga of the King's controversial involvement in the dispute between Callaway and the USGA over the ERC II's "springlike effect."

"The sun never sets on grasses developed at Penn State University – nor does it ever set on the school's graduates."

Stan Zontek, USGA agronomist for the mid-Atlantic region

"Any posting of a Stimpmeter reading [on a golf course] is a terrible [idea]. Don't go there."

Bob Brame, director of the USGA Green Section's North-Central region

"Here you see an environmental area – you know, those areas around greens with big weeds that you can't whack down."

Peter Dernoeden, professor of turfgrass management at the University of Maryland, showing a slide of an environmental area at a recent turf show.

Off The Fringe

Continued from page 17

cident we're introducing this first in golf. It's an excellent way to enter the market and demonstrate its safety and effectiveness. But before we do that, we have to prove that we can keep this product from doing unintended things.

Golfdom: How?

Harriman: First, by complying with extremely strict regulations that apply to all products enhanced by biotechnology. For example, moving even just one seed is regulated and has to be approved by USDA. We have regular federal and state inspections of our greenhouses, collaborators and field plots. Second, we're doing the most extensive testing that's ever been done on a turf-seed variety. We have more than 50 test sites at 20 of the nation's best universities. We've confirmed that the technology works, and we've seen no loss of color or performance. There's no phytotoxicity even at four times the recommended rate at fairway cut. It helps that bentgrass is already inherently resistant to glyphosate, but it does smoke the *Poa*.

Golfdom: Assuming you get approval and enter the market in 2003, how popular do you think this variety can be?

Harriman: It's still hard to say how quickly this technology will gain acceptance. Obviously, new construction and remodeling will be a big focus. Our research indicates that 90 percent of superintendents say they are "probably" or "definitely" interested in Roundup Ready varieties. More than half say they'd consider replacing their ryegrass with herbicide-resistant bent.

Golfdom: Speaking of which, what's pricing going to be like?

Harriman: It'll be higher than standard bents, but superintendents say they're willing to pay more. There could be some multi-year payment plans as well.

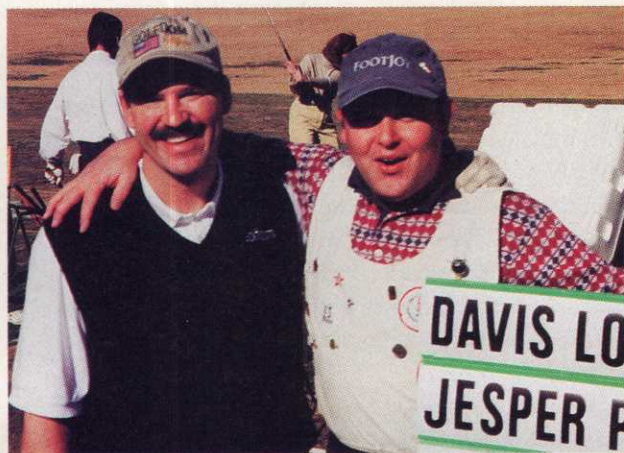
Golfdom: What's your final message to superintendents, owners and others who might be interested?

Harriman: You can break it down any way you want — dollars, environmental or aesthetics — but the most important thing is that it will simplify your life. In a couple of years, you'll be able to judge for yourself.

Editor's note: Roundup and Roundup Ready are registered trademarks of Monsanto.

What's Your Sign?

A confused "Signboy" latches on to *Golfdom's* Pat Jones. Matt Griesser, the star of several FootJoy commercials, mistook Jones for a Tour player after witnessing his power and grace (not!) on the range at the National Golf Course Owners Association's annual tournament earlier this year. Note that Jones' name is not on the leader board.



Can't Sugar-Coat This

Something got lost in translation in our January Real-Life Solutions piece about Novex fertilizer. We wrote that it was a sulfur-coated granular fertilizer, which it is not. A Lesco spokesperson offers the following explanation about how Novex works:

"The key to Novex is the AminoUreaFormaldehyde (AUF). Micronutrients and other soluble nutrient components are matrixed into the homogenous Novex granule. As the AUF is gradually released through microbial degradation, the soluble components become exposed to soil moisture and release. Therefore, Novex has multiple release mechanisms which are ultimately governed by the AUF. Novex is not a coated granule, so its release is not affected by attrition or mechanical damage."

Golfdom apologizes for the error.

Consolidation Caveats

Manufacturers and suppliers in the golf maintenance industry entered a merger-and-acquisition mode last year that had rarely been seen before. Among others, Novartis joined forces with Zeneca to form Syngenta, and Simplot expanded its portfolio with buyouts and strategic mergers

with other turf suppliers. Will the breathless pace of mergers continue this year?

According to industry experts, companies will take a short breather this year to digest what they've purchased. The lone exception could be e-commerce companies — but not

until those omnipresent Web sites start showing a profit.

Companies in 2001 will emphasize knowledge of their partners over growth, experts say. That advice extends to customers as well. Make sure you know who you're dealing with before you commit any money to a company, experts say. Otherwise, you could be left holding the bag.