

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Toro exceeds expectations

Bloomington, Minn.-based The Toro Co. reported net earnings for the third quarter ending Aug. 3 exceeded expectations despite a difficult market. Net earnings were \$16.9 million, compared to \$16.4 million for last year's third quarter, a 3 percent increase.

Revenues declined by 4.4 percent to \$329.8 million compared to \$345.2 million a year ago. Nine-month revenues were \$1.08 billion, slightly ahead of last year's same period of \$1.07 billion. Net earnings year-to-date were \$48.3 million compared to \$44.3 million last year, a 9.1 percent increase on net earnings.

Deere income down

Moline, Ill.-based Deere & Co. reported net income of \$71.8 million for the third quarter ending July 31, and \$256.1 million for the first nine months of 2001. This compares with net income of \$172.4 million and \$414.4 million for the comparable periods last year.

"Deere's third-quarter results continued to reflect the general economic slowdown and low farm commodity prices," said Robert W. Lane, chairman and CEO. "Although we are pleased to have remained profitable in the face of such difficult conditions, we are continuing to take aggressive actions to further strengthen our competitiveness and drive more efficient asset levels."

Scholarship available

The Grand Tour Scholarship features a four-week journey to visit 25 of the top 100 golf courses the country, either in the East or West.

For more information, contact Bettina Schrickel, certified golf course architect, at 954-647-3436 or lionessgolf@aol.com.

Please, No Crappy Jokes

MILORGANITE CELEBRATES 75 YEARS

By Ron Hall

Happy birthday, Milorganite! Gosh, that sounds funny — saying happy birthday to a fertilizer that's the byproduct of a city's sewage treatment process. Even so, the popular industry fertilizer Milorganite is 75 years old this year.

I traveled to Milwaukee in August to get a firsthand look at how Milorganite fertilizers are made and to see some of the venues where they're used (Brown Deer Park GC and the Brewers' new Miller Park). I was also allowed a glimpse at a new family of synthetically enriched Milorganite products (Milorganite Komplete) being tested and readied for the turf/ornamental market. While Milorganite fertilizers are a byproduct of the treatment of Milwaukee's sewage, they have never contained sewage.

"It is, and always has been, the nutrient-rich, heat-processed remains of the critters that digest the sewage. Even after 75 years, we find we still have to get that message out," says the company's Jeff Spence.

The history of the organic nitrogen fertilizer starts in 1926 when Milwaukee looked to O.J. Noer, of the University of Wisconsin College of Agriculture, to find a use for the biosolid

byproduct resulting from the city's activated sludge process. This technology had been perfected in England and never before used in the United States.

Noer found that the byproduct had an average nutrient profile of 6.2 percent nitrogen, 2.63 percent phosphate and .4 percent potash. He tested the materials on agriculture and turf and discovered the results were excellent. Further testing on golf

courses convinced him the material had great potential as a fertilizer.

The commercial potential had become so obvious, the Sewerage Commission authorized construction of a biosolids processing facility for the product, whose name stands for MILwaukee's

ORGanic NITrogen. Commercial production began in August 1926.

The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District will produce 55,000 tons of Milorganite this year at its modernized Jones Island Wastewater Treatment Plant. The sale of Milorganite fertilizers defrays operating costs and provides a controlled way to redistribute wastewater nutrients to the environment, safely and beneficially.

"It is, and always has been, the nutrient-rich, heat-processed remains of the critters that digest the sewage."

— JEFF SPENCE

Hall is editor of Athletic Turf, Golf-dom's sister publication.

ASGCA: Preserve the Great Golf Courses

Editor's note: The American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) recently submitted this position paper — The Impact of Golf Equipment on the Game of Golf — to be published in Golfdom. It has been edited for length.

The balance between preserving golf's integrity and encouraging a free market in the manufacture and selection of golf equipment has been an ongoing battle throughout the last century. Today, with 300-yard drives commonplace, the great layouts of the past are (once again) being rendered defenseless. Hazards placed at strategic distances are obsolete, and extra room no longer exists to add additional tees. The strategic principles that guided the design of all the great layouts in the 1920s and 1930s can no longer keep up with the state of today's game. Unfortunately, the onus of adjusting to technology is still falling on the golf courses.

To protect the hallmark designs of its forebears, the ASGCA endorses a modification to the ball that results in a percentage decrease on its flight/distance. Such a solution would have the greatest effect on the longer hitter, while having a lesser effect on the high-handicappers who support the game and find it challenging enough. Distance is its own reward, no matter the relative scale it is measured on.

While maintaining free enterprise among manufacturers in the design and production of golf equipment is a tradition of the game, the control over the parameters in which that production takes place must be absolute. The fate of golf's value and integrity is inherent in that control.

Golf is played differently today than ever before, with developing effects that are eroding the game's traditions. Inaction today is complicity in the deterioration of the game tomorrow. We urge the USGA and Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews to take the necessary steps to preserve the great golf courses of the world.

Prepared by Bobby Weed, Member of ASGCA Board of Governors

Quotable

"Better watch out while you're looking for your ball in there. If there's one place you can get deer ticks, it's at Deere Run."

— Bobby Fields, salesman for Finch Turf Equipment in North Wales, Pa., joking to his playing partners while they all searched for a golfer's lost ball in the bushes while playing the TPC at Deere Run in Moline, Ill.

"That's what I hear from the time I get here in the morning until the time I go home — 'Kachunk, kachunk, kachunk, kachunk.' "

— Steve Bailey, superintendent at Deer Park GC in Milwaukee, on golfers who (inadvisably) try to bit out of the trees that line the fairways of his course.

"I was 11. I got straight As, had two recesses a day, had the cutest girlfriend and won 32 tournaments. Everything's been downhill since."

— Tiger Woods, answering Sports Illustrated columnist Rick Reilly's question about the happiest period of his life (cnn.com).

"Oh, yeah. Oh, hell yes."

— Mike Scott, creator of the struggling golfsat.com, when asked if the \$9.5 million the company initially raised is gone. But Scott says the money was well spent, and he's not giving up on golfsat.com.

Thankful for the 'Net

On Sept. 8, PBI/Gordon's Gary Custis posted this message on a GCSAA online forum: attention golf course superintendents and other turf professionals important notice from PBI Gordon regarding Bensumec 4LF. Please do not apply until further notice. We have re-

ceived reports from several golf courses that have experienced yellowing on turf greens following application of a particular lot number of this product. We are investigating these reports.

Later, it used its Web site to recall the product.

The moral of this story? Before the Internet, it took weeks for a company to get out such an important message. The extended time it took only led to more turf damage, not to mention a company's reputation.

The Internet has its drawbacks, but this is a classic case of one of its advantages.

Inherited Assistants and Lessons Learned

I was a cocky, young superintendent and newly minted with my first course — Hacienda GC in Southern California. The course, built in 1923, had seen its economic ups and downs. Changes were made over the years — not all for the better — and some of the greens were still original.

My inherited assistant, Paul, had been on the course for more than 20 years and had worked for a number of superintendents. He watched the course decline over the years and had seen greens die, some more than once.

While my predecessor had initiated some needed improvements with the green committee's support, and I talked to the crew about doing more upgrades, Paul remained politely skeptical that anything permanent would result.

I took the job in the winter, and I felt fairly confident by the summer that some needed changes in the way the crew did things had been accomplished, even to the extent of getting Paul onboard. We interseeded the old poa greens with bentgrass at 1/4 a pound per thousand per week, and I saw positive results. We aerified and topdressed four times (which really impressed Paul), had trained the crew in how to hand water correctly and were on a solid preventive fungicide program. In short,

things were going great.

Members were telling us the greens hadn't been this good in years. It was the usual, inevitably temporary euphoria and good feelings experienced by old-time members when a new superintendent arrives and makes visible changes of which they approve.

As was my preference, Paul and I alternated weekends on a 12-on/two-off schedule. My kids were young at the time, and I valued spending quality time with them every other weekend. One Monday in mid-August, I came in before starting time after my weekend off. It hadn't been too hot, and I had stayed in the office to process some invoices. About 7:30 a.m., Paul came in and said, "Well, I guess you'd better order some redtop." I looked up from the invoices, irritated at both the interruption and the suggestion that redtop (*Agrostis alba* for you youngsters) was something we might want to use for some reason, and asked, "Why on earth would we want to order redtop?"

"Because No. 12 is gone," Paul said.

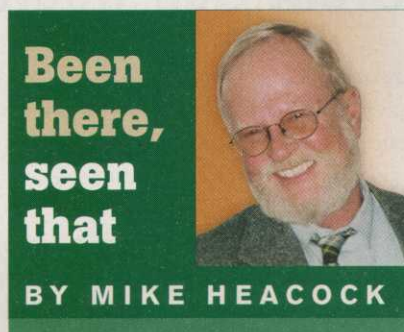
"What do you mean No. 12 is gone?" I answered. "It was fine on Friday night."

"It's dead now."

"How could it die?"

"Well, go look at it."

"I will. But if it's dead, what the hell



did you do to it? Forget to water?"

"No, I watered it. It looked a little bad Saturday, so I gave it some extra, and then it looked a little worse yesterday, so I gave it some more."

"And now it's dead?"

"Yeah, I'm pretty sure."

"Why didn't you call me?"

"It was your weekend off, and anyway that green dies every year."

Paul was right. The green was dead. He knew it would die, and he didn't believe I could save it. The green died every year, no matter who was superintendent.

This is the problem with inherited assistants. They may pay you lip service, but they "know" inside how things turn out — like they usually do in the past. Because Paul had embraced my changes, I was surprised to discover he "knew" I couldn't save that green. But he was right. I couldn't have saved that green in those days, knowing what I knew then. Still, I wish he'd given me the chance.

It was many years after that and at a different club before I took an entire weekend off during the summer. Paul and I continued to work 12/2 as long as I was at Hacienda, but I always came in on my weekend off, during the hot months from May through September, just to check. I never trusted him again.

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 Heacock at: mike.heacock@verizon.net or 310-849-5011.

October In Turfgrass Trends:

BRING ON THE BACTERIA: Researchers from the University of Florida's Fort Lauderdale Research & Education Center, Auburn University and Clemson University evaluated the microbial diversity of creeping bentgrass greens. The project examined the significance of nitrogen rate and root-zone mix on root weight and selected rhizosphere bacterial populations from bentgrass.

SPRAY DRIFT: Erdal Ozkan of The Ohio

State University discusses spray drift retardants — what works, what rates work best and which are cost-effective.

ACCIDENT PREVENTION: Editor Curt Harler discusses how good training programs help your employees deal with accidents. He describes an example he experienced this summer.

For more information, visit www.landscapemanagement.net.