

# Off The Fringe

## Business briefs

### Simplot plans aggressive move in golf market, Barker says

Following on the January promotion of Larry S. Hlobik to CEO, Boise, Idaho-based J.R. Simplot Co. named two more industry veterans to key management positions.

Joel Barker, formerly vice president of finance and administration for the Turf & Horticulture Group, was named the vice president and general manager of the business unit. His responsibilities include Jacklin brand seed products, BEST and APEX professional fertilizers, the Simplot Partners distribution network, and international seed and fertilizer sales. Bill Whitacre, formerly president of the Turf & Horticulture Group, replaces Hlobik as president of Simplot's AgriBusiness Group.

Barker says his immediate intent is to make an aggressive move in the golf/landscape/sports turf market.

"Over the last couple years, in building our turf business, we've had to look inward to structure ourselves properly to gain the focus and alignment we needed," he said. "I feel we've done that now, and we now have something of value to provide customers."

Barker didn't rule out acquisition as an aggressive growth strategy.

"We will continue to grow but not at a huge pace," he says. "It will be very strategic and based on acquisitions that fit our core businesses."

### Toro creates financing division

Bloomington, Minn.-based The T Toro Co. has created Toro Financing to help U.S. golf courses, universities municipalities and sports fields to acquire irrigation systems and maintenance equipment. Toro Financing is a partnership with GE Capital Vendor Financial Services.

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## Agronomy Experts Talk Technology

GREEN SPEED IS 'OUT OF CONTROL,' USGA'S MORAGHAN SAYS

By Larry Aylward, Editor

**T**im Moraghan, chief agronomist for the United States Golf Association, and Jon Scott, vice president of agronomy for the PGA Tour, didn't hold back their opinions when commenting on the technology of the game during a seminar on the last day of the GCSAA Conference and Show in February.

Scott and Moraghan expressed pointed views on equipment and maintenance issues during the seminar, "Current Issues in Golf Technology: Where Is the Game Headed?" Moraghan, who recently began his 16<sup>th</sup> year in his current position, says a lot has changed since the days he was a superintendent.

"I don't know if it's good or bad," he adds. "I'll say that superintendents are tremendously skilled, and the technology available to them is exceptional. But I also feel the superintendent can be his own worst enemy by taking that technology to such a degree that the players

who come out day in and out [to his course] expect perfection. Other than God, I don't know that perfection can be achieved."

Moraghan said green speed is "out of control." He said Mark Michaud,

superintendent of Shinnecock Hills GC in Southampton, N.Y., recently informed him that the height of cut on his greens at Shinnecock was lowered to .065 inches.

"Take that for what it's worth," Moraghan said. "Maybe we'll go back to sand greens and not have to worry about height of cut."

Scott touched on the current equipment controversy. Critics, including Moraghan, admit it's no fun to watch a PGA player hit a pitching wedge into the green on a par 4, 425-yard hole. But Scott says

the equipment issue is exaggerated.

"It makes a really good story to talk about the club controversy, USGA testing methods and equipment as a whole," Scott said. "But is it as big of an issue as it's made out to be?"

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**"Maybe we'll go back to sand greens and not have to worry about height of cut."**

Tim Moraghan,  
USGA Chief Agronomist

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In other company news, Toro announced that revenues for the first quarter ended Feb. 1 were \$277.9 million, compared to \$280.4 million last year.

### **Deere introduces One Source**

John Deere Golf & Turf has adopted a new strategy to serve superintendents. Deere's One Source program is designed to better serve superintendents' needs for parts, maintenance and financing.

"It's a process we've been thinking about a long time," says Gregg Breningmeyer, director of marketing and sales. "We wanted to create something where a superintendent could make one phone call and have all his needs met"

In other company news, Moline, Ill.-based Deere & Co. reported a net loss of \$38.1 million for the first quarter ended Jan. 31, or \$.16 per share, compared with year-earlier net income of \$56.4 million or \$.24 per share.

### **Syngenta profits up for 2001**

Syngenta AG announced a 2001 net profit of \$213.37 million despite an overall 4 percent decline in sales. In the professional products division, the company said turf and ornamental sales declined 4 percent from 2000 as a result of reduced pest and disease pressure in the United States.

### **Tyler back in operation**

Masterblend International LLC's purchase of Tyler Enterprises has been finalized, and Tyler is back in operation as a premium specialty fertilizer formulator. Under the agreement, Tyler will operate as a division of Cleveland-based Masterblend and will continue to have its headquarters in Elwood, Ill.

### **Textron closing Cushman plant**

Textron Golf, Turf & Specialty Products will close its Cushman plant in Lincoln, Neb., by the end of the year, according to a report. The plant has been open for more than 100 years and about 415 people will lose their jobs. Textron will move vehicle production to Augusta, Ga., and production of turf care and aeration equipment to Charlotte, N.C.

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Scott said golfers' improved physical condition (he probably didn't mean John Daly, though) has plenty to do with them driving the ball more than 300 yards — and accurately. He notes there are two conditioning vans for players to work out on every PGA Tour stop.

"They'll spend almost as much time in the conditioning vans as they do on the driving ranges and putting greens," Scott said. "It's part of the practice to keep their muscles toned to strike the ball more cleanly with more power, force and control."

Moraghan agrees with Scott on the conditioning issue. He says many golfers are basically more powerful than a locomotive these days. He cites Tiger Woods — "6-foot-2, 195 pounds, not an ounce of fat on his body and a clubhead speed of 140 mph" — as an example. Moraghan relates this story about Woods during the 2000 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach Golf Links.

On the Friday during the tournament, play was suspended not even midway through Woods' round. So on Saturday, Woods had to play 11 holes in the morning and 18 holes in the afternoon. After play had concluded and fans had gone home, Moraghan got in a golf car and took a final spin around the course before nightfall. "I'm going down the fairway at 6:30, and I see this knucklehead jogging down the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> fairway," Moraghan says.

Moraghan put the pedal to the medal in his golf car and caught up with the knucklehead. It was Woods.

"I said, 'What are you doing?' He said, 'I gotta get my run in, man.' He's played nearly 30 holes and he's out jogging."

Power and players hitting wedges into greens on par 4s aside, Scott says the game "isn't going to hell in a hand basket just because the scores are getting lower."

"It's still exciting because most of the game is still watched on the putting surface," Scott says. "I guarantee: No matter how far we decide to make the golf course, some John Daly, some Tiger Woods or some kid is going to overpower that golf course — not just tame it, but put it to bed."

## Quotable



**"I'm one of those guys you don't want around the golf course. I just tear up stuff and apologize for it later."**

—Mike Singletary, featured speaker at the recent GCSAA show and former middle linebacker for the Chicago Bears, on his golf game.

**"We've been accused of trying to protect some grand old courses. Guilty as charged."**

—Dick Rugge, USGA's senior technical director, addressing criticisms of his organization's regulation of golf equipment.