

Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

Business briefs

Toro selling Riverside facility

Bloomington, Minn.-based The Toro Co. is selling its Riverside, Calif., headquarters and plant, and moving manufacturing operations to its facility in El Paso, Texas. Toro said its office staff will remain in a leased facility in Riverside. "The move is part of a strategy to reduce production costs and improve asset utilization, insuring long-term competitiveness and leadership in irrigation markets," the company said.

Toro began shifting its manufacturing of residential and commercial irrigation products to El Paso earlier this year, but was to retain the manufacturing of golf-related products in Riverside. "Consolidating the manufacture of all products in El Paso follows strategic moves by other industry competitors and maintains the company's position in response to unfavorable economic conditions and changing market dynamics," the company said.

About 440 jobs will be lost because of the plant closing and restructuring.

Previously, Toro announced it will close its Evansville, Ind., plant and shift manufacturing to its Tomah, Wis., and Windom, Minn., plants. Toro said the move is part of its long-term strategy to strengthen operations and leverage enterprise-wide manufacturing assets. The move will affect about 94 employees.

In related news, Toro reported record sales and profitability for fiscal 2001. The company said it beat analyst expectations for the year, with diluted earnings per share of \$3.86 compared to \$3.47 for fiscal 2000, an increase of 11.2 percent. Net sales were \$1.35 billion in 2001, an increase of 1.1 percent. Net income for 2001 increased 11.4 percent to \$50.4 million.

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More Than a Mess

GEESE DROPPINGS ARE MORE DANGEROUS THAN THOUGHT

By Thomas E. Williams

Researchers from the Medical College of Ohio have discovered that Canadian geese may pose a more serious public threat than previously believed. The geese, which often congregate in large numbers on golf courses, are known for the mess they make.

It's not uncommon for a goose to produce up to a half-pound of fecal



MIKE KLEMMER

Beware of the droppings that geese leave on your course.

matter a day, and this is where the danger lies. According to the Medical College of Ohio study, the droppings often contain parasitic microorganisms that cause gastrointestinal illnesses. Among the parasites are *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium*.

Brian Harrington, Ph.D., one of

the study's authors, says the parasites are found throughout the country and primarily transmitted via hand-to-mouth contact. While they may cause only minor stomach irritation to healthy individuals, Harrington warns that their infection can be fatal to elderly individuals or others with weakened immune systems.

The Medical College of Ohio is urging routine testing for the parasites in course maintenance workers and golfers who are exposed to geese droppings and suffer characteristic intestinal problems. The college also suggests workers wear protective clothing and wash thoroughly after work.

"People should take precautions wherever possible," Harrington says. "Washing equipment

and hands is important because the parasites are highly resistant to disinfectants. The parasites can become imbedded on shoes and transmitted to people who themselves have not even visited a golf course."

This story is reprinted with permission of Golf Journal, the official publication of the USGA. Williams is a reporter for the magazine.

Business briefs

Briefs continued from page 10

Deere announces year-end loss partially due to after-tax charges

Moline, Ill.-based Deere & Co. announced net losses of \$320.1 million (\$1.36 per share) for the fourth quarter and \$64 million (\$.27 per share) for the year ended Oct. 31. Affecting results for both periods were after-tax charges of \$216.6 million (\$.91 per share) related to the previously announced early retirement programs, the decision to exit the hand-held consumer products business and the restructuring of certain manufacturing and marketing operations.

Net sales in the commercial and consumer equipment division were down 23 percent for the quarter and 10 percent for the year, the company reported.

Owners can depreciate construction of greens

Golf courses can now claim the costs of modern golf green construction as depreciating assets under a new IRS rule, scheduled to apply to the 2002 tax season, according to the National Golf Course Owners Association.

The ruling, a boon to golf courses trying to make ends meet in tougher economic times, allows owners to depreciate the costs of modern greens and their drainage systems under current law and regulations as 15-year land improvement.

Who's No. 1?

TORO, TEXTRON REACT TO DEERE'S CLAIM

At last summer's John Deere Classic, a PGA tournament held in Moline, Ill., John Deere's CEO, Hans Becker, sat down for an interview with a reporter from *Golf* magazine. As the interview ended, Becker noted that Deere was the No. 1 equipment supplier to the golf course maintenance industry.

What do Toro and Textron think of such a confident claim?

John Wright, director of marketing for Toro's golf business, said the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute gathers the only public numbers on how many pieces of outdoor equipment that all manufacturers sell combined.

"I know what my own numbers are," Wright said. "For Deere's claim to be correct by OPEI standards, there would have to be no Textron."

Textron, of course, is alive and well, thank you, and has its own feelings about Deere's claim. "We have the broadest, best and most complete line of golf and turf maintenance products in the world," said Gregory Hyland, Textron's chairman and CEO during a press gathering in October. "We are the leader or a close No. 2 in most product categories."

When reminded of similar statements by his competitors, Hyland added with a smile, "Toro and Deere are just blowing smoke."

Deere, however, stands by its claim.

"By looking at other manufacturers' published reports, we determined that we had attained a leadership position in golf course equipment sales worldwide," said Ken Edwards, recently retired director of marketing and sales for John Deere Golf & Turf Products. "When we say 'golf course equipment,' we are referring to the equipment used in everyday maintenance operations."

Does the national company ranking matter to superintendents? Sean Remington, superintendent at Green Valley CC in Lafayette Hill, Pa., says he doesn't think most superintendents worry about them.

"They're all making quality products," Remington says. "It all boils down to the service and support you get at a local level, not what happens on a national level."

— Frank H. Andorka Jr., Managing Editor

"Toro and Deere are just blowing smoke."

A smiling Gregory Hyland, Textron's chairman/CEO

Witt: I Don't Think I Left Anything on the Table

*Golf*dom asked Tommy Witt, certified superintendent of Kiawah Island Club in Kiawah Island, S.C., to reflect on his one-year term as GCSAA president. Witt wraps up his tenure next month.

Take it away, Tommy:

"This has been a challenging year beyond the Sept. 11th tragedy. The slowdown in the economy certainly has affected many as-



Tommy Witt

pects of the association. The Sept. 11 horror dramatically affected the manner in which business and travel will influence GCSAA functions.

"I will walk away from my GCSAA experience and presidency knowing I gave my absolute best, and I hope that superintendents are bet-

ter off today than when I joined the board eight years ago.

"I don't think I left anything on the

table. I did my very best each year to be one of nine contributing and participating board members to serve GCSAA.

"The GCSAA president, while charged with leading the association, is still just one member of the board. The president can accomplish nothing alone. I had eight talented men on the board, hundreds of committee members, and a great 120 GCSAA staff members helping me every day."

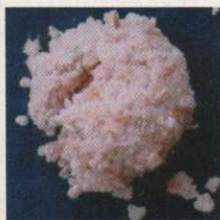
Off The Fringe

Hit It in the Drink ... and Feed the Fish

If a golfer uses the new ball from Eco Golf, he'll never technically lose another golf ball if he hits it in the drink. He will, however, dissolve a ball.

That's right. Eco Golf, manufacturer of the Eco Golf Tee, has developed a golf ball that will dissipate safely in water.

Eco Golf says its new ball looks, feels and flies like a real golf ball, but it's made from 100 percent natural materials. The ball degrades in three to five days, leaving no synthetic or toxic residue behind. The Eco ball is a one-piece, compression-molded ball. It flies about 75 percent the distance of a regular golf ball.



The Eco Golf Ball after being submerged in water for 96 hours.

The company claims that driving golf balls into the ocean was a favorite pastime of many cruise-line passengers (who often double as golfers), but the "sport" is prohibited. With Eco Golf's dissolving balls, driving ranges can return to cruise ships.

"Hitting golf balls into the ocean is an adrenaline rush similar to skipping stones into a lake," says Todd Baker, managing director for Eco Golf. "There is something special about watching the splash down of your ball plunging deep into the ocean and then turning to your friends and giving them all high fives."

Well, we don't get *that* excited about it.

Quotable

"Shirley Temples!"

— Bill Tryon, announcing how he and his son, Ty, would celebrate after Ty, 17, became the youngest player in history to earn a PGA Tour card. (Associated Press)

"The job superintendents have done is the biggest improvement in golf today. The demands have caused it, yes, but also the education that superintendents have now in agronomy and such (is critical)."

— Byron Nelson, Hall of Fame professional golfer (GCSAA)

"I don't recall that slow play was a problem in recreational golf until the average golfer had the bad example of the PGA Tour on television."

— Frank Hannigan, former USGA executive director. (Doug Ferguson, Associated Press)



Scanning the Web

Frank Andorka reviews puttingzone.com/gk.html

(All sites are preceded by <http://> unless otherwise noted)

You could call this site the "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Putting Greens and Weren't Afraid to Ask" site. Although the overall site is dedicated to the fine art of putting, you could easily spend hours perusing the "greenkeepers" section.

Its subjects are too extensive to list completely here, but the site discusses everything from green construction to irrigation practices and beyond. The most impressive part of the site is the navigation bar on the right-hand side, which lists journal and magazine articles about the

subject you choose from the main menu.

The list of article authors is equally impressive. It includes the USGA's Jim Snow, Penn State University's Al Turgeon and noted architect Mike Hurdzan, just to name a few. If I had to quibble, the links should take you directly to the articles rather than abstracts.

Armed with the extensive abstract information, however, you should be able to find actual copies of the articles on your own. It's such a good site, in fact, that I'm going to add it to our list of links at www.golfdom.com.

Speaking of our Web site, *Golfdom* has completely redesigned it to make it more user-friendly and current. We've included a new search engine and a navigation bar that will help you find the articles you need quickly. We're still tweaking it a bit, so if you have any questions or concerns don't hesitate to contact me at fandorka@advanstar.com. Thanks for giving us another shot.

Golfdom's managing editor Frank H. Andorka Jr. compiles *Scanning the Web* and is thrilled about the upgrades to *Golfdom's* site, www.golfdom.com. You can reach him at fandorka@advanstar.com with future column suggestions or sites you think he should visit.

He Needs a Golf Script

'HOOSIERS' STAR SHELVES PGA CAREER TO RETURN TO ACTING

By Larry Aylward, Editor

It makes sense that Maris Valainis, the actor who portrayed high-school basketball phenom Jimmy Chitwood in the 1986 film *Hoosiers*, could star as a rookie golfer on the verge of helping the United States win the Ryder Cup. Valainis, after all, can hit greens like he hit jump shots in *Hoosiers*, one of the all-time great sports flicks.

The stage is set for that to happen. The 37-year-old Valainis, a scratch golfer, was recently laid off from his job as golf pro and general manager of Rancho San Joaquin GC in Irvine, Calif., and returned to acting. Valainis has an agent and is looking for work.

Remember the pivotal scene in *Hoosiers* when Chitwood's coach, Norman Dale (Gene Hackman), calls the final play with the 1952 Indiana state basketball crown on the line? His team, the Hickory Huskers, is down by one with only seconds left. Dale tells the players they're going to use their star player, Chitwood, as a decoy and someone else is going to take the last shot. Then Chitwood lifts his head, looks his

coach squarely in the eyes and says, "I'll make it." If you're a *Hoosiers* fan, you know the rest of the story.

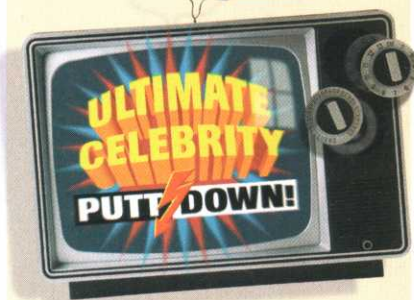
Can't you see a cool and collective Valainis starring in a similar role as a golfer? There he is, lining up a 40-foot putt to win the Ryder Cup. He turns to his nerve-wracked teammates and whispers, "I'll make it."

Valainis, who grew up in Indianapolis, started out as a golfer, not an actor. The golf bug bit when he was 8 years old when he and his brother began caddy and playing. His passion for the game explains his 1-handicap.

But Valainis' life changed when he was a college student in Indianapolis in the mid-'80s. He was playing hoops on a Monday night at a local school when the casting director for *Hoosiers* spotted him and asked him to audition for a role. Valainis had no acting experience, but he could shoot the rock.

He excelled in his role as Chitwood, and *Hoosiers* was a hit. Hence, the acting bug bit Valainis, who moved to California and had bit parts in a few films and TV shows before quitting the

What's on your TV?



You gave up watching *Emeril* after that last flambé claimed your toupee and *Hometime* because you discovered beer and electricity don't mix. The only thing left to watch is a good round of golf. According to GCSAA, here's how superintendents rank the best pro tournaments to catch on TV:

Masters	53%
U.S. Open	20%
Ryder Cup	11%
British Open	10%
PGA Championship	2%
Skins Game	1%
TPC Championship	1%
Other	2%

ILLUSTRATION: DAN BEEDY

Hollywood scene and returning to golf.

In the early '90s, Valainis took a job as the head pro and assistant manager at Casta del Sol GC in Mission Viejo. He spent the last few years at Rancho San Joaquin GC.

Valainis says he treasures his golf career, and he holds superintendents in high regard. "They're some of the most important people at golf courses," he says.

Valainis still laces up his Chuck Taylors and plays in local leagues. Sometimes other players look at him and say, "Aren't you Jimmy Chitwood?" PGA Tour player Mike Sposa told Valainis he watches *Hoosiers* to inspire him if he's in contention in a tournament.

Valainis isn't tired of the attention and loves to talk about *Hoosiers*, which he says is the *The Wizard of Oz* of sports films.

Memo to Hollywood: Send Valainis a good golf script.



ORION PICTURES

Maris Valainis (back row, second from left) excelled as Jimmy Chitwood in the movie *Hoosiers*. But what he'd really like now is a golf role, since the game is his first love.