

Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

Business briefs

GCSAA considering three locations

The GCSAA says it's moving forward with its feasibility study to relocate its headquarters from Lawrence, Kan., to a warmer, more golf-oriented environment. Three locations are being considered: Phoenix; Orlando, Fla.; and Jacksonville, Fla.

On Feb. 13, GCSAA will hold a town hall meeting during its conference and show to discuss the potential relocation. At that meeting, all conference and show attendees can ask questions and make suggestions about the organization's potential headquarters move.

New name for Textron

Textron announced that its subsidiary Textron Golf, Turf & Specialty Products would be renamed Jacobsen Turf, Commercial and Specialty Equipment effective Feb. 13. "The new name recognizes the Jacobsen brand as a leading supplier of quality turf care equipment and services to the golf, commercial and professional lawn care, landscaping, sports turf and agricultural turf markets worldwide," the company said.

Logos for Jacobsen Turf, Commercial & Specialty Equipment and subsidiary companies will also change. The new lettering and graphics are designed to draw attention to the different markets served by each brand.

Jacobsen Turf, Commercial & Specialty Products also announced the availability of a new line of Jacobsen brand commercial grounds-care products for the landscaping, professional and commercial lawn care, industrial turf care markets and to large property owners. The new product line will be sold through a network of authorized Jacobsen commercial grounds-care dealers.

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Triplex Mowers on the Cutting Edge

DEERE, TORO TO INTRODUCE NEW GREENS MOWERS

By Larry Aylward, Editor

That humming sound you hear is the triplex greens mower business. It's revving up in 2003.


Two of the mowing world's Big Three companies, John Deere and Toro, will introduce new triplex products at this month's GCSAA show. A safe bet is that most superintendents will be intrigued by what they see.

John Deere's Golf & Turf Division has been talking about manufacturing a diesel-powered triplex riding greens mower with an electric reel drive for more than a year. The talk has been realized. The Moline, Ill.-based company will showcase the 2500E triplex mower at its booth during the show. The new mower was created from superintendents' comments received at recent John Deere Golf & Turf Feedback Programs.

The big thing with the mower is the electric cutting unit, which replaces the hydraulic unit. That means superintendents are relieved of a major fear — hydraulic fluid leaks that can cause major damage on greens.

"The only hydraulics on the machine will be for steering and the raise-and-lower wheel drive," says Chuck Greif, manager of worldwide marketing and international sales for Deere's Golf & Turf Division.

A vital component of the mower, Greif points out, is that the electric cutting unit is as powerful as a hydraulic unit. Therefore, superintendents are able to verticut and groom with it. "They can also mow tees and fairways," Greif adds.



"Superintendents can now mow at one-sixteenth inch with the triplex."

*Helmut Ullrich,
The Toro Co.*

Eliminating the possibility of hydraulic fluid leaks from cutting units on greens is a big breakthrough, Greif says. "That helps superintendents a lot."

Helmut Ullrich, marketing manager for greens mowers for The Toro Co., would agree with Greif's view about helping superintendents. That said, Toro is also looking to help superintendents and golf course technicians by making cutting units more efficient and easier to maintain.

"We've learned over the years that maintaining cutting units is a very time-consuming task and requires high skill," Ullrich says.

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MIKE KLEMME

Business briefs

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Rumors swirl around Whitman

The new year has barely begun, but already rumors are circulating among Washington insiders that the first Bush cabinet member to resign will be Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christine Todd Whitman. Whitman, a moderate Republican appointee who was supposed to enforce environmental laws, has found herself at odds with the Bush Administration's tendency to lean toward regulations that benefit industry, according to Knight Ridder Newspapers News Service. Her potential resignation could clear the way for a more industry-friendly EPA administrator to take the post. But Joe Martyak, the EPA's chief spokesman, strongly denied the rumors that were circulating.

Audubon hosting summit

Audubon International is planning its first-ever summit on Feb. 12 at Catechee GC in Atlanta during the GCSAA show. The group is kicking off its "Fifty in Five" initiative to enroll 50 percent of U.S. golf courses in its environmental programs within the next five years. The Albany, N.Y.-based group says it has signed up 13 percent of the nation's 17,000 golf courses for its Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System since its inception 10 years ago.

These guys are good

Two *Golfdom* contributing editors — Joel Jackson and Geoff Shackelford — were recently honored for their distinguished work. The GCSAA named Jackson one of its three recipients for its Distinguished Service Award. Jackson is the director of communications for the Florida GCSA and writes the monthly column "Shades of Green" for *Golfdom*.

Shackelford was honored for his design work on Rustic Canyon GC, recently named by *Golf Digest* as America's Best New Affordable Public Course for 2002. Gil Hanse designed the California course in collaboration with his associate Jim Wagner and Shackelford, who writes the monthly column "Designs on Golf" and other features for *Golfdom*.

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What Toro has done is transform the cutting-unit technology of its Greensmaster Flex 21 walking greens mower to a triplex greens mower. The result is a riding mower that offers a better cut in all conditions and is more service-friendly, Ullrich says.

"Superintendents can now mow at one-sixteenth inch with the triplex, the same as with the walking greens mower, which meets their demand for low-height-of-cut requirements," Ullrich says. "The cutting units are also easier for technicians to maintain."

The key to making the cutting unit more service-friendly is precision manufacturing, Ullrich says. Precision manufacturing means fewer adjustments on the cutting unit. In fact, the nongreaseable cutting units are so simple to adjust that superintendents can adjust them themselves, Ullrich says.

Whether a superintendent uses triplex mowers or walking greens

mowers on his or her course's greens depends on several factors. But the industry will always need both versions of the mowers, industry experts agree.

Quality of cut and labor are key issues that go hand in hand when choosing what type of mower to use.

"The quality of cut and striping effects that a walking greens mower gives for aesthetic appeal is still regarded as the premier way to mow greens," Greif says. "But [using them] is labor-intensive. If you have three walk mowers, you have to have three people to operate them."

It's not that triplex mowers don't do a good job of cutting greens. But superintendents and their crews must be more careful operating them in certain weather conditions because of their weight, says Ralph Nicotera, vice president of marketing and product management for Jacobsen Turf, Commercial and Specialty Equipment. "If you have a real

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Quotable

"I was so happy to see pythium in the summer of 2002 to give me a break from treating dollar spot."

Joe Nappenberger Jr, superintendent of Wedgewood CC in Columbus, Ohio, on the dollar spot epidemic that has plagued many superintendents in the Midwest over the past two years.

"One of the favorite skills I learned when I first became a superintendent was how to use a chainsaw because you can't grow grass in the shade."

— Scott Adams, general manager of the Old South Golf Links in Bluffton, S.C., on tree management.

"They played with a snake and got bit."

— Stuart Appleby, after the Australian Open at Cheltenham's Victoria GC was cancelled. The tournament was deep-sixed because the maintenance staff tried to make the course as difficult as possible in severely dry conditions. The greens were reportedly unplayable because they were rock hard and cut very short. (Fox Sports)

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hot and dry season in Northern areas of the country where golf courses have bentgrass greens, a triplex mower could cause some stress," he says.

Obviously, the best way to achieve labor efficiency is to use triplex greens mowers, Nicotera says. Greif notes that upper-echelon courses use mostly walking greens mowers. However, he says some courses' maintenance staffs walk mow the greens only for tournaments.

Nicotera probably speaks for all mower manufacturers when he says that quality of cut will always be a vital issue with triplex greens mowers.

"What people remember most about a course is its greens," Nicotera says. "If the greens are good, they'll go back and play the course again. Quality of cut is what we need to continue to offer on these units. We need to make sure we have the latest technology and the top-quality products to put on greens."

While Trees Are Dormant ...

... YOU MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER PRUNING THEM

By Jami Pfirman

Editor's note: Throughout the year, Pfirman, a communications specialist for The Davey Tree Expert Co., will report on seasonal tips for tree care.

Every golf course is its own ecosystem. Each plant is an integral part of the whole. From the turf to the trees, every plant must be healthy to ensure the stability of the whole. Routine care, like pruning of course trees, is essential for maintaining health.

Regular pruning is beneficial for many reasons ranging from health to aesthetics. Pruning removes dead, broken, decayed, diseased or insect-infested wood. It improves the penetration of light and air as well as reduces wind resistance and potential storm damage. Pruning corrects and redirects structural growth to prevent future problems. In addition to health benefits, pruning shapes the appearance of trees. It also eliminates safety hazards.

While pruning can be done year-round depending on objectives and the tree species, dormant pruning, in particular, can be beneficial for many trees. Pruning during times of growth as in the late spring may tax tree resources. While trees are attempting to create new wood or leaves, less energy is available to respond to pruning wounds.

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