

Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

Business briefs

Ryegrass supplies short; bentgrass back in line

It's no secret. Supplies of ryegrass will be short this spring.

"We all know the reasons (for the shortage)," said Brian Muntz, regional sales manager for Seed Research of Oregon. "It's because of a lack of carryover and a poor-yielding crop mostly because of the weather."

Experts also point to the fact that many Oregon seed producers voluntarily took their fields out of production when prices were low, reducing the overall ryegrass acreage in Oregon.

"What we have in the valley will be gone," Muntz said. "The better varieties will be the first to go."

In the bentgrass market, inventories are back in line and prices have stabilized, Muntz said. "But there isn't as much of a surplus as there was a couple of years ago," he added.

LESCO restructures

LESCO announced a strategy to restructure debt and strengthen its balance sheet by the end of the first quarter of 2004, including:

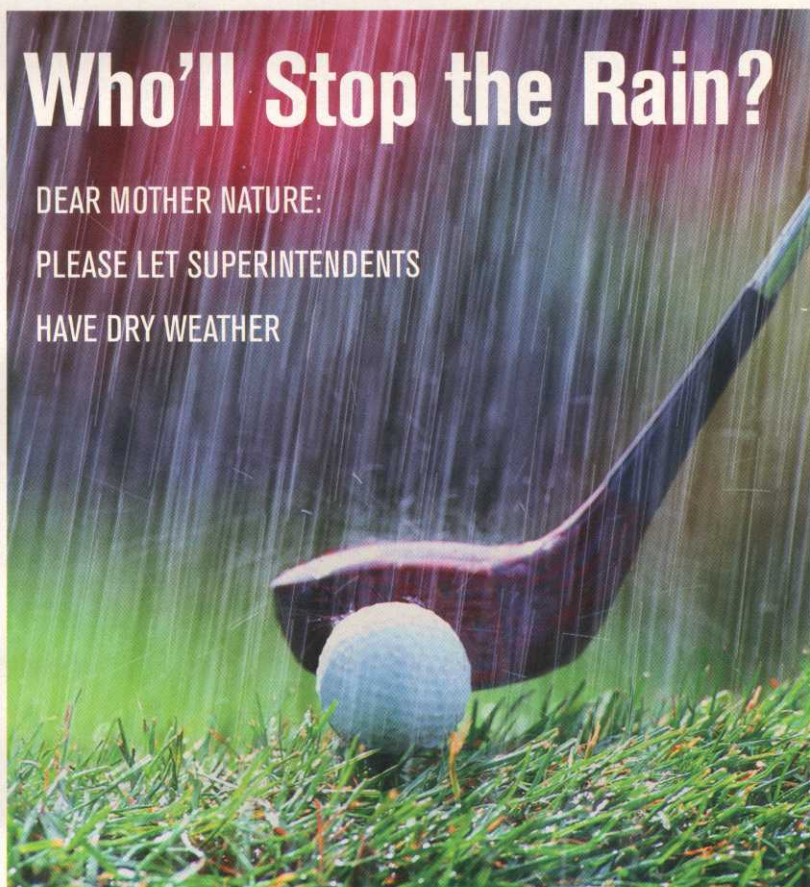
- the sale of its receivables portfolio to GE Business Credit Services (GEBCS) and outsourcing of its private label credit program;
- refinancing of its revolving credit facility;
- buyout of its interest rate swap agreement; and
- buyback of its outstanding preferred stock.

Under the terms of its agreements with GEBCS, the company will sell its existing accounts receivables portfolio to GEBCS for about \$55 million and will outsource its private label credit program through the GE

Briefs continue on page 20

Who'll Stop the Rain?

DEAR MOTHER NATURE:
PLEASE LET SUPERINTENDENTS
HAVE DRY WEATHER



DIGITAL STOCK

By Larry Aylward, Editor

With spring around the corner, many superintendents are praying to the golf course gods for dry weather — and for good reason. Dry weather could equal good business, which could equal fatter maintenance budgets and maybe even year-end bonuses.

The weather, especially the abundance of rain, wreaked havoc on courses' businesses last year, mostly in the Midwest and Northeast.

"The biggest player in decreased

rounds (last) year was Mother Nature," said Michelle Frazier, certified superintendent of Boston Hills Country Club in Hudson, Ohio.

"The weather in the Northeast (last) season had a major affect on business," said Scott Wohlers, superintendent of Arrowhead Golf Club in Spencerport, N.Y. "For us, we didn't start to have nice weather until mid-June. We've had poor springs for two years in a row. It's almost impossible to recover lost income."

Continued on page 19

Off The Fringe

Continued from page 16

The heavy rain was not limited to the Midwest and Northeast, however.

"We were up on the year until it rained all June and July," said Scott Sewell, superintendent of Seascope Resort in Destin, Fla. "The weather is the main reason our rounds were down."

Bryan Hensley, superintendent of River Pines Golf, a 27-hole daily-fee course in Alpharetta, Ga., said the course had six weekends washed out during last year's playing season where not a single round was played.

"The reduced revenue this year was because of the more than 85 inches of rain we received since September 2002," Hensley said.

What kind of weather is on tap for this spring and summer? Here's how the 2004 *Old Farmer's Almanac* rates the 2004 weather in some regions:

In the Southwest, April and May will be warm and dry with above-nor-

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SCOTT WOHLERS
SUPERINTENDENT
ARROWHEAD GOLF CLUB

mal temperatures and below-normal rainfall.

In the Southeast, April and May will be warmer than normal, with near-normal rainfall in April and then heavy rains during May. June will be dry, with near-normal rainfall in July and August.

Florida can expect stormy weather in parts of March. Temperatures in

April and May will be near normal in the south and slightly warmer than normal in the north. Rainfall will be near normal in April, but very wet in May.

In New England, April and May will be much warmer than normal. After a fairly normal June and July, August will be hotter than usual.

In the northern Great Plains, which includes states near the Great Lakes, the summer will be hot and dry in the west, with above-normal rain in the east.

The summer will be hot and dry, with much less rainfall than normal in most areas comprising the Great Plains. But rain will increase in September and October.

The summer will be hotter than normal in the Rocky Mountain region, with dry weather continuing in the south and almost-normal rainfall in the north.



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Business briefs

Briefs continued from page 16

platform. All proceeds will be used to reduce outstanding debt. LESCO expects to incur a one-time charge of \$2 million to \$3 million in connection with the agreement.

"In combination, these agreements will allow us to reduce debt by more than \$50 million and increase our financial flexibility, which is critical for long-term growth," said Michael P. DiMino, LESCO's president and CEO.

Certis USA distributing Basamid

Basamid soil fumigant is now available for use in golf course renovation in North America from Certis USA LLC. Basamid, used prior to turfgrass installation to control weeds, harmful bacteria and soil-borne diseases, nematodes and soil-dwelling insect pests, was recently sold by BASF to Kanesho Soil Treatment SPRL of Brussels, Belgium.

Kanesho Soil Treatment has granted the North American distribution rights for Basamid to Certis USA.

E-Z-GO upgrades ISO certification

E-Z-GO Textron has changed its Quality Management System to the new International Standardization Organization (ISO) 9001:2000 version. ISO certification is a model for quality assurance in design, development, production, installation and servicing.

Bureau Veritas Quality International (BVQI) of Jamestown, N.Y., the ISO registrar, conducted a final audit of E-Z-GO's Augusta, Ga., plant in early October, subjecting the company's operations to a rigorous inspection, according to E-Z-GO.

Medallion looks to expand

Medallion Golf, a new affiliate of New York-based Meadowbrook Golf Group, is looking to expand its portfolio from three to six in the next year.

According to the *Orlando Business Journal*, Medallion is preparing to spend \$100 million to buy equity interests in golf courses across the country. The report says three golf courses are already in the portfolio and that three more are under active consideration.

Before You Cut Down That Tree...

By Jami Pfirman

The foundation of any golf course is the turf. From playability to appearance, the health of a course's turf affects everything. By maintaining turf health, lush courses attract not only players but attention as well.

To maintain turf health, superintendents do their best to remove all hazards, from miniscule weeds and grubs

and many superintendents will send crews out to take down numerous trees during winter. Before handing over a chainsaw, however, The Davey Tree Expert Co. recommends exercising caution. Haphazard tree removal is dangerous to the course and the crew.

First, taking down a tree will alter your course dramatically. The look and playability will be affected. Other practices, such as routine pruning, may help improve turf condition.

Pruning, when done properly, will allow the necessary light and air movement to reach turf grasses once starved in the shade of a tree.

Second, tree removal can be incredibly dangerous to crew members who have little or no training. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recognizes the danger involved with tree removal and pruning by untrained personnel. OSHA has mandated that any person doing tree care or maintenance must be fully trained in accordance with the American Standards Institute Z133.1, which is the safety standard that includes pruning and removals.

By employing a trained and insured arborist, course managers can eliminate some of the danger to employees and the course. Trained arborists can assess a tree's existing conditions and suggest an appropriate course of action to protect turf and trees.

Pfirman is a communications specialist for The Davey Tree Expert Co.



MIKE KLEMM

Consider consulting a trained arborist before you make a decision to cut down a tree.

to large threats like trees. While the decision to rid courses of grubs and weeds is an easy one, trees pose a conundrum. Trees affect course play and appearance. But they also cause shady patches and compete with the turf for nutrients, often causing damage to greens. For those reasons, many course managers opt to completely remove problem trees.

Removing the trees may seem like a logical solution to alleviate turf woes,

Quotable

"Agronomics, economics and politics are part of every decision you make."

— Bob Brame, a USGA Green Section agronomist, speaking to superintendents during his "Year in Review" presentation at the Ohio Turfgrass Conference & Show.

"There's a reluctance in this industry to embrace new golfers — and that has to change."

— Ruffin Beckwith, senior vice president of the World Golf Foundation, on why the golf industry has had problems with player development.



"People want fast greens, but they want greens to hold. Yeah, and I want an SUV that gets 30 miles to a gallon."

— Ron Ross, certified superintendent of Quarry Oaks Golf Club in Ashland, Neb., on the greenspeed issue.

"I live on the course, about 100 yards from the maintenance facility. I don't have to worry about being late."

— Brian Thomas, assistant superintendent of King's River Golf and Country Club in Kingsburg, Calif., on his morning commute to work.

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Go Ahead And Stress

IT'S GOOD FOR YOU – A LITTLE, ANYWAY

Now hear this superintendents: It's OK to stress out about the unwanted *Poa annua* on your course's greens or the grub damage on your course's fairways.

It's OK because stress is good for you, according to a recent study. Yes, we said it's *good* for you.

But there's a catch. Be careful not

to get too stressed, which is not healthy. If you're tearing your hair out, you've gone too far.

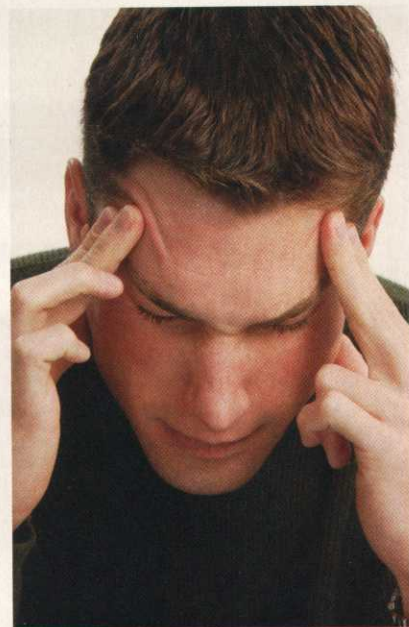
In the study, Northwestern University scientists discovered that elevated levels of special protective proteins that respond to stress in a cell (molecular chaperones) promote longevity.

Acute stress triggers a cascading reaction inside cells that results in the repair or elimination of misfolded proteins, prolonging life by preventing or delaying cell damage, according to the scientists, whose findings were published online Dec. 10 by *Molecular Biology of the Cell*, a publication of the American Society for Cell Biology.

"Sustained stress definitely is not good for you, but it appears that an occasional burst of stress or low levels of stress can be very protective," said Richard I. Morimoto, John Evans professor of biology, who co-authored the paper with lead author James F.

"Sustained stress definitely is not good for you, but it appears that an occasional burst of stress or low levels of stress can be very protective."

RICHARD I. MORIMOTO
JOHN EVANS PROFESSOR
OF BIOLOGY



LIQULIBRARY

Morley, a graduate student. "Brief exposure to environmental and physiological stress has long-term benefits to the cell because it unleashes a great number of molecular chaperones that capture all kinds of damaged and misfolded proteins."

Morimoto and Morley studied *C. elegans*, a transparent roundworm whose biochemical environment is similar to that of human beings and whose genome, or complete genetic sequence, is known. In their experiments, the researchers found that when heat shock factor, the master gene that controls the expression of all chaperones, was underexpressed in adult animals, longevity was suppressed. When heat shock factor was overexpressed, lifespan increased. The results suggest that heat shock factor has significant beneficial effects to the organism as a whole.

Past studies have shown that consuming red wine and dark chocolate in moderation can be good for you. Now it appears a little stress is beneficial, too.

— **Newswise**

Industry Loses Two Professionals

Robert Falconer MacNally II, past chairman of the National Golf Foundation and former chairman, president and CEO of Tommy Armour golf company, died in December at 71.

Born April 28, 1932, MacNally was president of Tommy Armour Golf from 1979-95 and chairman from 1995-97. During his tenure, Armour's sales grew from \$10 million to \$100 million. He was co-holder of a patent for the popular Silver Scot 845s irons, originally introduced in 1987. And he was the first to introduce the high-visibility yellow golf ball.

He joined NGF's board of directors in 1979 and was chairman of the board from 1985-86. He retired from the board in 1997 after 19 years of service and was director emeritus at the time of his death.

"Bob was a driving force within the golf industry and within the NGF for many

years," says NGF president and CEO Joe Beditz. "I can't think of anyone who was held in such high esteem by so many within the golf industry or who was so consistently in tune with what is good and right for the growth and enjoyment of the game."

Another industry professional, **James W. Ollerenshaw**, who was employed at The Andersons in Toledo, Ohio, died suddenly on Dec. 24. He was a product manager for the Professional Turf Products Group at The Andersons.

Ollerenshaw, 35, was born in England and grew up on a dairy farm. He came to the United States in 1987 as a result of a college exchange program between Lancashire College of Agriculture & Horticulture at Hutton in Lancashire, England, The Ohio State University and The Andersons.