

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:

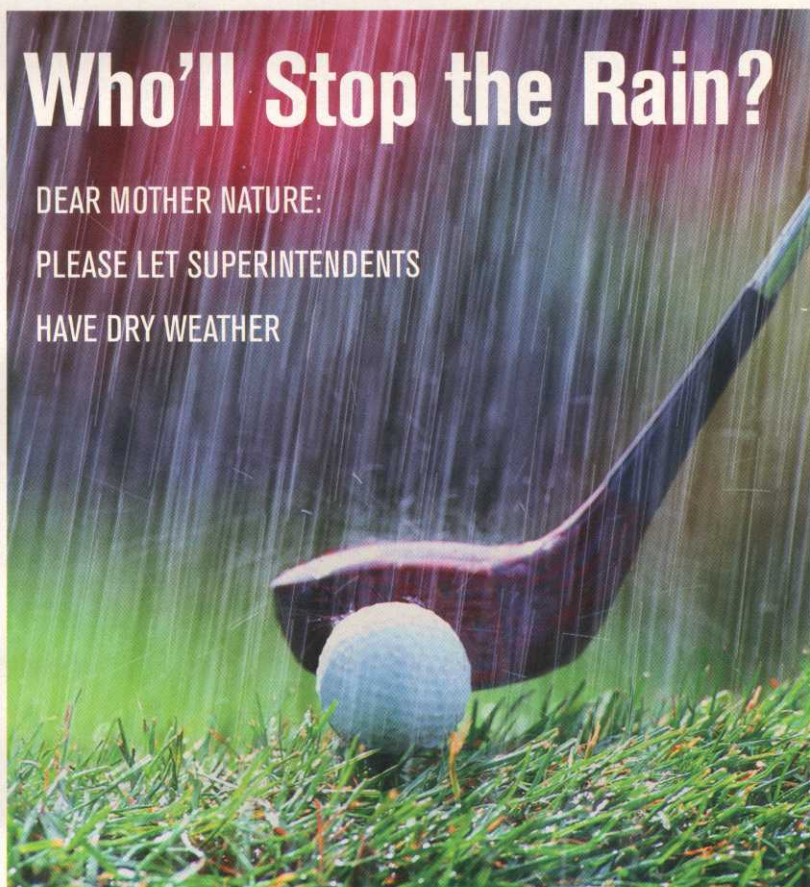
- the sale of its receivables portfolio to GE Business Credit Services (GEBCS) and outsourcing of its private label credit program;
- refinancing of its revolving credit facility;
- buyout of its interest rate swap agreement; and
- buyback of its outstanding preferred stock.

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-

"We've had poor springs for two years in a row. It's almost impossible to recover lost income."

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.



Irrigation is a major investment...

Be Sure.

Professional members of the American Society of Irrigation Consultants have passed an extensive peer review and qualification process. Working with an ASIC member gives you the confidence that a highly-qualified irrigation consultant is on the job, helping to protect your interests and your investment.

Contact ASIC to find a consultant near you.



**American Society of
Irrigation Consultants**

111 E WACKER 18th FL
CHICAGO, IL 60601
312.372.7090
FAX: 312.372.6160
WWW.ASIC.ORG