

Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

Business briefs

Pickseed buys SRO

Industry consolidation continues — this time in the seed segment. Pickseed Companies Group announced on New Year's Eve that it has purchased Seed Research of Oregon (SRO) from its parent company, Land O'Lakes. SRO will operate as an independent business unit of the Pickseed Companies Group in its existing Corvallis, Ore., facility.

In another transaction involving the two companies, Land O'Lakes purchased Seeds Ohio, a regional seed distributor based in West Jefferson, Ohio, and owned by Pickseed.

Penncross celebrates a big B-day

It's the big 5-0 for Penncross and time to wish the creeping bentgrass a big, happy birthday.

For 50 years now, superintendents have chosen Penncross creeping bentgrass for their greens, tees and fairways, making it the most widely used bentgrass variety in the world, according to Hubbard, Ore.-based Tee-2-Green, which has marketed the variety since 1973.

Tee-2-Green plans to commemorate Penncross' anniversary with a series of events. It has started the celebration by producing a 50th anniversary video for the Tee-2-Green Corporate CD, which will be mailed to 15,000 industry professionals in the show issue of "Golf and Environment," the self-proclaimed "superintendent's video magazine." Tee-2-Green will also feature Penncross in its booth at the upcoming Golf Industry Show, as well as showcase the creeping bentgrass in a series of advertisements that will run in industry trade publications.

In 1946, Penn State University Professor Burton Musser established a research and development program to produce seeded bentgrass varieties that were aggressive and

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GIS Project 'Bridges' Trade Associations

SUPERINTENDENTS, BUILDERS, ARCHITECTS UNITE TO BUILD
PUTTING GREEN INSIDE ORLANDO CONVENTION CENTER

By Thomas Skernivitz, Managing Editor

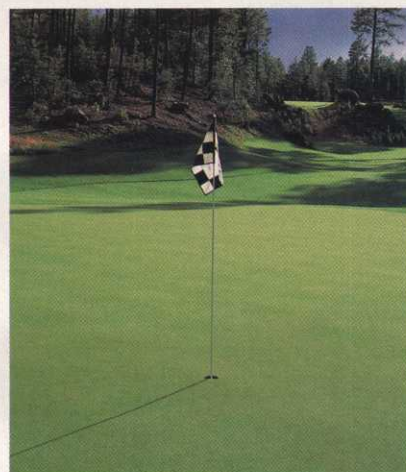
The "Building of the Green" at this month's inaugural Golf Industry Show should look a lot like the building of "The Bridge on the River Kwai."

Unlimited hard work and pride will go into crafting the centerpiece of the conference. Deadlines will have to be met. And just when things finally get rolling — in this case, a few Titleists rather than a train — the good guys will have to blow up the whole magnificent project.

For Alec Guinness and the gang, it all worked out in the end: The 1957 film won seven Academy Awards. GIS organizers, meanwhile, are hoping for a jolly good show of their own in Orlando.

Starting from scratch on Monday, Feb. 7, and with only five days to finish, a diverse collection of golf course professionals — from architects to builders to superintendents — will build and cultivate a real-life putting green smack in the middle of the Orange County Convention Center.

If all goes well and 5,000 square feet of sod takes, the three factions will celebrate their work the ensuing Saturday by engaging in a show-closing



MIKE KLEMM

Can a real-life green such as this be duplicated from scratch inside a convention center? GIS attendees will find out in Orlando.

putting contest. The losers get to immediately start tearing down the entire project. Then again, so do the winners.

"Nobody's ever done a green in five days — from cement floor to living green — and then had to make it disappear almost instantly," says Lee Hetrick, executive director of the Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBA). "Usually a green's going to stay where it's been put."

"It will definitely be challenging,"

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disease-tolerant while also having exceptional vigor and quick establishment. He wanted a new variety with the ability to tolerate various climates and also exhibit overall excellent appearance, color and adaptability. The result was Pennncross.

Toro, Deere post big numbers

Deere & Co. and The Toro Co. both had big years in 2004 — as in record years.

Moline, Ill.-based Deere & Co. announced worldwide net income of \$1.406 billion, or \$5.56 per share, in fiscal year 2004 vs. \$643.1 million, or \$2.64 per share, in 2003. Worldwide net sales and revenues grew 32 percent to \$5.207 billion for 2003's fourth quarter, and increased 29 percent to \$19.986 billion for the year. Net sales of the equipment operations were \$4.612 billion for the quarter and \$17.673 billion for the year, compared with \$3.375 billion and \$13.349 billion for the periods last year.

Deere expects equipment sales for 2005 to increase by 2 percent to 7 percent.

Bloomington, Minn.-based Toro reported record 2004 net earnings of \$102.7 million for its fiscal year ended Oct. 31, breaking the previous year's mark of \$81.6 million.

Toro reported net earnings of \$6.9 million on net sales of \$336.9 million for the company's fiscal 2004 fourth quarter, a 23-percent increase over 2003. The company said a significant contributor to the revenue growth for the year was an 18.1-percent increase in international business.

"Our record sales and profit performance reflect solid growth in each of our business segments," said Kendrick B. Melrose, chairman and CEO. Melrose said the company expects continued growth in 2005.

PTI expands again

Pursell Technologies Inc., a manufacturer of controlled-release fertilizers and pesticides, expects to double its production capability with the opening of a new plant in Sylacauga, Ala. The manufacturing expansion is the third in recent years for the 100-year-old company. Some of the firm's products are Polyon polymer-coated fertilizers, Trikode polymer-coated and sulfur-coated fertilizers.

Jack-ed Up

IT DOESN'T GET ANY MORE
EXCITING THAN CADDYING
FOR THE GOLDEN BEAR

By Joe Traficano

Growing up in a small Illinois town, my friends and I dreamed of playing professional baseball, basketball and football. Golf was a game we played just for kicks, one that we never practiced as much as the others. We fantasized about hitting a home run to win the World Series. We pictured ourselves scoring a touchdown in the Super Bowl. But when it came to sinking a putt to win a golf tournament, well, I can't say that ever made the wish list.

As a former superintendent and a salesman for West Coast Turf, I still have dreams. And better yet, I actually had one come true last year.

My story begins with the construction of Outlaw, the sixth golf course at Desert Mountain Golf in Scottsdale, Ariz. Like the other five courses, Outlaw was designed by one of the game's legends.

I had already met Jack Nicklaus. In fact, because of his longtime affiliation with Desert Mountain, where I worked for seven years until last December, we enjoyed an honest working relationship. But my construction colleagues at Outlaw had never met the Golden Bear, and they were ecstatic knowing he would be visiting the site quite often during its construction. Jack wound up visiting Outlaw seven times, with each outing lasting close to four hours. I was impressed with his attention to detail but was more in awe of his design and basic construction knowledge. There were numerous times when he would look at a hole, throw out an idea, and then ask me if I could maintain that type of contour or slope.



DAN ZOLA

The construction team could sense Jack's appreciation of our efforts. Upon finishing a visit, he would sit back with all of us and chat about golf, sports and life in general. Once he left, we couldn't help but say over and over, "We just sat with the greatest golfer of all time."

During the last month of the project I asked if I could caddy for Jack at the grand opening. I figured, how hard could it be? I had caddied several times before, and I play the game.

So, on March 22 Jack shows up to play Outlaw as part of its grand opening. I meet him at his car and the first thing out of his mouth is, "So, are you caddying for me today?" I answer, "Yes, I am, and we are going to have some fun." He slaps me on the back, smiles and walks right into a press conference.

That's when I start to get nervous. I keep saying to myself, "What were you thinking? You are going to carry the golf bag of Jack Nicklaus. What were you thinking?" Making me even more apprehensive is the fact that CBS is there to film a show on his life. And there are 2,500 or so members walking with us on the course.

Jack finishes the press conference, does a golf clinic to warm up and off we go to the first hole. In order for everyone to hear him comment on each hole, he is wearing a microphone throughout the round. He pars the

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