

Off The Fringe

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

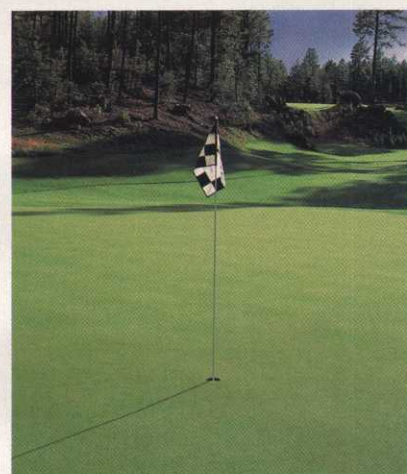
The "Building of the Green" at this month's inaugural Golf Industry Show should look a lot like the building of "The Bridge on the River Kwai."

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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adds GCBA President Jeffrey Harstine. "We won't be able to please everybody."

The main purpose behind the project is to educate GIS attendees, specifically superintendents. The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) had pondered the idea of building an indoor green for several years and finally submitted a formal plan in October 2003.

"Our goal is to find some part of the golf course to highlight at every Golf Industry Show and to provide a learning experience for our members," says Jeff Bollig, the GCSAA's director of communications.

"There are many superintendents who have been involved in construction elements," adds Chad Ritterbusch, executive secretary of the American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA). "However, many have not. And many others will have the opportunity to become reacquainted with the process."

The GCSAA had no trouble finding willing partners in the ASGCA and GCBA. The architects, led by Tom Fazio

and Tom Marzolf, designed the green. And the builders, behind Harstine and Tommy Sasser, have donated myriad funds and supplies and will handle much of the construction on the show floor before handing the baton to the superintendents for green maintenance.

"The builders," says Marzolf, vice president of the ASGCA, "are really the big story in terms of they're making it happen. They're going to have all the materials delivered and they're going to supply the manpower to physically build it. ... If you were building a green on a golf course, you could expect something like this to cost \$50,000."

Although none of the associations is putting a price tag on the project, Harstine says the GCBA has collected between \$12,000 and \$13,000 in

member donations.

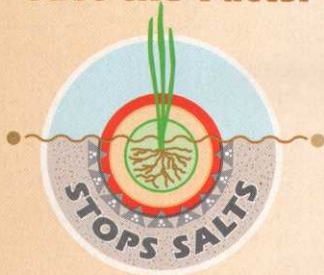
"Nearly every (builder) company has contributed toward the effort," Hetrick says. "We're trying to balance the cost of getting the dirt, the pipe and all those different things. And the majority of it is given to the association for the association purpose. That's really the underlying factor — there's nobody

"The builders are really the big story in terms of they're making it happen."

TOM MARZOLF

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that is going to get any marketing leverage from participating. It's all being done for the GCBA by the GCBA.

The architects originally intended to replicate a U.S. Open green from Pinehurst or Oakmont Country Club. Per the builders' advice, they scrapped the idea in favor of a unique design that suits the educational initiative.

"We're going to have three quadrants that will be at different pitches, different grids, to show easy pins, moderate pins, and pins that are borderline pins in terms of their slope or pitch," Marzolf says. "So it is not a replica green anymore. We would have been limited in how we could use the green for teaching."

Using the same rationale, at least two or three varieties of turf will be utilized — bentgrass, bermudagrass and paspalum grass. The sod will surround two bunkers and cover about 250 to 300 cubic yards of fill material that stacks between 3 and 4 feet high.

As for the weeklong timetable, materials are to be delivered Monday. Architects and builders will spend Tuesday and Wednesday rough-shaping the floor of the green. "The core of the green itself is USGA — which is drainage, 4 inches of rock layer and 12 inches of mix," Harstine says.

On Thursday, with the floor open to attendees for the first time, the builders will begin laying irrigation pipe. "The goal is to finish construction of the green by Friday morning, and Friday afternoon we're sodding the green," Marzolf says. "And by the end of the day Friday we're ready to turn it over to the superintendents association."

"The superintendents at some point in the program will take over the green and topdress it, roll it and groom it," Harstine adds.

Will the putting surface be good enough to stage a "Ryder Cup"-like putting contest, as Harstine puts it?

"I don't know," answers Hetrick. "We're going to try to get it to that stage, but if it's ridiculous, no, we're not going to have a contest. But if we can get it to where we can roll the sod out and it will stay pretty much stationary and maybe lightly sand it with something to where it has a pretty good roll to it, yeah, we'd probably have one."

Attendees won't be able to miss the indoor green. The project covers 12,000 square feet in the center of the trade-show floor, with every aisle funneling toward it. "We are thrilled that the building of the green has been placed in such a prominent location," Ritterbusch says.

Each association will have respective "experts" present at all times in booths to provide commentary and field questions. "We'll be constructing the green right in front of everybody," Hetrick says. "There'll be discussions on cost for building a green, which ownership would be very interested in hearing."

"People can either walk up or schedule a time," Ritterbusch says. "A superintendent or an owner or both might sit down with a golf course architect and perhaps talk about the master planning process and how that takes place." ■

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