

Business briefs

Briefs continued from page 14

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

Continued on page 20

Off The Fringe

Continued from page 16

first two holes and everything is going smoothly. I keep reminding myself about the three golden rules. But on the third hole he hits his ball long. It rolls off the green and he asks for another ball. I'm standing probably 5 feet away from him, so I toss him a ball. Just as I let it go, he turns away and I hit him in the finger. I thought, "I broke Jack Nicklaus' finger!"

He looks at me and says, "What do I look like, a target?" As we walk down the fairway, I hand him the putter and he taps me on the backside. "I was only joking with you," he says, before starting to laugh. Right then and there I know the three golden rules do not apply to me.

The next four holes go as planned. I have a nice rhythm going until the eighth hole, when my fantasy comes to an abrupt stop. Jack crushes his drive. It takes a huge kick forward and lands some 370 yards off the tee. The hole is only 470 yards, so my math indicates he has only 100 yards to the pin. Well, I had forgotten to factor that the hole location is minus 10 yards. I give him the incorrect yardage and just as he is going to swing, I realize my mistake. It's too late to take back. I pray for a split second that he doesn't hit a good shot. But I'm watching Jack Nicklaus. And sure enough, he hits it exactly 100 yards, which is 10 yards too long. The ball bounces over the green.

Easily audible because of the microphone, Jack proceeds to rip me about my lack of math skills and tells the crowd that I should stick to growing grass. I hand him another ball. He puts it pin high.

As we're walking off the ninth tee, he senses that I'm slightly agitated with myself. He puts his arm around me and says, "Don't worry about it," and that he was just having fun on my account. The next eight holes go by without a hitch.

Like everything in the world, all good things must come to an end. My legs are screaming and my head is pounding. But my heart is saying,



SANDY CASHMAN SCHMIEDER

A Picture Worth ...

'ARTISTRY OF GOLF' PAINTINGS COMMEMORATE SUPERINTENDENTS

Do you see the very classy and cool painting above? It could be yours if you stop by Agrotain International's booth (2179) at the Golf Industry Show (GIS) in Orlando this month.

Agrotain, a supplier of stabilized nitrogen products, has created the "Artistry of Golf," a new series of commissioned paintings that pay tribute to the hard work and dedication of superintendents everywhere. The first painting in the annual series, titled "Crowds Have No Place Here," showcases the sixth hole at Crooked Stick Golf Club. The commissioned work will be unveiled at the GIS, where superintendents can take a chance on winning one of 50 signed and numbered limited-edition prints, suitable for framing. The grand-prize winner will receive the original framed oil painting.

"We understand that quality golf course management requires not only effective use of science but also instinct and intuition," said Andrew Semple, vice president for international business at Agrotain International. "The Artistry of Golf series is our way of recognizing the professionals who combine the best of science and intuition to successfully practice their art."

The painting is the work of Sandy Cashman Schmieder, an artist who has been professionally serving the golf course maintenance industry for more than 15 years. Schmieder is a managing partner at EPIC Creative Communications in Wisconsin.

"Through my travels and work on hundreds of golf courses across the country, I have gained tremendous respect for the wide-ranging knowledge and skills of superintendents," Schmieder said. "I'm continually amazed by their passion for their work, their love of the game and especially of the land that they care for."

"Let's go another 18 holes." I do not want this day to end.

As we approach the 18th green, I hand Jack his putter. He takes a moment to thank me and wants to make sure that I tell the maintenance staff what a great job they've done and that the course has turned out exactly the way he envisioned in his design.

Once on the green he takes 20 minutes to publicly thank everyone involved with the construction of the course. He thanks me again for a job

well done with the course while also noting my lack of caddying skills ... despite a nice effort. Meanwhile, I've gained newfound respect for the caddies on the pro tour.

The day comes to an end with the two of us shaking hands and wishing each other good luck. He jumps in his car and drives away. My dream day is over for the moment but will last forever in my mind.

By the way, he finished two under for the day.