Off The Fringe

Business briefs

GCSAA Conducting Water Study

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America is getting out the measuring cup. The GCSAA will conduct a national study called the Golf Course Environmental Profile project to collect data on water use and conservation on golf courses.

The survey is part of a multiyear project by GCSAA that will evaluate environmental performance on golf courses. The project is designed to collect information that will allow golf course superintendents and other facility personnel to become better managers, help facilities operate more efficiently and help GCSAA develop more valuable programs and services.

Information will include details about playing surfaces, natural resources, environmental stewardship efforts and maintenance practices on the golf course. It is being funded by The Environmental Institute for Golf, thanks in large part to a grant from The Toro Foundation.

The first survey was conducted earlier this spring when GCSAA queried member and non-member superintendents regarding the physical characteristics of their golf courses. This second survey, measuring water use and conservation, was conducted through Nov. 20.

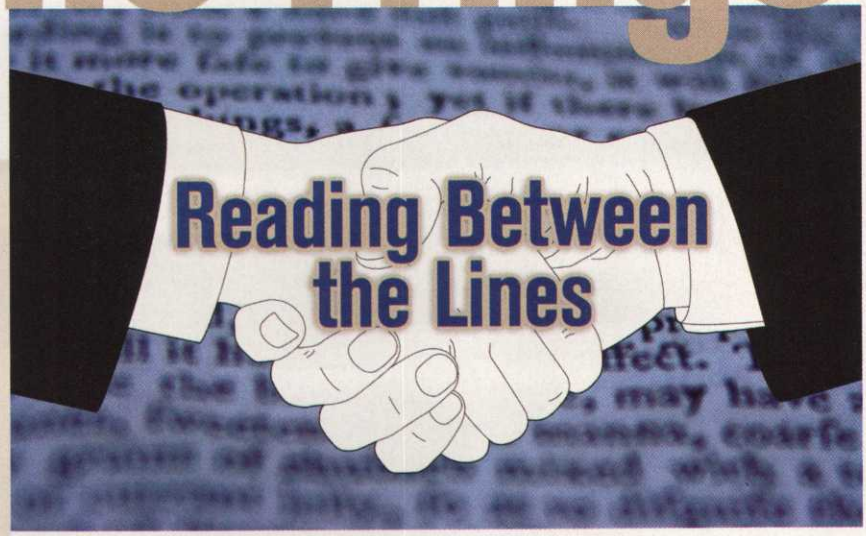
Great Lakes Charts New Image

Great Lakes Golf Course Products will change its name to The Prestwick Golf Group, effective Jan. 1. Accompanying the name change is a new Prestwick Golf Group logo as part of the re-branding initiative.

Great Lakes President Matt Morse said the name change is a sign of the company's substantial growth as the market leader in the golf course furnishings industry.

Briefs continue on page 12

Reading Between the Lines



UNDERSTANDING CORPORATE DEALMAKERS THESE DAYS REQUIRES A DICTIONARY AND A FAIR AMOUNT OF INTUITION

By David Frabotta, Senior Editor

ANALYSIS

With many residential and commercial real-estate markets cooling, well-funded investors looking for other real-estate options could be coming to a golf course near you. The Donald is a good example, but he's not the only one.

The recent announcement that KSL Capital Partners will buy ClubCorp for $1.8 billion might not have been a surprise to many of us in the industry, but KSL's size is fairly impressive with $1 billion to spend and plans to expand ClubCorp's portfolio of more than 160 properties.

Superintendents might be wondering how their day-to-day operations might change. When *Golfdom* talked to ClubCorp CEO John Beckert in October, he said superintendents likely won't notice any changes at the property level, at least for now.

"It's presently envisioned that [the management structures] will not change ... but we're one week into this, and we're evaluating what [KSL's] vision of the future is and how we fit into that, so it's really too early to tell," Beckert told us.

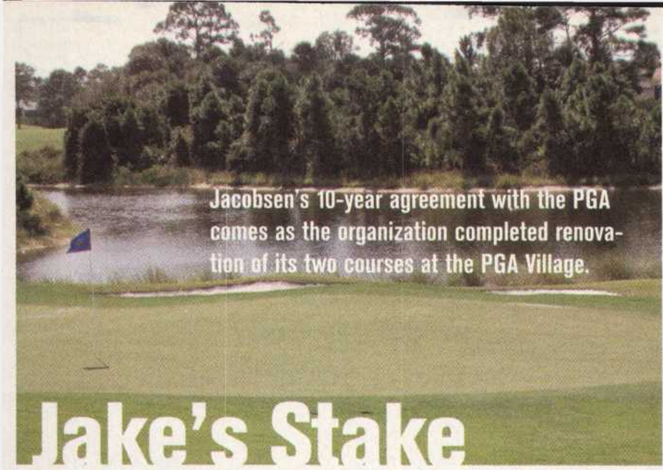
As an interviewer of at least 200 CEO types, my translation would be: There will be no changes until the shareholders think they can make more money. Then, your budget will be cut. Maybe not this year, but eventually, you will be asked to do even more with even less.

Why?

Equity firms buy properties sometimes for prestige, but all the time to make more money for their investors. With a reported $1 billion in equity, KSL manages money for some heavy hitters looking for alternatives to their hedge funds.

That means shareholder return just became the most important

Continued on page 12



Jacobsen's 10-year agreement with the PGA comes as the organization completed renovation of its two courses at the PGA Village.

Jake's Stake

SUPERINTENDENTS WILL SEE JACOBSEN BECOME 'MORE ENGAGED IN THE BUSINESS OF GOLF'

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

The response so far has been positive. Superintendents are happy that Jacobsen sold its commercial grounds product lines in August to heighten its focus on golf and professional turf-related markets, the company's leaders say.

Superintendents have told Jacobsen, "We're glad you're focusing on your core competency."

But Jacobsen's leaders realize that savvy superintendents ultimately will judge the company's business decision over a longer period of time. They will expect the company to prove itself in regard to the business decision.

Jacobsen, a business unit of Textron, has battled back from a few problems it endured the past few years, such as customer service issues. Jacobsen's leaders, who believe the company is much better off, know it will take time to broadcast that message.

Last year, Jacobsen named Dan Wilkinson to replace Dan Carlson as its president. Wilkinson, who spent 17 years at General Electric and worked under Jack Welch, was hired for his customer service expertise.

Jacobsen had problems filling part orders with its dealers. That dilemma was not helped when Jacobsen decided to move its headquarters to Charlotte, N.C., and consolidated operations there. The moving of people and processes were challenging.

But the sale of the commercial grounds care product lines to Commercial Grounds Care, an affiliate of Schiller-Pfeiffer, allows Jacobsen to concentrate on the golf and professional turf markets with equipment manufactured in Charlotte and Ipswich, England.

Karla Cuculi, Jacobsen's marketing director, also points out that Jacobsen has maintained a parts-fill rate in the upper 90s percentile for more than a year.

Textron and Jacobsen decision makers decided to sell the businesses after looking at the matter systematically. They said they looked at the value of the businesses from all angles. And as they went through that process, they identified strategic issues that needed to be massaged. In the end, they said they needed to focus on the core of the business — golf and professional turf — and put all of their resources into the segment of the market where they have the most equity.

When and how will superintendents and others begin to notice Jacobsen's increased focus on golf? Company leaders say they will see that through "accelerated product development," which will be heavily researched through the company's customers. Superintendents will see Jacobsen become "more engaged in the business of golf."

An example of the latter is Jacobsen's recent announcement that it has become "The Official Turf Equipment Supplier to The PGA of America" and "The Exclusive Turf Equipment Supplier to PGA Golf Properties." The 10-year agreement comes as The PGA of America completed renovation of its two courses at the PGA Village in Port St. Lucie, Fla., and began renovation at Valhalla Golf Club in Louisville, Ky., host of the 2008 Ryder Cup.

Jacobsen leaders believe the 90-year-old PGA and their 85-year-old company are a good match because of their combined longevity in the market.

In March, Jacobsen also plans to open a new facility in Charlotte, which will house a training center as well as its corporate headquarters, Cuculi said.

"It's one of the more tangible outcomes of this new focus," she added.

Dale Miller, director of agronomy for the PGA Golf Club, said he noticed that Jacobsen had its "ups and downs" the last 10 years, but he believes the company is "back up to standards." Miller uses Jacobsen equipment at the PGA's two golf courses.

"The most efficient operations are the strongest equipment operations," he said. ■

Quotable

"We used to run an alternate-shot couples tournament. We started calling it the divorce open."

— Frank Jemsek, owner, Cog Hill Golf & Country Club in Lemont, Ill.

"Golf is like politics; it's very local."

— Joe Louis Barrow, Executive Director of The First Tee

PHOTO BY: LARRY AYLWARD

Business briefs

Briefs continued from page 10

Thompson, Steinke Win Musser Awards

Dr. Sarah R. (Devereux) Thompson, a recent graduate from North Carolina State University in entomology, and Dr. Kurt Steinke, a recent graduate from the University of Wisconsin in horticulture and soil science, earned the Musser Foundation Award of Excellence for significant and innovative contributions to turfgrass science research. They each received $20,000.

Thompson is a senior research scientist at BASF Corp. in Research Triangle Park, N.C. Steinke is an assistant professor of turfgrass ecology at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas.

Andersons Unveils Web Site

The Andersons' Turf & Specialty Group unveiled a Web site that explores the benefits of granular fertilizer and pesticide technology. The site explores subjects such as costs, safety, environmental, efficacy and the many types of granules available on the market.

"Our industry may experience a transformation in product innovations in the next several years due to new technology development of granules as well as environmental and regulatory pressures," says Chuck Anderson, technical development manager of The Andersons.

The Web site is located at www.GranuleTechnology.com. ■

Continued from page 10

gauge of success for the company, and it will trickle down eventually. The proof came in the Nov. 1 announcement that Beckert will move over to KSL as its senior advisor (they might as well call him the transaction hunter) and Eric Affeldt, a founding member and principal of KSL Capital Partners, will replace Beckert at ClubCorp.

"John Beckert has a diverse background and a valuable skill set which will help us accelerate our growth in the travel and leisure industry," KSL Managing Director Michael S. Shannon said in a prepared statement. "As ClubCorp's new CEO, Eric Affeldt will employ KSL's successful hands-on methods of managing and expanding enterprises in order to increase both member and shareholder value."

Yikes. Still think your budget is safe? In case you missed it, "hands-on methods of increasing shareholder value" means you'll be having a budget meeting with someone you've never met before some time very soon.

These lawsuit-dodging, analyst-impressing, employee-confounding press releases are tough to decipher, so I thought I'd look at a couple recent company announcements to polish up on what's really being said in corporate communications.

"The pace of change over the next five years is going to dwarf the pace of change over the last 50 years, and we're going to have to get out in front of it."

— Jeff Zucker, chief executive of NBC Universal's television group, on news of a major restructuring that will eliminate 700 jobs (10/20/2006).

Note to self: be very wary of the phrases "get out in front of change" as well as, "We're experiencing a sea of change in the industry."

Let's try another:

"We are working aggressively on a detailed analysis of the company, top to bottom."

— Chrysler Group President and Chief Executive Tom LaSorda said this during an earnings conference call in October after revealing Chrysler lost $1.5 billion in the third quarter of 2006.

Between the lines: Please don't dump your shares yet … our share price will bound once we disclose how many plants we're closing and how many people we'll be sending to the unemployment line.

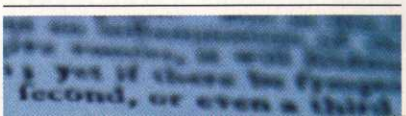
Also be alert to "Dynamic markets require good companies to adapt," or "We're going to concentrate on our core competencies."

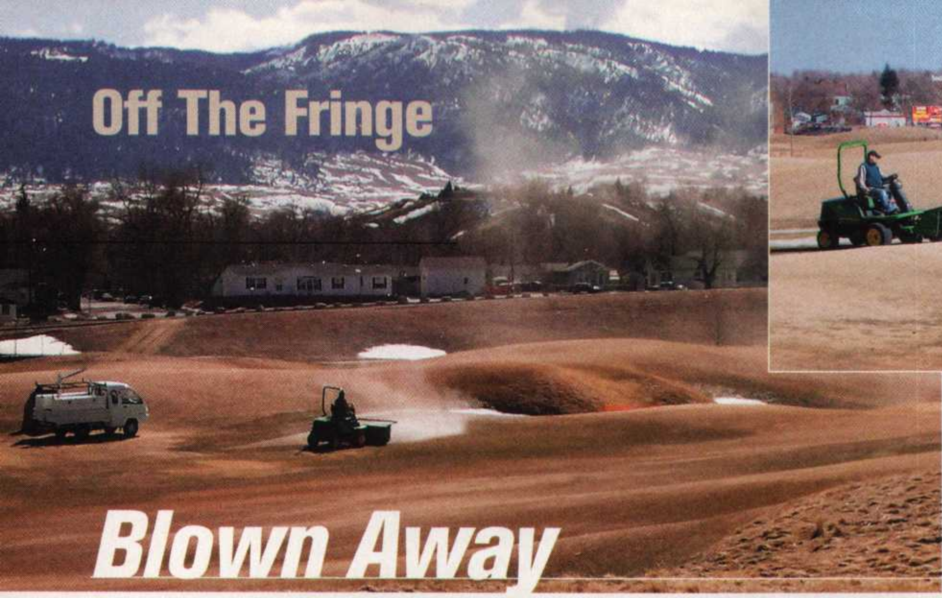
Does that mean companies actively pursue noncore competencies? You'll know they do when you read something about "developing markets that required a heavy front-end commitment that didn't materialize on the back end." That means they gambled and lost.

Reading the tea leaves might not be as easy as it used to be, but exercises like this one might enable you to see what's coming before it renders you "unable to adapt to current market conditions due to ubiquitous external factors that forced a more streamlined property so the core customer could better leverage all the synergies provided in this unique facility."

That one probably means you're fired because you're too expensive, and that's a message that seldom gets lost in translation. ■

Editor's note: This column originally appeared in the Nov. 2 edition of **Golfdom Insider***, our biweekly e-newsletter. To sign up or view newsletter archives, visit www.golfdom.com.*





Sweeping sand back into the bunkers is a time-consuming task. Snow fences help keep sand in the bunkers.

Blown Away

MOUNTAIN WINDS BLAST SAND AROUND THREE CROWNS

By Curt Harler

More than weeds or diseases, it's the blowing sand that causes headaches for Bob Brownlow, superintendent of Three Crowns Golf Course in Casper, Wyo. Winters mean Brownlow gets sand blasted along with the snow. Summertime means he gets sand blasted without snow.

The winds off the Rocky Mountains are so strong and consistent that they blow the expensive, imported sand right out of Three Crowns's bunkers. Casper is a very windy place, and wind plays a large role in both the golf and Brownlow's maintenance practices.

There are 86 bunkers at Three Crowns, each stocked with eye-catching white sand imported from Idaho. It's painful — in more ways than one — to stand downwind of a bunker and watch the sand get blown up and out across the green it was meant to protect.

Brownlow has a couple of simple but effective remedies he uses to keep the sand in place, including placing snow fence around affected areas to encourage snow to accumulate and cover the bunkers.

"Our main strategy was to use covers as we do on the greens," he says.

While tarps are the ready answer to the situation, encouraging and keeping snow in the bunkers works just as well as a mechanism for holding the sand in place, Brownlow says.

One handy, inexpensive tactic is to put snow fence in the bunkers. The snow fence is positioned just like snow fence would be along a highway — to encourage the snow to pile up next to the fence and in the bunker.

The course uses a flexible, plastic snow fence that is inexpensive, easy to install and easy to remove. The orange color might not be the most aesthetic feature to hit a golf course, but it does the job.

Three Crowns began its first full year of operation this past season. Brownlow, who was an assistant under Chris Condon during the building of Three Crowns, is blown away by the wind problems.

"We just didn't know what a problem the wind would be," he says. Brownlow has worked at other courses in the Mountain region. He took over as superintendent at Three Crowns last year when the course opened in May.

The constant wind isn't good for the grass, either. Because of the harsh, desiccating effect of the wind, greens must be irrigated through the winter.

The wind is a problem whether the grass is mature or still at seedling stage. "They tried to seed six holes in October (2004) to get a jump on things," Brownlow recalls. "The wind just blew it all away."

His solution on greens is to keep things moist and growing all year. That might sound counter-intuitive in an area where 18-inch snowfalls are common. But the instant the snow melts, Brownlow knows the turf on his greens will be in trouble.

Trees, too, must be protected from the wind. Young Ponderosa pines that

Superintendent Bob Brownlow uses snow fences and covers to help keep sand in place.

border the fairways are sheltered by wooden forms that block the wind as it howls in along the North Platte River, which runs just above Three Crowns.

All trees are on drip irrigation to assure the water stays where it should.

Brownlow continues to research ways to combat the wind's impact on Three Crowns bunkers and grasses.

"It's just one of those problems that nature throws at you," he says. "You have to learn to put up with it." ■

PHOTOS BY: CURT HARLER