

Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

Business briefs

RISE unveils program for specialty pesticides and fertilizers

RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment) recently unveiled a new grassroots program for managing local pesticide and fertilizer issues.

"Our goal is to strengthen and build alliances in towns and cities across the country and to increase public awareness of the benefits of our industry's products," RISE President Allen James said. "Pesticides go beyond beautifying our surroundings — they play a vital role in protecting people, animals and the environment. Our industry has a great story to tell and we've done a good job of communicating at the federal and state levels. This new grassroots program will help us to tell our story in hundreds of communities across the nation, ensuring an informed public and a balanced public policy debate about the use of specialty products."

RISE has committed to a significant expansion of its grassroots action and is hiring a grassroots manager. Also, RISE is encouraging industry associations, state and local chapters, individual members and distributors to get involved.

PTI spins off FarmLinks

The research program started by Pursell Technologies Inc. will now operate as its own company under the name FarmLinks LLC.

The spin-off business in Sylacauga, Ala., is comprised of four divisions:

- Pursell Farms, a 3,500-acre farm with lakes, streams, forests, rolling hills, mountains, wetlands and wildlife;

- FarmLinks Golf Club, a championship 18-hole golf course created by PTI in 2003;

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So You Want to Host a Major Tournament?

AS A VOLUNTEER, HERE'S WHAT I'VE FOUND YOU CAN

COME TO EXPECT **By Anthony Pioppi, Contributing Editor**

In the last six years, I've had the good fortune to be a volunteer staff member for four high-profile golf tournaments. If all goes as planned this year, I'll chalk up my fifth this summer as part of Bob Reynolds' crew at Newport Country Club for the U.S. Women's Open in June.

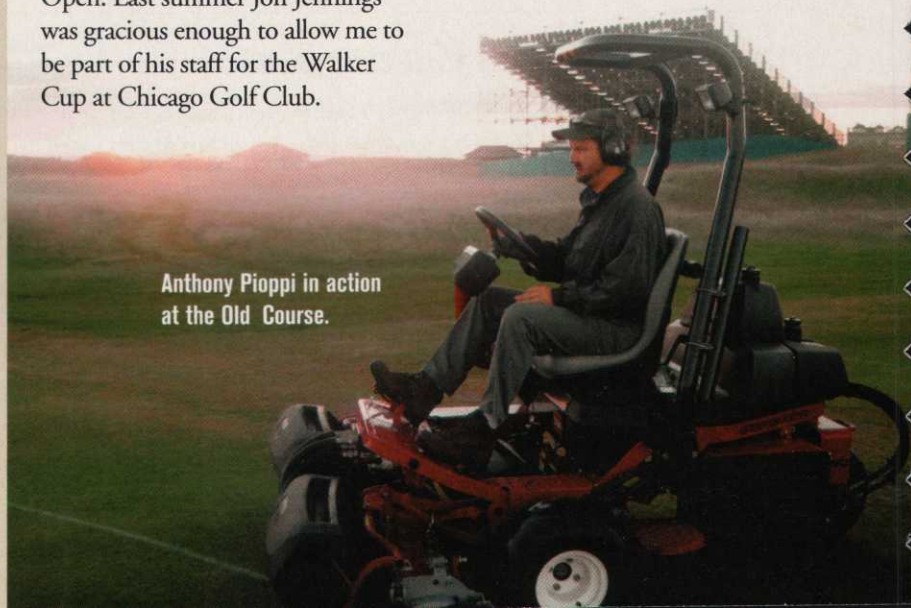
My first stint was with Eddie Adams at the 2000 Open Championship at the Old Course. I was back at the Old with Euan Grant, who was in charge for the 2005 Open. In between I worked a bit for Craig Currier at Bethpage Black for the 2002 U.S. Open. Last summer Jon Jennings was gracious enough to allow me to be part of his staff for the Walker Cup at Chicago Golf Club.

There are common threads that run through the successes each of these talented professionals was able to attain with their respective tournaments. Unlike superintendents who host tour events every year, these men were faced with new situations every day. Even at the Old Course, which hosts a European PGA Tour event, the rules are different for the Open.

The first fact I realized — and it is unequivocal — is that I would never want to be the superintendent on whose course such tournaments are held. The amount of — how can I

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Anthony Pioppi in action at the Old Course.



Jacobsen's Wilkinson Knows How to Handle Customers

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

Dan Wilkinson, who replaced Dan Carlson as president of Jacobsen last October, said his background in customer service was a big reason he was selected to the post.

"My whole career has been spent building success around the customer," Wilkinson said.

It's no secret Jacobsen has had some customer service issues, specifically problems refilling part orders with its dealers. Wilkinson says Jacobsen has a powerful brand name, but it needs to refocus on customer service.

"At the end of the day, it was really my customer focus that brought me to the chair," Wilkinson said.

Jacobsen's woes began when the company started moving different

operations from place to place around the country, Wilkinson said.

"We went from having a Cushman facility in Lincoln, Neb., to having a manufacturing facility in Racine, Wis.,"

"At the end of the day, it was really my customer focus that brought me to the chair."

he said. "We had operations in Charlotte, N.C., and operations in the United Kingdom. At the end of the day, we ended up with a lot of duplicate fa-

cilities. And it crashed altogether but not in a very planned fashion. That was the start of the downward spiral."

Wilkinson, who joined Textron in 1997 as director of national sales accounts at Greenlee, said Jacobsen also must be a better partner to its dealers. "Our dealers are in business to make money, too," he said. "We need to focus on the whole supply chain."

Wilkinson spent 17 years at General Electric working under Jack Welch prior to joining Textron. He said GE taught him how change — specifically executing change — is vital to a business growth.

"Something that was really ingrained in me in my GE days was the infusion of transformation — the willingness and openness to change," Wilkinson said.

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*Typical customer reaction after an I-Trim demonstration.

Business briefs

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■ an agronomics component, which utilizes the distinctive property as a “working laboratory” and research facility where golf products are tested, demonstrated and evaluated under real-world conditions;

■ and The Experience at FarmLinks, a relationship-marketing program that brings more than 1,000 turf and horticulture professionals to Pursell Farms and the FarmLinks Golf Club each year for several days of education, relaxation and recreation.

Environmental Turf, SFR agree

Environmental Turf and SFR Holding Co. reached an agreement regarding the patent, marketing and licensing rights to the salt-tolerant SeaDwarf Seashore Paspalum.

SFR will hold the trademark and exclusive patent on SeaDwarf, with Environmental Turf having all rights to the trademark and patent as the Master Licensor. SFR retains the rights to sublicense, propagate, distribute, market and sell SeaDwarf in Mexico.

Environmental Turf will hold the exclusive patent rights and marketing rights as Master Licensor to sublicense sod growers to propagate, distribute, market and sell SeaDwarf, both domestically and internationally. Essentially, Environmental Turf is the central source and marketing company for SeaDwarf in the United States and worldwide, with SFR acting as the licensing agent for growers in Mexico, in cooperation with Environmental Turf.

July named Smart Irrigation Month

The Irrigation Association has named July Smart Irrigation Month to raise awareness of the importance of using irrigation efficiently.

“Our mission is to promote efficient and effective irrigation worldwide,” said IA Executive Director Tom Kimmell. “Smart Irrigation Month is a way for the industry to highlight irrigation equipment and practices that make the most of our most precious resource. While the irrigation industry is bringing increasingly efficient technology to the marketplace, irrigation consumers have an important role in choosing efficient technology and using it effectively,” Kimmell said.

NGCOA Reacts to Eminent Domain Issue Affecting New York Club

With the Village of North Hills, N.Y., threatening to seize Deepdale Golf Club under eminent domain law and turn it into public links, Mike Hughes, the CEO of the National Golf Course Owners Association, issued the following statement:



Mike
Hughes

IT'S NOT OFTEN the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution enters the world of golf, but it did so recently in the Village of North Hills, N.Y. That's where city officials are moving to claim eminent domain over a private golf club. While disturbing in this instance, the possibility that similar actions could spread to courses in other parts of the U.S. is what should have golf club members and non-golfing taxpayers alike very concerned.

The Village of North Hills is home to the Deepdale Golf Club, a highly regarded private club approximately 20 miles from Manhattan. The mayor of North Hills claims converting Deepdale to a municipal facility in the name of “economic development” would provide an amenity to village residents. It is also likely the conversion would boost property values, according to Mayor Marvin Natiss, although he didn't say anything about property taxes.

We believe the mayor is loosely interpreting the “Takings” clause of the Fifth Amendment, which allows taking private property for “public use” as long as just compensation is made to the private party. However, our quarrel is not with the Constitution or even the concept of eminent domain — it's with this interpretation of economic development.

*We saw the eminent domain issue coming even before the U.S. Supreme Court's controversial *Kelo v. City of New London, Conn.*, ruling in June 2005 that confirmed the use of eminent domain in the name of “economic development.” A pre-*Kelo* example occurred in Coatesville, Penn., where an attempt failed to condemn a family farm in order to construct a recreational complex that would have included an 18-hole golf course.*

Leadership at the National Golf Course Owners Association believes this is a slippery slope. If government starts to condemn private property in order to build upscale municipal courses, or scout for “blighted” privately owned golf courses ripe for multi-million dollar renovations subsidized by taxpayers, where might it lead? That's why this is not only an issue for golfers. Undoubtedly, that's also why lawmakers in Washington and in more than 30 states have introduced legislation to curtail or require greater scrutiny of eminent domain in the name of economic development.

We believe local authorities need to ask whether their constituents are really clamoring for more high-end, public golf courses. There are currently some 70 public-access golf courses within a 25-mile drive of North Hills. Isn't the hue and cry much louder for investment in better schools, healthcare and roads?

The question that must be asked now in North Hills . . . is whether the need for further economic development justifies seizing some of the least-blighted property in the area. Is it more compelling than the Deepdale members' right to their private club? Further, might the property values enjoyed by North Hills, already among the highest in the nation, be due in part to the gem of a private golf club that already calls North Hills home?

Off The Fringe

The Sounds of Augusta

TO SEE THE COURSE IS ONE THING. TO HEAR IT

IS ANOTHER **By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief**

I was fortunate enough to attend the Masters Tournament last month, thanks to Club Car Inc. The Augusta-based manufacturer of golf cars and utility vehicles held a press outing, which included a trip to Augusta National Golf Course on Wednesday to watch a practice round and the popular Par-3 Contest.

Augusta National, despite the politics surrounding its ongoing expansion to keep the 1932 design in the “present,” is still a place to behold, even at 7,445 yards long.

For the golf fan, Augusta is an amusement park for the senses. I thought of that while I was there and observed life around me.

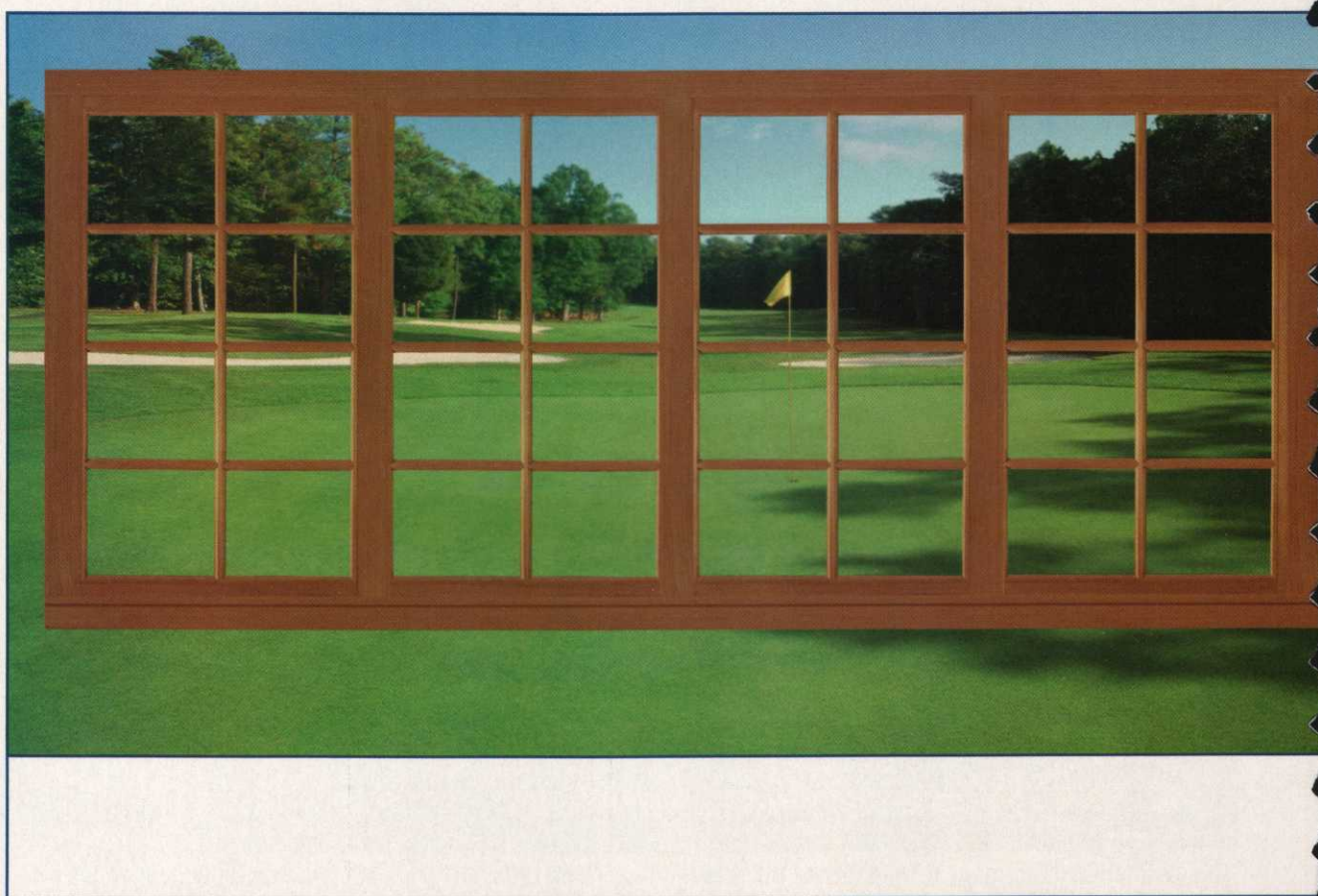


To see Augusta in its early spring splendor is one thing. But to *hear* it, as I sought to do, is another. I listened to the experience that is a day at Augusta, and here are five sounds I'll never forget:

1 The “thwack” created by the world’s greatest golfers when they hit off the tees. These guys bring their “A” games to this tournament, arguably the most acclaimed of all the Majors, and it sounds like it. The “thwack” sound they make is so precise and so perfect. I wish I had close to a “thwack” like that. Yeah, these guys are good, all right.

2 The sound of the rumple created when the green cellophane paper is removed from the famous Masters egg-salad sandwich. It’s a distinctive sound that speaks words for which we long. It says the egg-salad sandwich, a tasty staple of the Augusta foodservice operation, is ready to be consumed.

3 The sound of money rustling in the Augusta National gift shop. There’s gold in them green hats and polo shirts — not to mention a million other items for sale from playing cards to clocks to coasters. When it’s busy (when is it not?), this mother of all gift shops resembles the New York Stock Exchange’s trade floor. It’s where dollar bills — make that 100-dollar bills — go to die.



4 **The sound of happy chatter.** Find me a person in a foul mood walking the Augusta grounds during Masters week, and I'll find you a patch of *Poa annua* on one of the course's pristine bentgrass greens. It can't be done! Augusta National, perhaps, is the greatest place on the planet to be from April 3 through April 9 every year.

5 **The sound of the roaring crowd.** The Masters fans know how to roar, and they do it with style. For instance, when Jack Nicklaus, who played his final Masters last year, was in-



troduced on the first tee during the Par-3 Contest, a loud but polite and appreciative roar — one that exclaimed, "Thanks for the memories, Jack" — resounded throughout the venue, landing pleasantly on the tens of thousands of ears in attendance. It was a sweet sound, indeed.

Quotable

"The golf course superintendent is in a stronger place."

— *Certified Superintendent Tim O'Neill, 2005 president of the GCSAA, on the state of his profession.*

"For a good golf course, you need drainage and common sense. If you are short on the latter, get more of the former."

— *Michigan State Turf Professor Paul Rieke, quoting what he was told several years ago by a pioneer turf researcher.*

"To quote an old superintendent, 'I should have been a mason. Bricks don't wilt.' "

— *Mike Beall, superintendent of the University of Georgia Golf Course in Athens, Ga., on his chosen profession.*

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put this delicately — beetle droppings that comes with hosting such an event is amazing. The tournaments, amateur or professional, garner an inordinate amount of attention from the media and golf fans around the world. Often, decisions are made by governing bodies in which the superintendent has no input and is left only to implement and defend.

As an example, in 2000 on the Wednesday morning of tournament week, the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, which oversees the Open, decided to remove the crushed stone and cement pieces that covered the sidewalk behind the Road Hole green on No. 17. As far back as anyone could remember the surface had always been that

way, but the R&A came to the conclusion that if a ball ended up on the sidewalk players would be able to sweep away the stone and cement chips around the ball, classified as loose impediments, giving themselves a teed-up lie. Even though Adams realized his crew could be better utilized elsewhere with the first tee time less than 24 hours away, he had the entire staff of 45-plus on site within minutes and in under an hour the sidewalk was clean.

As Adams said at the time, there was no reason to get worked up about such decisions. There was nothing he could do to change it, so why worry about it.

The media will scrutinize every alteration and perceived flaw on the course, especially if players complain. At the three professional tournaments in which I took part, the media nearly obsessed over green speeds. Currier refused to discuss it at Bethpage. So when players started guessing the greens were rolling close to 15 feet, that became gospel with

some reporters even though Currier never commented on the matter. But Currier and others for whom I volunteered understood they had to deal with the media, which meant making themselves available to the press and answering the same questions repeatedly.

A pattern I found at all the tournaments was the superintendents made their full-time employees the crew chiefs. Maybe that seems obvious, but remember that high-profile tourna-

ments bring high-profile volunteers. The number of superintendents of famous courses who donate their time at such tournaments is astounding. Although it may seem odd to have a guy who normally mows collars higher in the pecking order than one of the most respected superintendents in the coun-

try, it makes sense. The full-timer understands exactly how his boss wants a certain job performed.

The people teaching each task must be clear and concise in their instructions and firm in their assessments of the work being done. The host superintendent must let his full-time crew members know they are the bosses, and if they don't like how a job is being performed, they must correct the offender, no matter how well known he or she is.

At the same time, hosts need to remember that their full-timers and the volunteers are talented. There must be a trust factor. The last chore a superintendent wants to be doing is driving around checking every bunker, collar, approach and first cut to make sure the work is done correctly.

The lead-up to the tournament can sometimes be years. It's good that a host course superintendent has fun with it and makes sure the crew does, too. It will be over before they realize it.

The full-timer understands exactly how his boss wants a certain job performed.

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