

Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

Business briefs

KSL Buys ClubCorp for \$1.8 Billion

The private equity firm KSL Capital Partners bought ClubCorp's portfolio of more than 160 golf facilities, and ClubCorp will divest the Pinehurst Resort to the family of management company founder Robert Dedman. The two transactions, which are subject to closing conditions, total about \$1.8 billion. The KSL acquisition is expected to close later this year pending the successful sale of Pinehurst. ClubCorp will retain its management contracts under KSL.

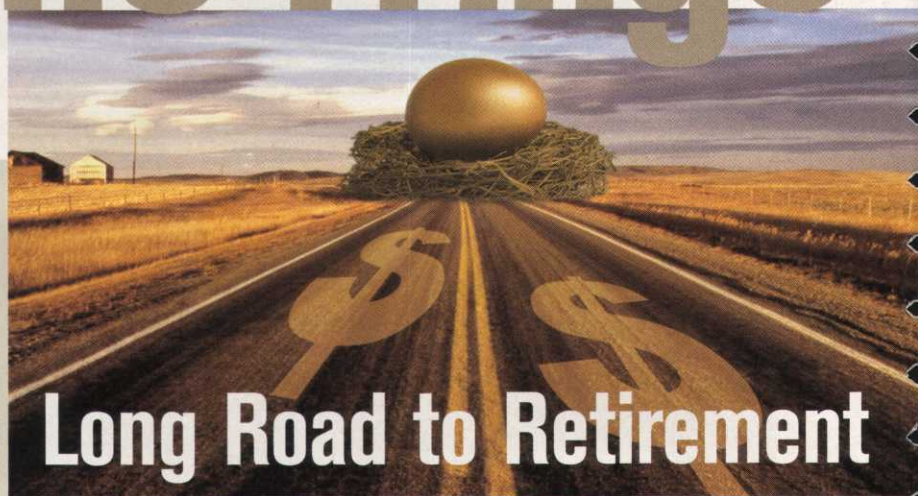
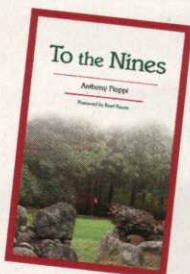
"We have new shareholders. ClubCorp is going to go on running as is, but KSL holds all the shares," says ClubCorp Spokesperson Patty Jerde. "ClubCorp will be a portfolio company of KSL Capital Partners."

KSL Capital Partners boasts an excess of \$1 billion in committed capital for investment in travel and leisure business.

Book Highlights Nine-Hole Courses

Ask any golfer and you'll find that many have a love of the game rooted in playing nine-hole layouts. Yet the modern golfer has been conditioned to believe that in order for a course to achieve greatness, it must host a major tournament, be longer than 7,600 yards from the tips, and play to a par of 72. But greatness still comes in small packages, nine holes at a time, as evidenced in Anthony Pioppi's new book, "To the Nines." Almost every great architect of the Golden Age has a brilliant nine-holer to his credit.

Pioppi's book is available at Amazon.com and www.greatgolfbooks.com.



Long Road to Retirement

THE LUXURIES WE ENJOY NOW MIGHT BE ON LOAN FROM OUR
LATTER YEARS **By David Frabotta, Senior Editor**

We all make sacrifices so we can retire someday. But if your portfolio's quarterly statements looks like mine, then the jagged undulations that resemble the lifecycle of Enron's stock price might have you a little worried despite your best efforts. Am I supposed to know what a Multi-cap Value Equity 2 Index is?

Worse yet, Americans don't save money anymore. In fact, we spend about 100.5 percent of our income, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis. The savings rate officially hit zero in August 2005, making Americans the worst savers of any industrialized nation.

That dubious distinction means our retirement accounts will see even more stress in the near future to fill the void once met by old-fashioned rainy-day funds. It's like tugging on the loose end of great-grandma's afghan: If you yank too hard, it all unravels, and it

already has holes and never really covered your feet, anyway.

What's killing our savings and deferring our retirement? Debt: 72-month loans for luxury cars; second mortgages for additions and swimming pools; and credit cards filled with electronic gadgets, power equipment and expensive vacations are eating up more money than we make.

ANALYSIS

Credit-card-carrying consumers owe an average of \$10,000, and Americans owe a whopping \$2.35 trillion in nonmortgage loans, according to the latest report by the Federal Reserve. That's a lot of plasma TVs.

A new study is trying to determine if these shopping sprees might be influenced by where we live.

The A.G. Edwards 2006 Nest Egg Index measures the wealth of particular cities, states and regions using factors such as personal savings, debt levels and home ownership. Could wealth be endemic?

Continued on page 14

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Think Water

RAIN BIRD TOUTS INTELLIGENT IRRIGATION AT ARIZONA EVENT

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

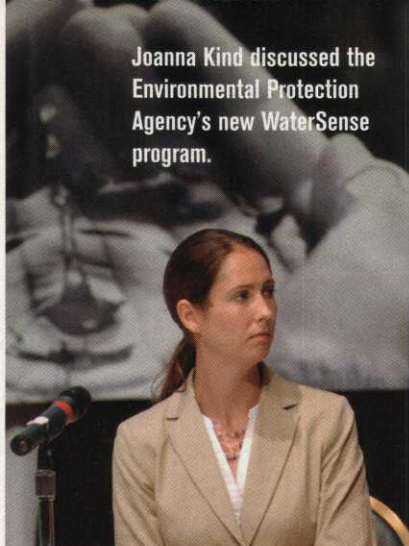
Rain Bird and an assortment of “students” went back to school recently at the University of Arizona (UA). Glendora, Calif.-based Rain Bird held its third Intelligent Use of Water Summit Aug. 31 on the UA campus in Tucson. The two-hour event, which featured several speakers including golf course architect John Fought, attracted more than 100 attendees. Rain Bird’s fourth summit is set for Dec. 31 in Pasadena, Calif.

Why has Rain Bird decided to get in the education business? The answer is simple, said Barbara Booth, director of Rain Bird’s Golf Division. “While products are near and dear to our hearts, products alone will not enable people to make intelligent choices when it comes to water uses and irrigation systems.”

It’s easy to assume that Rain Bird wants everyone — from golf course superintendents to landscapers to homeowners — to water away. After all, irrigation is the company’s business. But Rain Bird realizes the world is facing a severe freshwater crisis. So it’s staging symposiums focused on the relationship between water conservation and landscape water use, water conservation policies and legislation, and potential programs and initiatives to bring greater awareness to the need for water conservation.

Arizona golf course superintendent Shawn Emerson, who attended the event, said he welcomes the educational events. “What is telling in this is how good golf course superintendents and the industry are in the conservation of water,” said Emerson, director of agronomy for the Golf Club at Desert Mountain.

At the outset of the program, Dave



Joanna Kind discussed the Environmental Protection Agency’s new WaterSense program.

Johnson, Rain Bird’s corporate marketing director, said the need to conserve water has never been greater.

“With global water experts predicting the conflicts of the future will be fought over water, it’s essential that world leaders, environmental experts and the public be aware of the need to conserve water,” Johnson said.

Fought, a member of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, said environmental awareness is at the top of his agenda as an architect, and that includes proper water use. He said he’s designing a new golf course in St. George, Utah, that will be seeded with a more drought-tolerant fescue/bentgrass mix that will require half the water used by a course seeded with Kentucky bluegrass and bentgrass. Fought said the U.S. golf industry needs more courses like it.

“It’s really critical that we get a handle on this,” Fought said of water use. “It’s probably the most important issue we need to be involved with today.”

At the program’s conclusion, moderator Robert Glennon, professor at the University of Arizona’s Rogers College of Law, advocated raising water rates to prompt the public to conserve. Glennon, the author of “Water Follies: Groundwater Pumping And The Fate Of America’s Fresh Waters,” noted that 36 U.S. states will suffer water shortages soon.

“It’s evident that conservation programs fraught with complexity, thereby requiring elaborate monitoring programs, may prove to achieve neither cost-effectiveness nor meaningful water savings,” he said. “Appropriate water

Quotable

“You have slow play because golfers play slow. They don’t abide by any of the sensible practices that have been recommended for years on how to encourage fast play.”

— Dave Catalano, director of golf at Bethpage State Park in Farmingdale, N.Y.

“I don’t know that McDonald’s and Burger King are having less turnover problems. But it’s a lot easier for them to train a new person to flip burgers than it is to train someone to take good care of a golf course.”

— Lyne Tumlinson, director of career services for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

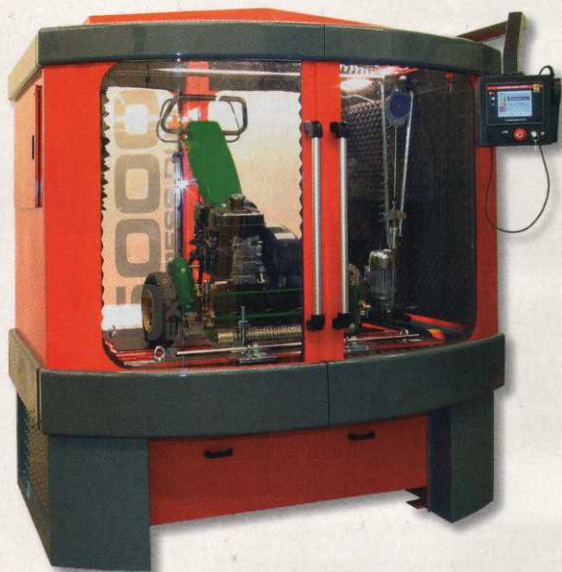
“We don’t think it’s the sexiest topic in the world, but we think it’s pretty darn important.”

— Chad Ritterbusch, executive director of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, on growing the game.

rates offer an opportunity to augment various conservation programs as a way of encouraging water conservation.”

Emerson disagreed with Glennon’s proposition and said raising water prices is not the answer for conservation. “It sounds and feels good, but is it reality?” Emerson asked. “We need more science behind everything we talk about.” ■

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AMERICA'S FAVORITE GRINDER

Off The Fringe



Continued from page 10

"When you look at the market rankings, it becomes clear that there are lots of cities in the Midwest where people know how to take care of their nest eggs," A.G. Edwards Financial Planner Sophie Beckman says in a prepared statement. "Although there are definitely pockets of good savers in every region of the country, the Midwestern region shows the greatest consistency throughout."

But don't pack your bags for the Rust Belt or Great Plains just yet. New Jersey, Connecticut, Maryland and Massachusetts all made the top five when broken down by state, and the top-three cities are Los Alamos, N.M., Connecticut's Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk corridor, and San Jose, Calif. (Visit www.agedwards.com for the complete Nest Egg Index).

So what's the message?

"We found that while external factors, such as economic and employment situations may influence an area's ranking, building a healthy nest egg really comes down to solid saving and investing habits, personal priorities and discipline," Beckman says.

That need for more discipline comes at a time when fewer workers can count on guaranteed pensions, and of course, Congress continues to ignore the looming shortfalls in Social Security. That means self-funded retirement accounts will be the norm, but it doesn't mean they'll be sufficient. Half of Generation Xers risk having less money in retirement (at age 65) than they had while working, according to the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College. Its National Retirement Risk Index was developed to raise awareness of the issues that affect retirement for baby boomers and subsequent generations.

The center estimates that one-third of early boomers — born 1946-1954 — probably won't have enough to maintain their current standard of living when they retire; 44 percent of late boomers risk having less retirement income.

The center's solution: Work an extra couple years to give yourself a cushion, or save more money (3 percent more) beginning at an early age. The former is probably more feasible for those of us without access to a fusion-powered DeLorean.

That's food for thought the next time you wander into the home-theater aisle at BestBuy or pass by yet another status car in traffic.

Keeping up with the Joneses might make you more like them, but it probably won't make you wealthy. ■



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Freezing Points



SUPERS SHARE TIPS TO PREVENT, CONTROL WINTER DESICCATION

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

Don't look now, but here comes the cold to a considerable part of the country. So, superintendents, get set for snow, ice, teeth-rattling winds and long, dark nights. Oh, yeah, and the threat of desiccation on the golf course.

Recently, we asked some veteran superintendents for some tips on how to prevent or control winter desiccation before it starts. Here's what they had to say:

"The only thing I have ever done to prevent winter desiccation on my greens is to apply a heavier-than-normal layer of topdressing that I do not drag in but allow to stay on top of the greens for the entire winter. Some superintendents will apply an anti-desiccant spray. I have not done that. As far as tees and fairways are concerned, I've never done anything special to prevent desiccation on these areas. Because in a 'normal' winter, anti-desiccation materials are not needed. In a severe winter, they are not going to help. So why spend the money on them?"

— **John Carlone**, *Certified superintendent of the Meadow Brook Club in Jericho, N.Y.*

"We try to make sure our soil moisture level is high prior to freeze. We up the potassium level in the fall while the plant is still growing."

— **Jim Nicol**, *Certified superintendent of Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minn.*

"I will water heavily, if need be, the first week of November. I will run sprinkler heads next to big trees by the greens. We use an anti-transpirant with

our last application of fungicides. I try to break up the winter winds with a snow fence and also try to catch the best cover of all — snow. We put out brush to catch some snow as well on a couple greens. We do not cover greens. Last year we did not topdress the greens, but we have in the past. I'm leaning toward topdressing and dragging it

in to protect the crown, yet light enough that the sand doesn't hold moisture and therefore damage the crown. I find the bentgrasses are very hardy and don't need covers. It's the *Poa annua* we protect to some degree."

— **James Bade**, *Superintendent of Somerset Country Club in South St. Paul, Minn.* ■

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Off The Fringe

Outer Limits

EXPERIMENTAL FACILITY LOOKS
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ATTEMPTS TO DESTROY ITS TURF

By David Frabotta, Senior Editor

Imagine your green chairman routinely infects your A-1 putting greens with cutworms and asks you to fertilize the crabgrass. And your general manager also wants the dollar spot to flourish on the L-93 while you devise the best way to grow various weeds in the TiffEagle bermudagrass fairways.

It's no joke. That's the life of Gary Ryan, turf superintendent for the Bayer Environmental Science Research and Training Center in Clayton, N.C. He's in charge of keeping 40 different golf-length cultivars healthy at the company's experimental facility while scientists try to kill them during product testing under the most stressful conditions possible.

"It was hard to get used to at first, but it's been interesting to find new ways to control pests," Ryan says. "Agronomically, I'm still the same thing I went to school for, but I'm doing it in different ways."

Those "cultural" methods don't typ-

ically include preventive pesticides or fungicides because they could interfere with experimental trials in progress. So Ryan keeps a close watch on plant stress, and he aerates more often than he did as superintendent of nearby Neuse Golf Club.

"I've been in the business for 15 years, and I think I've reseeded more in the past three than I did in the previous 12 combined," he says. "But I've learned more in the past three than I could have in other environments, too."

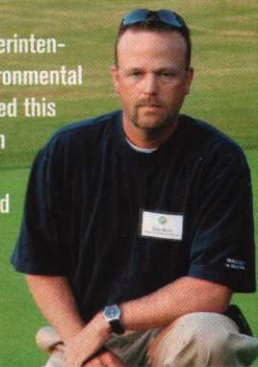
Ryan's domain includes 40 acres of golf-height grasses, which include 40 varieties of warm- and cool-season turf on four golf holes and plots scattered around the facility's 281 acres, which also includes eight acres of vegetative/or-namental management studies. And there's always something new. The facility just planted two acres of seashore paspalum to see how it fares in North Carolina's transitional climate (zone 7).

As many as a dozen experimental trials are being conducted at any one time, requiring Ryan to consult a spreadsheet before he can treat a pest or stamp out a fungus.

"They kill it, and I bring it back. That's it in a nutshell, but I'm still doing what I love."

That cycle might sound pretty familiar to other superintendents, too, says

Gary Ryan, turf superintendent for Bayer Environmental Science, rehabilitated this A-1 bentgrass green that was about 60-percent damaged due to an experimental trial.



certified golf course superintendent (CGCS) Bruce Williams, director of golf and grounds management for Los Angeles Country Club.

"We stress turf to create better conditions for the golfer, so I'm not so sure what he is doing isn't like what every superintendent is doing around the country," he says.

Williams was a speaker at Green Start Academy, a Bayer/John Deere confab that brought 50 assistant superintendents to the Research and Training Facility for continuing education and networking.

Other speakers included Stanley Zontek, director of the USGA Green Section in the Mid-Atlantic region; Grady Miller, Ph.D., professor at North Carolina State University; Bob Farren, CGCS, grounds and golf course manager at Pinehurst Resort, as well as product lecturers from Bayer and John Deere/Turf One Source.

"There has been some good basic information here," says Green Start board member Ken Mangum, CGCS, director of golf courses and grounds at Atlanta Athletic Club. "We all depend on research like this because we are busy doing our jobs every day, and the better-educated our assistant superintendents are, the better off the industry will be. ... They are going to be controlling budgets of their own not too long from now."

In the meantime, Ryan will continue his uphill battle to make the grounds suitable for guest tours and training, and he says he'll keep a special eye on the paspalum experiment. If it works well, he says he might even use it for his lawn. ■



Richard Rees, Ph.D., demonstrates the NTech GreenSeeker, which translates light reflection into a vegetative index to determine turf health.

BAYER MEASURES PLANT HEALTH

A turf doctor might be able to gauge the exact health of your greens on-site thanks to a development by Bayer Environmental Science. The company recently dedicated a lab at its Research and Training Center that will work to quantify plant health using equipment that measures photosynthesis and root biomass, among other criteria.

Measuring phosphorescence, for example, allows turf managers to measure plant health prior to adverse visual symptoms, says Richard Rees, manager of projects and technical information for Bayer Environmental Science. He is spearheading the development of diagnostic tools that can be mounted to existing equipment for practical turf evaluations.

The company's plant health initiative was launched in cooperation with North Carolina State University. ■