

# Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

## Business briefs

### Jacobsen sells lines

Textron Inc. announced that the Jacobsen business unit has sold its commercial grounds care product lines to Commercial Grounds Care, an affiliate of Schiller-Pfeiffer Inc. in Southampton, Pa. The sale includes the Jacobsen Johnson Creek, Wisconsin manufacturing facility, a leased service parts facility in Dalton, Ohio, and products branded BOB-CAT, Bunton, Ryan, Steiner and Brouwer.

The sale of the commercial grounds care product lines allows Jacobsen to heighten the focus on its golf and professional turf-related markets with equipment manufactured in Charlotte, N.C., and Ipswich, England.

"Jacobsen has made a strategic decision to focus on its professional turf business which includes golf course, sports turf and municipal grounds equipment," said Dan Wilkinson, president of Jacobsen. "Although the commercial grounds care division offers strong brand names and an excellent facility in Johnson Creek, it is not consistent with Jacobsen's long-term growth strategy."

### Target honors stack

Malcolm Stack would have loved it — a golf tournament in his honor. More than 140 golfers turned out for Target Specialty Products' seventh annual Charity Golf Tournament in July at Tustin Ranch Golf Club in Tustin, Calif., to honor the life of Stack, the founder of Bell Laboratories, Inc., who died in April after battling lung cancer.

Stack's wife, Debra, and daughter, Linda Stack Hughes, were among the golfers participating. After the tournament, the Malcolm Stack Perpetual Trophy Award was given to the tournament's low-gross foursome, includ-

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Turf-Seed visitors loaded up on hay wagons to check out the trials.

## Turf's Up

### GRASS FANS FLOCK TO OREGON FOR SEED COMPANY TOURS

By Stephanie Ricca

**T**urns out, it *is* interesting to watch the grass grow. I also picked up a few more key points about grass biology, pinot noir and the ongoing discussion over genetically modified turfseed during this year's seed company tours in Oregon held in June.

Beatles fans go to Liverpool. Grass fans go to Oregon. The fertile Willamette Valley is home to a handful of the most productive seed companies (large and small) that research and breed, grow test plots and cultivate the grass varieties that end up on lawns and golf courses across the country.

Every few years the companies open their doors to their distributors, research partners and members of the media to learn more about the science behind the green carpets. A lot of pure research goes on out here, but like any agricultural crop, it's easy to see that what starts in the field today ends up on the table tomorrow, so to speak.

Seed companies work ahead, and

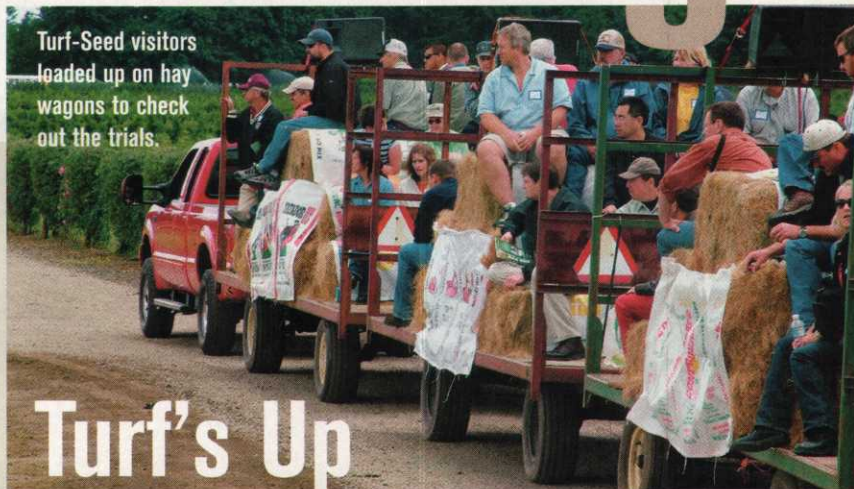
plan and test varieties for the next National Turfgrass Evaluation Program trial. They cultivate proven winners and hope the weather holds out for a good crop.

At Seed Research of Oregon, Dr. Leah Brilman spoke about the digital imaging programs that Drs. Mike Richardson and Doug Karcher are developing and testing at the University of Arkansas. These small digital "boxes" can gauge turf coverage, density and disease via imaging programs. The group is working to fine-tune these programs and translate the data gathered into useful terms, but the possibilities are endless, Brilman said.

Researchers with the company are also on quest to develop a protein-based test to determine annual vs. perennial ryegrasses at the point of germination. This knowledge would make the shipping process much more efficient.

Up the road at Pickseed West, I tried to apply my new turf knowledge to distinguish ryes, blues and tall fescues on their neatly mown plots. I'm getting there.

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### 'On Our Way Back'

OWNERS AND OPERATORS UPBEAT ABOUT  
INDUSTRY'S RECOVERY, NGCOA MEETING REVEALS

Owners and operators of some of the industry's largest golf course portfolios met recently at the National Golf Course Owners Association's Multi-Course Leadership Retreat in Monterey, Calif., and professed that they were decidedly upbeat about the state of the game and the prospects of an ongoing recovery.

"Most multi-course owners are reporting same-store revenues up 4 percent to 7 percent over the prior year," said Jim Hinckley, CEO of Century Golf Partners Management, which is associated with Arnold Palmer Golf Management. "Many companies are still trying to get back to the revenue levels of their peak years of '99 to 2000, but I think most people feel like we're working our way back."

Ron Jackson, president and CEO of Meadowbrook Golf Group, which owns, leases and manages 75 courses, said: "We've been through some tough times, and the positive improvement going forward is going to be slower than the fall. But we seem finally to have the ability to charge a little more for a round of golf, and consumers are willing to buy a little merchandise in the pro shop, eat lunch in the restaurant and have a cock-

tail after the round. So we're seeing some light at the end of the tunnel."

Owners and operators representing 53 ownership and management groups with controlling interests in more than 1,600 golf courses across the United States and around the world attended the event, held June 28-30.

For the first time in several years, NGCOA CEO Mike Hughes said the industry is in a "deal-making mood."

"The last time there was this much anticipation in the air was back in the early to mid '90s, when there was all that Wall Street money trying to find a place to land," Hughes said.

Hinckley said that investors are looking more favorably at golf courses these days. "I think the industry is on the verge of a transition. As investors start to realize it's an industry with stable cash flow, it opens [new] doors to capitalization strategies," he added.

In his keynote address, Peter Ueberroth, owner and co-chairman of the Pebble Beach Co., said that although "the competitive spirit of U.S. businesses and sports is at a low point, we have the ability to come back faster [than ever]. As we do, we're going to be stronger and make a positive difference in the community."

## Quotable

**"When someone mentioned that I looked like I was back in my 'comfort zone,' I asked him whether he meant my 'buffet zone.'"**

— David Duval, on his golf game and his weight. Duval has improved his game and regained some weight, about 25 pounds. (*Golf Digest*)

**"Never let a disease go from Friday to Monday. If you see a disease, take care of it right now."**

— Joe Hubbard, certified superintendent of Broken Sound Golf Course in Boca Raton, on the dangers of procrastination when it comes to turf disease.

**"People think in terms of the instant mature look. We're in an era of instant gratification."**

— Golf course architect Bill Coore on people wanting a great golf course NOW.

**"Summer employees are like *Poa annua*. They're great when they're here but by mid-August they all start to fade away."**

— Dan Bissonette, superintendent of Walloon Lake Country Club in Petoskey, Mich.

**"... I think he probably will break it. I'd just like to be the first guy to shake his hand when he does, but I'm not going to follow him around the last Major to make sure that I'm there."**

— Jack Nicklaus on the inevitability of Tiger Woods breaking his record for Majors won. (*Slam!Sports*)



## Off The Fringe

# Who Needs a Health Club?

### HOLM GETS HIS EXERCISE ON THE GOLF COURSE

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

**I**n the early morning, before any golfers have arrived, many superintendents ride in utility vehicles around their courses to give the turf a visual inspection. Erick Holm, the certified superintendent of Hop Meadow Country Club in Simsbury, Conn., slips on his Sauconys and runs his course.

The 46-year-old Holm likes to get in a workout while he's working. The father of two young children doesn't have a lot of free time to hit the gym. And if Holm doesn't get in a workout... let's just say he needs his daily exercise to perk up like some guys need their two cups of coffee in the morning to do the same thing.

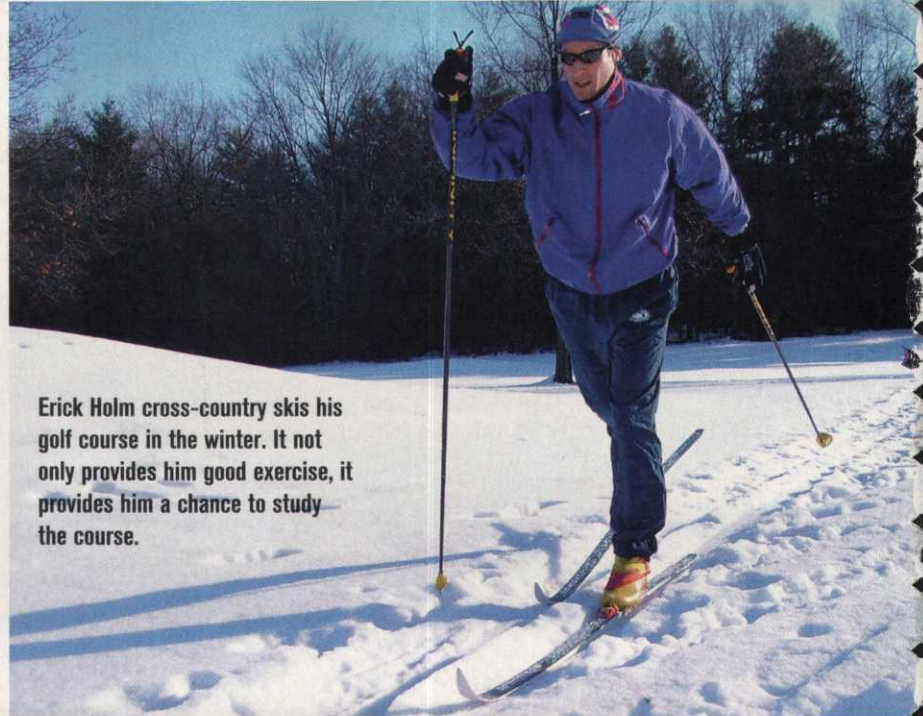
Holm used to have more time to exercise. But when he and his wife began having children about eight years ago, Holm no longer had that luxury. "I became restricted with my workout regimen," he says.

With a time-consuming job and a time-consuming home life, Holm wondered how he was going to keep in shape. "I'll just do more laborious and physical tasks at work that are healthy for me," he told himself.

So he began running the course when play is slow and during the off season. And when there's snow on the course, Holm dons his cross-country skis and glides across it.

Whether running or skiing the course, Holm takes a voice recorder and digital camera with him. If he sees something on the course that requires maintenance, he'll stop and dictate himself a message or snap a photo.

There are several physical tasks that



Erick Holm cross-country skis his golf course in the winter. It not only provides him good exercise, it provides him a chance to study the course.

Holm enjoys performing on the course to help him keep in shape. When the summer winds down and the seasonal staff departs, Holm enjoys getting behind a hand mower to cut greens. A few years ago Holm competed in the World Masters Cross Country Championship in Lake Placid, N.Y. To help him train for the event the previous fall, Holm would mow nine to 12 greens in a three- to four-hour period.

"I'd just take my water bottle with me and go for it," he says. "It was a good aerobic workout."

Holm also likes to change cups on greens. Not only does it afford him the chance to see the greens up close ("I get to see the soil and the roots"), the task is good exercise.

"It's like doing pushups," the 5-foot-10 and 160-pound Holm says, explaining that he lets his upper body do a lot of the work while cutting a new hole. Carrying around a 10-pound soil bucket also helps his cause.

Holm also enjoys the annual spring cleanup for the workout it affords. He likes getting out there to trim trees and drag brush into a wood chipper. As with any strength workout, he'll use the left side of his body and then switch to his right side.

Because he enjoys the work and his

body can endure it, Holm can chop down a tree and have the wood chipped in a time and fashion that would humble Paul Bunyan. His younger crew members are impressed with Holm's stamina, but Holm insists it's not about sending them a message.

"I have no intentions of working somebody into the ground to prove a point," he says.

In the winter, when he sees the course from his cross-country skis, Holm studies tree placement and how shadows fall on the ground as well as areas that might be suffering from desiccation.

"The majority of winter damage is from winter shade," Holm says. "You can tell what branches need to be pruned or whether a specific tree needs to be taken out. They just don't allow the sun to penetrate the area to melt snow and ice."

Last winter Holm removed a few trees in a foot of snow. He sawed the branches off the trees and dragged them through the deep snow to the chipper. Holm didn't mind working in a foot of snow. Heck, the difficult trudging meant he was getting a better workout.

One thing is for certain: Holm doesn't need a health club membership. "For now, the course is my gym," he says.



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ing Greg Fukumitsu of Syngenta, Martin Howard of Trump National Golf Course, and Reed Yenny of Hillcrest Country Club. In the spirit of the evening, the winners donated their winnings to the American Cancer Society. The tournament raised \$61,000 for the society — the most in its history.

### Scotts donates to Wee Foundation

Scotts/Landmark Seed will donate \$5 to the Wee One Foundation for every 25-pound bucket of its new Memorial Creeping Bentgrass that is sold.

The Wee One Foundation — established in memory of certified superintendent Wayne Otto — provides financial assistance to golf course management professionals who incur extensive medical expenses within their families. To qualify, applicants must have suffered a catastrophic medical hardship and be either a golf course superintendent, assistant golf course superintendent or an individual who works for a company or organization that serves the golf course management industry.

"Wayne Otto was a very special person," said Wayne Horman, director of seed sales and marketing for Scotts.

### A "Dismal" opening? Not quite

Another celebrated golf course designed by a big-name architect has come to the Sandhills of Nebraska. In August, Jack Nicklaus officially christened Dismal River, located in Mullen, Neb., during the course's grand opening. In 1995, Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore opened Sand Hills Golf Club in Mullen. It's regarded as the nation's top modern design.

Who would have thought that Mullen would become a destiny for such celebrated courses? Nicklaus, for one. "The experience of arriving at the Dismal River site was like stepping back in time and seeing what the dunes of Northeast Scotland must have looked like a hundred years ago," Nicklaus said.

Dismal River represents Nicklaus' 250th design.

## A Variety on the Rise

### SUPERINTENDENTS, RESEARCHERS WEIGH MERITS OF PASPALUM

By Curt Harler

**I**n the constant battle to provide better varieties for greens and fairways, seashore paspalum is butting heads with bermudagrass as the variety to plant in the South. At several upper-end courses in Florida and the Carolinas, paspalum appears to be gaining ground. It also is doing well in Hawaii and inland areas like Arizona.

Paspalum has several advantages, including its much-touted requirement for less nitrogen and lower water needs than bermudagrass. While agreeing that paspalum has other advantages, United States Golf Association agronomist Todd Lowe cautioned superintendents at a recent meeting, "It is not a wonder grass."

"It has excellent drought tolerance, needs 50 percent less water than bermudagrass and less need for edging along cart paths," he said. "It is not as affected by cloudy or rainy weather. Its tight canopy sits the ball up high for golfers. It stripes up nicely."

In fact, the "wow factor" was cited by almost all the 50 researchers and superintendents who attended a recent paspalum seminar sponsored by Bayer Environmental Sciences and Environmental Turf in Naples, Fla.

Most superintendents in attendance either oversee courses where paspalum is used or have experimented with the grass. They represent high-budget courses with tight water restrictions, many using reclaimed or brackish water.

With the recognition paspalum has received, researchers are spending more time on breeding, insect and disease problems. Georgia plant breeder Paul Raymer noted the ability of paspalum to tolerate several stresses has driven its reputation. Yet, he said individual varieties show broad variation in their ability to cope with different stresses.



Most attendees at the paspalum seminar said they are "wowed" by the variety.

"There has been a lag in research with seashore paspalum," added Tim Murphy, weed specialist at the University of Georgia. "We need to know what pests — weeds, insects and diseases — are affecting it. One challenge is that many paspalums that are close relatives of seashore paspalum are considered weeds. The good news is we are now seeing seashore paspalum included on (weed and insect control) labels."

Lowe noted that paspalum does well at rates of 3 pounds to 6 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year. But he stressed that potassium and micronutrients should be kept under control. Clemson University professor Bert McCarty added that a lot of calcium is required — 15 pounds per 1,000 square feet per month at the high end — but much less in the summer.

Lowe pointed out that seashore paspalum has awesome root growth, but it can produce awesome pads of thatch. On the plus side, those long roots can go deep in the soil profile for water, he added.

There was general agreement that it was a bad idea to mix-and-match paspalum and bermudagrass. The consensus: Go with one or the other.

*Harler is managing editor of Golfdom's TurfGrass Trends.*



# Off The Fringe

## Who Will Win?

POLITICAL ANALYST CHARLIE COOK  
OFFERS UP HIS VIEW OF ELECTION

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

**Y**ou probably care, whether greatly or mildly, about who wins the upcoming elections in November. That's because whoever wins — and which party ends up controlling the House and the Senate — could impact the industry in which you're employed.



But Charlie Cook said he doesn't care who is victorious in November. The veteran Washington, D.C.-based political analyst says he just wants to see some good old-fashioned excitement unfold.

"I just want to hear shoulder pads crack," Cook told members of the trade press earlier this year during a speech at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington as part of a Media Summit presented by BASF.

Cook said he can't predict who will win control of the House and the Senate in the U.S. Congress.

"I'm supposed to have a real good idea of what's going to happen, but I don't," said Cook, editor and publisher

of "The Cook Political Report" and columnist for the "National Journal." "This is a really confounding election."

Cook examined the election from two perspectives — the macro political approach and the micro political approach. When you look at it from the macro political approach — or from top to bottom — Cook said Republicans appear to be in eminent trouble.

"They're toast," Cook said. "This is going to be a truly horrendous election for them."

But when one looks at the election from the micro political approach, or from the bottom to the top, it appears the Democrats will have a difficult time gaining control of the House and the Senate. "When you look at it from that approach, where you look at each of the 435 House races and each of the 33 Senate races, it doesn't look so bad for the Republicans," Cook said. "They will probably lose some House and Senate seats, but they'll probably hold their majorities."

Several additional factors could and probably will impact each political approach, Cooke noted. When looking at the election from a macro political approach, the job-approval ratings of Congress and President Bush could prick the Republicans. Cook said the Gallup Organization has found that when Congress' job approval is more than 40 percent, the net seat change in the House is about five seats out of 435 seats. "That's nothing," Cook added. But when the job

approval rating is under 40 percent, the average turnover is a 29-seat loss, he said.

Then Cook recited several recent job-approval ratings for Congress from various polls. There was a 35, a 27, a 28 and a 23. "And that's just not the liberal news media speaking," Cook said. "Fox News had Congress at 25."

Mid-term election outcomes are also affected by a current president's approval rating, Cook said. Then he recited recent approval ratings for Bush, including a 32, a 33 and a 39. (Bush's approval ratings have dropped even more lately.)

In a president's second term, a 48 to a 53 rating is "OK," Cook said. A rating in the mid 40s is "Rodney Dangerfield/No Respect" territory, he added. A rating in the high 30s is "toxic," and a rating in the low 30s is "radioactive," Cook said. A below-30 rating is what Cook called "Nixon land."

With the Republican-controlled Congress and Bush receiving bad ratings, there's a good chance the Democrats could re-energize and reorganize to win back the House, Cook said.

Of course, most of Bush's low approval rating stems from the war in Iraq. "It's like a wet blanket hanging over the president and the party," he said.

Still, when examining the situation from the micro political approach, Cook said Democrats will need to run the table to win back the House and the Senate. "It sounds like a big feat for the Democrats to pull off," Cook said.

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Regarding bentgrass, the showpiece at Turf-Seed later in the week was the putting green. More than a few people slipped off a shoe or two to feel the grass.

Besides the explanation of current research on drought tolerance in Kentucky blues, the talk around Turf-Seed was its acquisition by the Scotts Miracle-Gro Co. Sure, mergers and acquisitions happen all the time, but this one has a bit of a back story: Turf-Seed founder Bill Rose has been a critic of Scotts' development of Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass, a genetically modified turf under consideration for deregulation.

Tours that week concluded at Turf Merchants Inc. TMI had a theme for its event — GSI: Grass Seed Investigation. In addition to a tour of the turf plots, participants could visit six different stations intended to separate fact from fiction regarding such topics as Texas bluegrass, DNA fingerprinting of Kentucky bluegrass, and the proper testing for annual and intermediate ryegrass contamination in perennial ryegrasses.

Oh, and about the pinot noirs? Just try one and you'll know what I'm talking about.

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*Ricca is managing editor for Landscape Management magazine.*