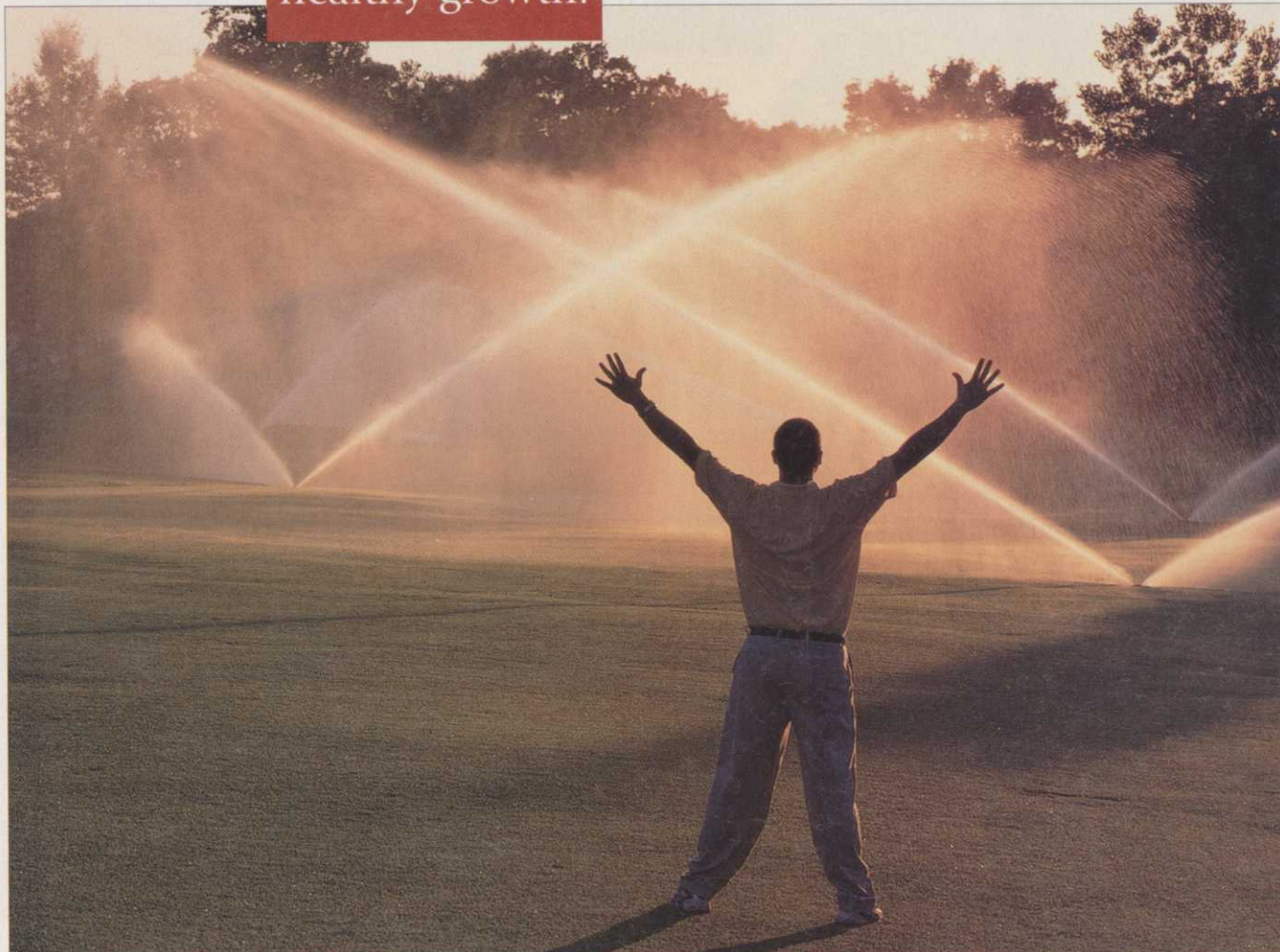


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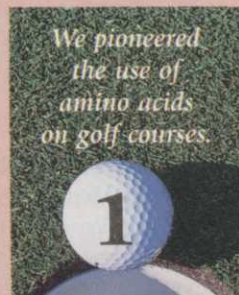
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Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Simplot plans aggressive move in golf market, Barker says

Following on the January promotion of Larry S. Hlobik to CEO, Boise, Idaho-based J.R. Simplot Co. named two more industry veterans to key management positions.

Joel Barker, formerly vice president of finance and administration for the Turf & Horticulture Group, was named the vice president and general manager of the business unit. His responsibilities include Jacklin brand seed products, BEST and APEX professional fertilizers, the Simplot Partners distribution network, and international seed and fertilizer sales. Bill Whitacre, formerly president of the Turf & Horticulture Group, replaces Hlobik as president of Simplot's AgriBusiness Group.

Barker says his immediate intent is to make an aggressive move in the golf/landscape/sports turf market.

"Over the last couple years, in building our turf business, we've had to look inward to structure ourselves properly to gain the focus and alignment we needed," he said. "I feel we've done that now, and we now have something of value to provide customers."

Barker didn't rule out acquisition as an aggressive growth strategy.

"We will continue to grow but not at a huge pace," he says. "It will be very strategic and based on acquisitions that fit our core businesses."

Toro creates financing division

Bloomington, Minn.-based The T Toro Co. has created Toro Financing to help U.S. golf courses, universities municipalities and sports fields to acquire irrigation systems and maintenance equipment. Toro Financing is a partnership with GE Capital Vendor Financial Services.

Briefs continue on page 14

Agronomy Experts Talk Technology

GREEN SPEED IS 'OUT OF CONTROL,' USGA'S MORAGHAN SAYS

By Larry Aylward, Editor

Tim Moraghan, chief agronomist for the United States Golf Association, and Jon Scott, vice president of agronomy for the PGA Tour, didn't hold back their opinions when commenting on the technology of the game during a seminar on the last day of the GCSAA Conference and Show in February.

Scott and Moraghan expressed pointed views on equipment and maintenance issues during the seminar, "Current Issues in Golf Technology: Where Is the Game Headed?" Moraghan, who recently began his 16th year in his current position, says a lot has changed since the days he was a superintendent.

"I don't know if it's good or bad," he adds. "I'll say that superintendents are tremendously skilled, and the technology available to them is exceptional. But I also feel the superintendent can be his own worst enemy by taking that technology to such a degree that the players

who come out day in and out [to his course] expect perfection. Other than God, I don't know that perfection can be achieved."

Moraghan said green speed is "out of control." He said Mark Michaud,

superintendent of Shinnecock Hills GC in Southampton, N.Y., recently informed him that the height of cut on his greens at Shinnecock was lowered to .065 inches.

"Take that for what it's worth," Moraghan said. "Maybe we'll go back to sand greens and not have to worry about height of cut."

Scott touched on the current equipment controversy. Critics, including Moraghan, admit it's no fun to watch a PGA player hit a pitching wedge into the green on a par 4, 425-yard hole. But Scott says

the equipment issue is exaggerated.

"It makes a really good story to talk about the club controversy, USGA testing methods and equipment as a whole," Scott said. "But is it as big of an issue as it's made out to be?"

Continued on page 14



"Maybe we'll go back to sand greens and not have to worry about height of cut."

Tim Moraghan,
USGA Chief Agronomist

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diseases on its own.

Amino acids also facilitate the uptake and translocation of fertilizers, many fungicides, herbicides, and plant growth regulators. Nutrients and chemicals are *better* utilized so often *less* is required.

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Business briefs

Briefs continued from page 12

In other company news, Toro announced that revenues for the first quarter ended Feb. 1 were \$277.9 million, compared to \$280.4 million last year.

Deere introduces One Source

John Deere Golf & Turf has adopted a new strategy to serve superintendents. Deere's One Source program is designed to better serve superintendents' needs for parts, maintenance and financing.

"It's a process we've been thinking about a long time," says Gregg Breningmeyer, director of marketing and sales. "We wanted to create something where a superintendent could make one phone call and have all his needs met"

In other company news, Moline, Ill.-based Deere & Co. reported a net loss of \$38.1 million for the first quarter ended Jan. 31, or \$.16 per share, compared with year-earlier net income of \$56.4 million or \$.24 per share.

Syngenta profits up for 2001

Syngenta AG announced a 2001 net profit of \$213.37 million despite an overall 4 percent decline in sales. In the professional products division, the company said turf and ornamental sales declined 4 percent from 2000 as a result of reduced pest and disease pressure in the United States.

Tyler back in operation

Masterblend International LLC's purchase of Tyler Enterprises has been finalized, and Tyler is back in operation as a premium specialty fertilizer formulator. Under the agreement, Tyler will operate as a division of Cleveland-based Masterblend and will continue to have its headquarters in Elwood, Ill.

Textron closing Cushman plant

Textron Golf, Turf & Specialty Products will close its Cushman plant in Lincoln, Neb., by the end of the year, according to a report. The plant has been open for more than 100 years and about 415 people will lose their jobs. Textron will move vehicle production to Augusta, Ga., and production of turf care and aeration equipment to Charlotte, N.C.

Continued from page 12

Scott said golfers' improved physical condition (he probably didn't mean John Daly, though) has plenty to do with them driving the ball more than 300 yards — and accurately. He notes there are two conditioning vans for players to work out on every PGA Tour stop.

"They'll spend almost as much time in the conditioning vans as they do on the driving ranges and putting greens," Scott said. "It's part of the practice to keep their muscles toned to strike the ball more cleanly with more power, force and control."

Moraghan agrees with Scott on the conditioning issue. He says many golfers are basically more powerful than a locomotive these days. He cites Tiger Woods — "6-foot-2, 195 pounds, not an ounce of fat on his body and a clubhead speed of 140 mph" — as an example. Moraghan relates this story about Woods during the 2000 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach Golf Links.

On the Friday during the tournament, play was suspended not even midway through Woods' round. So on Saturday, Woods had to play 11 holes in the morning and 18 holes in the afternoon. After play had concluded and fans had gone home, Moraghan got in a golf car and took a final spin around the course before nightfall. "I'm going down the fairway at 6:30, and I see this knucklehead jogging down the middle of the 10th fairway," Moraghan says.

Moraghan put the pedal to the medal in his golf car and caught up with the knucklehead. It was Woods.

"I said, 'What are you doing?' He said, 'I gotta get my run in, man.' He's played nearly 30 holes and he's out jogging."

Power and players hitting wedges into greens on par 4s aside, Scott says the game "isn't going to hell in a hand basket just because the scores are getting lower."

"It's still exciting because most of the game is still watched on the putting surface," Scott says. "I guarantee: No matter how far we decide to make the golf course, some John Daly, some Tiger Woods or some kid is going to overpower that golf course — not just tame it, but put it to bed."

Quotable



"I'm one of those guys you don't want around the golf course. I just tear up stuff and apologize for it later."

—Mike Singletary, featured speaker at the recent GCSAA show and former middle linebacker for the Chicago Bears, on his golf game.

"We've been accused of trying to protect some grand old courses. Guilty as charged."

—Dick Rugge, USGA's senior technical director, addressing criticisms of his organization's regulation of golf equipment.

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Off The Fringe

Petersan's Protégés

VETERAN SUPERINTENDENT'S PUPILS

FORM SOCIETY TO HONOR HIM

Not every superintendent gets his own society. But Doug Petersan, superintendent of the Austin (Texas) GC, is *not* every superintendent.

That's why two of Petersan's former protégés, certified superintendents Tom Athy and Chris Ayers, organized the Doug Petersan Society.

The group consists of nearly 30 former Petersan assistant superintendents and interns who have moved on to bigger and better things. For the past three years, they've met at the GCSAA Conference and Show to drink a few beers,



Chris Ayers (left) and Tom Athy (right) organized the Doug Petersan Society to honor their mentor (center).

share Petersan stories (some they can't talk about in public) and talk turf. They met in a small room at a local hotel during this year's show.

Athy, director of grounds at Omaha (Neb.) CC, worked for Petersan in the mid-1970s at Fremont (Neb.) GC. Ayers worked for Petersan in the '80s at Baltimore CC. They both praise Petersan.

"Doug doesn't know the meaning of the word 'ego'," Ayers says. "He's a teacher and mentor to everyone in this room."

"Have you ever worked for someone who was very knowledgeable about what he did, but had a way of conveying that knowledge to you without making you feel like a dummy?" Athy asked. "We're just a bunch of guys who share a common respect and admiration for Doug."

The modest Peterson, who recently turned 60, says he's not sure he deserves the attention, but he appreciates it.

"I'm proud of all the people who worked for me," he said, scanning his eyes around the room. "If I leave a legacy, this is it."

— Larry Aylward, Editor

Awful News That Will Make You Scream

We've got bad news, terrible news and absolutely awful news.

The bad news: There's a new slasher movie coming out.

The terrible news: It's called *The Greenskeeper*.

The absolutely awful news: The film stars embattled Texas Rangers pitcher and gay/minority basher John Rocker.

It's bad enough they made a horror movie with a murderer dressed up as a superintendent. It's worse they picked the obnoxious Rocker to star in the role. (But even in a terrible movie, he's probably a better actor than he is a closer.)

There is good news, though. There's a strong chance (99.999 percent, we guess) that the movie will go straight to video. Translation: It stinks.

The filmmakers say they're looking for national distributors. Sorry, but anybody willing to put up the jack to distribute this film is off his rocker (pun intended).

We love what Ken Rudolph of Fox Sports Net had to say about the film:

"Rocker had such a good time making the movie, he plans to star in another horror film this summer entitled, 'The Texas Rangers Pitching Staff.'"

Can you say, "Blown save?"

Don't Forget to Sign Up for Major Challenge

John Deere and *Golfdom* have joined forces to present the Major Challenge, an online fantasy golf competition for superintendents and other turfheads who want to test their luck against colleagues around the world.

You can register online now by visiting www.majorchallenge.com or by clicking on the Major Challenge link at www.golfdom.com. Contest information, complete rules, eligibility, standings, stats and player information are also available on the site.



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BCMU[®] provides quick greenup with enough longevity to carry the rich, deep green color up to 18 weeks, much longer than lower-end methylene ureas and coated technologies. Visual quality will remain when other fertilizers begin to fade.

safe & reliable

The precise and steady release of BCMU[®] gives turf managers consistent results with any application rate or interval while building a solid nitrogen base. Its low salt index with almost non-existent burn potential make it the safe choice as well.

When you consider all the important features and benefits of a nitrogen source, no other competitor compares to BCMU[®]. Its unique balance of short, intermediate and long methylene urea chains creates a product that is the best of all worlds and an outstanding value.

Combine that with the efficiency of Meth-Ex[®] technology and you have a nitrogen source that stands alone. BCMU with Meth-Ex technology has a high nitrogen activity index, which means that more nutrients are available when the plant requires them while "banking" some for later use.

BCMU[™] is found only in UHS Signature Brand Fertilizers and have been tested and used with outstanding results for years. Find out why the best fertilization program should be an easy balancing act for the smart turf manager.



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Our fertilizer comes with a built-in insurance policy.



UHS Signature Brand Fertilizers with Prospect® Plus not only provide quality nutrients, they also work to:

- Help turf establish or withstand environmental stresses
- Develop a more fibrous, extensive root system
- Enhance early plant growth and vigor
- Build greater shoot mass
- Increase uptake of soil nutrients and moisture
- Increase photosynthesis

UHS Signature Brand Fertilizers with Prospect® Plus have been impregnated with a proprietary nutrient solution that has shown a remarkable ability to improve vigor, quality and stress tolerance in turf, trees and ornamentals. The patented additive in Prospect® Plus has been tested extensively on many crops, including turf, in laboratory, greenhouse and field studies in the U.S. and several other countries.

Those studies have consistently shown a positive effect on early plant growth and development and with mature plants under stress. Sod farms results show that turf can be harvested earlier due to increased root mass and quicker establishment from seed or sprigs. Mature turf has greater root mass with a noted "tighter" visual appearance and less susceptibility to stress.

The same benefits can be found in Prospect®, a liquid micronutrient for foliar application or for use in fertigation systems.

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Ohio Turfgrass Foundation Research and Educational Center - 2000

| Treatment | Rate | % Turf Density |
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| Check | | 60.00 |
| Fertilizer (46-0-0) | 0.014 lb. N/1000 sq. ft. | 72.00 |
| Fertilizer (46-0-0) + Prospect Plus | 0.014 lb. N/1000 sq. ft. + 48 oz./acre | 77.00 |

Seeded on August 4, 2000 with G-2 creeping bentgrass at a rate of 2 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft. Density measurements were based on % cover taken visually on 10/4 (8 weeks after treatment)

Study Results: "... a significant increase in creeping bentgrass establishment two months after seeding with the application of fertilizer and Prospect Plus compared to the untreated control." **A 22% improvement over check and more than a 12% increase over fertilizer alone!**

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Unions Are Alive and Well, But Industry Is Better Off Without Them

Q How active are unions in trying to organize golf course maintenance workers?

A In recent years, they've been very active. A recent edition of the *Los Angeles Times* carried a story in the business section by the paper's labor writer under the headline, "New Group of Union Leaders Ready." The article opened with this paragraph: "The UCLA Labor Center graduates its first class of trained union leaders — 26 low-wage immigrant workers who have spent the last week studying labor history and learning to be better organizers and strategists." The article went on to say: "... The seminar ... was the first in a union leadership series ... funded by the state through the Institute for Labor and Employment."

Let's leave aside the obvious question of why California is using tax money to pay for union-organizer training, when unions themselves have plenty of cash in the form of dues and fines from their members. What jumps out is that the U.S. labor movement at present is focused on the "low-wage immigrant worker." That description fits a lot of our permanent and seasonal hourly golf course maintenance workers in many areas of this country. Several unions have, at various times and places in recent years, made golf course maintenance workers a primary organizing target.

One might think that only a few national unions (The Teamsters?) would be interested in organizing our labor force. But people I'm acquainted with in this industry have faced off recently against the Longshoremens, Service Employees International, United Culinary Workers, UAW and others. With union

Been there, seen that

BY MIKE HEACOCK



membership continuing a steep 30-year decline in the United States, most unions feel free to organize wherever they see opportunities.

While there are a fair number of unionized course operations in the United States, Las Vegas is the only major city I'm aware in which most golf courses are unionized. Las Vegas is a "union town," but even so there are still many nonunion courses. How do some courses in Las Vegas remain nonunion? One key, of course, is economic — wages and benefits must be competitive in the local market. They don't have to equal or exceed the highest-wage union courses, but they have to be competitive.

This doesn't always work, however. I know of one course that went union because the crew — all young, single men with nothing to lose — was convinced that the union could get them double the area-wide wage through collective bargaining. That never happened, they all quit to do something else, and that union went away.

Surprisingly to some, wages and benefits are not the primary reason some golf course maintenance workers vote to bring in a union — or to keep one out. I've been a member of five different unions at various times in my checkered working career, including one of the U.S. Postal Workers' unions for a few years. Working conditions in the U.S. Postal Service are typical of the

original recipe that created unions, and which still result in management vs. union strife on a continuing basis. Management in the postal service, at least in the bigger cities, tends to treat workers as anonymous, interchangeable low-value units rather than unique individuals. Time pressures are usually tight; workloads can be very high; the work is repetitive, physical, often mind-numbing; and one letter carrier (worker) can substitute for another. This general description could apply, as well, to some course maintenance operations.

Unions are invited by workers to try to organize when the brightest workers in the company no longer trust management to communicate respectfully with them as valued individuals, and when workers feel that management makes arbitrary decisions that have a negative impact on them.

An example I've seen of management mistreating workers is the superintendent who's having marital problems and takes his frustration out on his crew. Another is the manage-by-intimidation type, a management style that is thankfully disappearing along with the dinosaurs who practice it.

The bottom line: You'll retain more management flexibility and have fewer grievance-type problems to deal with if you can avoid unionization. Everyone is better off if your management style is enlightened enough that a union is not warranted. That won't guarantee that union organization won't happen, but it will give you a much better chance to avoid it.

Editor's Note: Mike Heacock, former vice president of agronomy and maintenance for American Golf Corp., fields your questions in his bimonthly column. You can reach him at: mike.heacock@verizon.net or 310-849-5011.

The National Golf Course Owners Association is comprised of good people and stages a solid annual show. But I think the NGCOA shanked one big time by recruiting Chris Zimmerman, Nike Golf's general manager, to be one of its top speakers at the association's annual conference and trade show in Phoenix earlier this year.

Zimmerman was a walking, talking Nike Golf commercial. The only good thing about his "speech" was that the expansive Regency Room at the city's downtown Hyatt Hotel was half empty (maybe more) for his 8 a.m. appearance. I envy those who slept in or opted for a long breakfast while brooding over the sports page.

In all fairness, Zimmerman's presentation was billed as a "Company Focus." You knew he was going to talk about Nike Golf, but...

"I wanted to talk to *this* group," the tanned Zimmerman said at the top of his marketing rant. (I swear he was licking his chops.) Then he launched into the history of Nike Golf. Here's my Cliff's Notes version of Zimmerman's talk:

We started selling golf products in 1985, but were unsuccessful. We knew we had to differentiate Nike Golf from Nike, so we created a separate identity for Nike Golf with a different logo and branding. When we entered the ball market in 1999, nobody took us seriously. Then we threw a lot of money at Tiger to use the ball, Tiger won a bunch of tournaments and people began to take us seriously. Then we threw more money at Duval, and even more people began to take us even more seriously. We're entering the golf club market, we have innovative TV commercials to market our products, and we're going to kick the competition's arse. Any questions?

I raised my hand. "What are you doing to promote *affordable* golf, assuming that your high-falutin' clubs and balls are going to cost so much that I'll have to drink Old Milwaukee in the clubhouse for the rest of my life?" I asked.

Zimmerman gave an answer, but it was one of those "we're-looking-into-it" replies.

"What are the things we can do with equipment to make the game more enjoyable for entry-level players of less ability?" Zimmerman asked out loud, repeating my question. "We have that very much in our plans."

Nike Speaker's Talk – Just Boo It

BY LARRY AYLWARD



HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT HIS COMPANY'S PLAN TO CREATE AFFORDABLE EQUIPMENT FOR PEOPLE WHO LIKE GOLF BUT CAN'T AFFORD TO PLAY IT

His answer should have been the subject of his speech. He should have been talking about Nike's plan to create inexpensive equipment for the people who like golf but can't afford to play it. He should have asked owners for their opinions.

We'd all love to use Nike equipment, but it's too costly for many of us. What the golf world needs now is new golfers, and it can only help if Nike and other big-name companies lure new blood to the game by offering affordable equipment along with their respected names.

I've been to three NGCOA conferences now, and "the game is too expensive" has been a constant refrain. After you've walked around a few days and everybody's talking about how the game needs to be more affordable, the last thing you want to hear is somebody from a well-to-do company talking about how great its upscale products are.

What's worse is Zimmerman came off kind of haughty. He actually said Nike quit selling its golf shoes in the same orange boxes as its other shoes because its marketers recognized that their golf customers didn't want to feel like they were getting the same products their sons were getting from Foot Locker. Puuhlease!

Zimmerman acknowledged that Nike is viewed by its peers and the public as a great marketing company. No doubt.

"But we like to think of ourselves more as a product company," he added. "Having Tiger and David is like having Batman and Robin. They are a valuable piece of our marketing plan. But none of this means anything unless your products are right."

Right for whom? I just wonder how much Nike products would cost if Tiger and David weren't part of the plan.

Golfdom Editor Larry Aylward can be reached at 440-891-2770 or laylward@advanstar.com.