UK’s ‘brain drain’ to Europe said serious

What greenkeepers overseas need is a Walter Hagen.
— Bill Bengeyfield
former national director,
USGA Green Section

Send data from independent water studies at courses

To add substance and bulk to the limited amount of research data on turf chemical runoff, Golf Course News is asking superintendent nationwide to let us know if a ground water or surface water study of any kind has been or is being done at their course.

“The Cape Cod Study was a good one, but it was only one study. There is a critical need for data on the impacts of turf chemicals on our water environment,” said Stuart Cohen of Environmental & Turf Services, Inc., who directed the Cape Cod Study.

Cohen said he has discovered several instances of isolated, limited golf course runoff or leaching studies. Those were usually conducted as a result of state or local requirements for special circumstances, such as gaining a zoning permit.

“When the results of studies are favorable, there is no press release from the state agency,” said Cohen. “Since known studies have been held and there has not been a media cry of ‘dangers of golf courses,’ my guess is that these studies are favorable to the industry.”

Superintendents are asked simply to write, listing:
• a contact name and phone number;
• the pesticides being monitored;
• whether it is a surface or ground water study;
• if monitoring wells were installed;
• if the study was a condition of a permit; and
• if a final report was issued.

Cohen, who will follow up on this initial information, has agreed to compile the results and summarize them in an upcoming issue of Golf Course News.

Knowing superintendents may be too busy to expand on the study, Cohen asked that they at least identify a contact person who will be available during which the study was done.

“Most studies may have just a handful of data,” he said, “but taken in total, it could place a whole picture of the multi-year impact of golf courses on the environment.”

People are asked to send the information to Cohen at Environmental & Turf Services, Inc., 11141 Georgia Ave., Suite 208, Wheaton, Md. 20020.

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UK superintendents leaving for fertile European ground

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Buckinghamshire, England, thinks the threat of skilled shortage will lead to new awareness by employers of the value of Walder's fellow professionals.

That, in turn, will mean a new look at current wages. "Anywhere grass is grown," he declared, "our members are prominent. In fact, just moving around plants and ornamental planting, pruning and decorating, they are recognized in Europe as distinctive craftsman. They are paid accordingly."

"If this movement means an economic upturn for greenkeepers, so much the better. The paycheck is important."

The British International Golf Association echoes that stand. Several members of that greenkeeper or course superintendent group have been attracted to the greener cash fields of Europe.

Jack McMillan may be the leading example. The first president of the English & International Golf Greenkeepers Association and past chairman of the British & International Golf Greenkeepers Association, McMillan feels that, in order to sell the game of golf to the French and German masses, they must be able to pay at reasonable cost.

He believes good, hard-wearing public courses could be built, reasonably priced, along the lines of the many public and local authority courses in the UK that give so much pleasure to so many people.

Scottsmen McMillan ruefully gives the green fee price "prize" to Pebble Beach, Calif. He played that world-renowned links for $200. "I thought I'd bought a butter" courses are the answer, he believes.

While there may not be a strong greenkeeper organization in Europe, individuals are surfacing with strong opinions and leadership qualities. Among them is Jaime Ortiz-Patino, president of Valderrama Golf Club, a course in Spain Bengeyfield responded to his consultant inquiry. This led to other Spain course projects.

Petino has been quick to lend a helping hand to others golf-minded. He supplied materials, equipment and stolons for the first public course in Spain, being built next to Valderrama in the town of Guardiaro by townspeople. U.S. architect Robert Trent Jones Sr. contributed course aid in the form of staffs experienced in grading.

There has been some mutual disillusionment among some Spanish golf club officials and aspiring young course superintendents from America, lured overseas with glowing promises.

Many Americans lacked the background to handle course problems, and others complained of being short-changed financially. Leading British professionals have taken a leaf from the carefully kept notes of top-notch U.S. pros — South Africa's Gary Player, Australia's Greg Norman, Spain's Severiano Ballesteros and Germany's Bernhard Langer.

According to Bengeyfield, they are venturing rather deeply into course design.

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