

From America to Europe, busy times ahead

There are a couple of upcoming events I'd like to preview for you.

First, *Golf Course News* has arranged with ExpoConsult of Holland, organizers of Golf Course Europe, to cover this European conference and show in Wiesbaden, Germany, Oct. 7-9.

Golf Course News - Europe will publish a special section in the October issue.

Second, the Golf Course News marketing conference will take place Sept. 16-17 at the Oakbrook Hills Conference Center near Chicago. This two-day conference will address the problems in marketing products and services to golf facilities and, hopefully, develop some solutions for the industry suppliers'

marketing and sales efforts.

As I mentioned in last month's column, the 1992 editorial calendar is now published, so I'd like to review it for you. Our editorial department has added some new features, as well as four special sections that will expand coverage of particularly "hot" topics in the industry.

Here's the rundown:

January—GCSAA Preview: *Golf Course News*' Annual Awards (Architect, Builder, Resort Developer,



von Brecht

Best Conditioned Course).

February—GCSAA Show.

March—Golf Course Utility Vehicles—Special Advertising Section.

April—Pre-emergent Herbicides.

May—Driving and Practice Ranges—Special Advertising Section.

June—Rotary Mowers.

July—Fungicides.

August—Ryegrass Seed Producers and Research—Special Advertising Section.

September—Soil Blenders.

October—Irrigation and Pumping Stations—Special Advertising Section.

November—Architects, Build-

ers and Developers.

December—Hi-tech Developments in Golf Course Maintenance.

My recent column on slow play garnered some interesting response.

All disagreed with my suggestion to allow players to hit on par 3s while the group ahead has not completed play.

This is a regular practice at some courses, even though it could result in injury.

I must agree with my critics, who point out that a rule for speeding up play should not be posted. Aside from that one point, respondents agree there is a need for continuing education for faster play.

Keep your comments coming!

COMMENTARY

Get tests straight before announcing them

By Mark Leslie

Henry Adams once said: "Practical politics consists in ignoring facts."

Time and again we've seen proof of this in America. Time and again men have spoken too soon, thought too little, voted too quickly, compromised too much, pressed on when they should have let go, or given up when they should have hung on.

Time and again the results have been ominous. People suffer, families are disrupted, neighborhoods are uprooted, companies go belly-

up, cities go bankrupt, and states survive only by raising taxes.

All this is nothing new. But this is a plea for it to stop.

It follows the dioxin scare, which is perhaps the most damaging—and costly—illustration of the danger of no-think-quick-response-overstatement tendencies. In 1982, the government ordered evacua-



Leslie

tion of 2,232 residents of Times Beach, Mo., saying traces of dioxin were found in the town's soil. The Environmental Protection Agency spent \$33 million to buy up the town, posted signs on Highway 44 warning motorists to keep their windows closed and not to stop or leave their vehicles. Syntex Corp. was blamed for contamination of Times Beach and 16 other Missouri sites because one of its subsidiaries had bought a plant that had once supplied dioxin-tainted waste oil to a contractor who had sprayed it on the town's streets.

Syntex last year signed a consent decree agreeing to clean up the sites and incinerate 100,000 square yards of contaminated soil.

The estimated cost over the next decade? As much as \$200 million.

My beef? The scare, the evacuation and all the consequent hullabaloo were a mistake.

Dr. Vernon Houk, the center of Disease Control official who had recommended the evacuation, now believes it was unnecessary. He says the scientific theory and methodology that led him and others to

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GUEST COMMENT

A list is a list, but take note, address problems

By Jim Gilligan

Lists attract our attention. They enumerate our problems, pleasures and needs. They are a condensed index of things to do, we should have done, and could have done.

Lists are powerful documents. We respond to them quickly, whether it is a shopping list, a Christmas list, a work list, a sports list or a problem list. It must be the simple declarative style of a list that triggers a quick response. I responded quickly when I read the list of "Golf Course Superintendents' 10 Deadly Problems." Then I saw that they were "The Top 10 Sins of Golf Course Maintenance" as seen through the eyes of 12 USGA agronomists.

The list was the result of a survey requested by a group of golf course owners. Observations were tabulated and the results listed according to frequency in the survey. These problems not only were sinful. They were deadly; a fatal combination.

The list implied that superintendents might be responsible for these problems. Golf course maintenance is a career for super-

intendents; it is a matter of job security. Industry leaders who listened to the talk or who read the article may erroneously interpret the tone of the list.

Jim Connolly, USGA agronomist who presented these facts at the Maine Golf Turfgrass Conference and Show, stated that it was not his intention to fault the superintendent but to make the industry aware of the problems. There is no denying these problems exist.

In presenting the list in this column, I changed the order to reflect my views of the importance of each problem. The comments following the category are my thoughts.

Following is the list of ten important problems facing golf course superintendents. The number in parentheses indicates the original ranking.

1. Labor (9). Size alone puts this problem at the top. Labor comprises the largest percentage of golf



Jim Gilligan

course budgets. The human element demands attention. Low wages, few benefits, seasonal employment, poor working conditions, lack of training and scarcity of qualified people contribute to this problem.

Labor needs a strong planning effort equal to or greater than other maintenance programs.

2. Communications and Public Relations (1). To resolve this important issue, communications should begin at the top and set the pace throughout the golf course organization. A positive attitude must be developed in the organization to make it effective. The forms of communication should be kept simple. The quality of writing, speaking and listening must be emphasized.

Public relations can be easy: be courteous to everyone; golfers, staff administrators and sales reps. Community activities are a means of establishing a solid public relations image.

3. Green Speeds (3). An important concern because of its impact on overwatering, pesticide use, equipment and labor. Fast greens

and low-cut fairways perpetuate the problems of maintaining the grass in a constant state of stress. Pressure is exerted from all sides in this question of keeping fast greens. As superintendents, we are not entirely blameless.

4. Overwatering (2). A significant problem that a superintendent may be forced into to preserve the "green" look. The stress of present maintenance standards are a contributing factor to this problem.

Automatic systems left unmonitored overwater; manual systems left in inexperienced hands overwater.

5. Pesticide Use (4). Pesticide misuse is the problem.

Superintendents today are taking a judicious look at their use of pesticides. Using diagnostic tools to identify pests, employing longer application intervals, and carefully selecting the correct pesticide are means superintendents are using to eliminate any misuse of pesticides.

Superintendents understand the complexities of pesticide use and the financial and environmental cost

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An odyssey: groundskeeper to pro to Tour official

Mickey Bradley has braved hurricanes and other storms in two job conversions

By Vern Putney

Joyce Kilmer wrote, "Only God can make a tree."

With one furious sweep, Hurricane Camille in August 1969 destroyed 1,375 trees at the Biloxi, Miss., Broadwater Beach Hotel and Golf Club complex where Mickey Bradley was assistant professional and changed his career direction.

The 36 holes and par-3 lighted nine-hole course were closed. On the heels of that disaster, Bradley was given the task of counting and removing tree stumps at \$2.75 a stump.

During that heart-breaking job, Bradley became friendly with course superintendent Bert Newman and received a fresh perspective on course preservation and maintenance. He discovered he preferred outdoor work to the sometimes-confining pro shop.

He began by cutting greens, then branched into course maintenance.

Complete conversion to course care wasn't immediate. When the course was restored, Bradley returned to the pro shop.

In 1972, he became head pro at a nine-hole layout in Ittabena, Miss. There, a farmer, one helper and Bradley handled maintenance with one walk-behind grass mower. Bradley was on the course at dawn to mow the greens, then opened the pro shop.

Fortunately, no travel time was wasted. Bradley lived in a trailer on the course.

A crop-dusting airplane was used to fertilize the course. It and the pilot lacked Stealth fighter accu-

racy. Anything not covered, including the swimming pool and clubhouse, was saturated.

Bradley in 1974 became pro-course super at Ellendale Country Club in Houma, La. During his five-year stint, Golf Digest ranked Ellendale one of the top five courses in the state.

Bradley's bent to the course superintendent field continued strong. He next became superintendent at Sherwood Forest in Baton Rouge, La., and earned his certified golf course superintendent degree that same year, 1980.

Bradley switched to Hickory Hill Country Club in Gautier, Miss., in 1983.

In October 1989, he was hired by the PGA Tour to direct the Ben Hogan tournaments. Tour officials were seeking a person who could communicate with superintendents, one with combined pro and super knowledge. Bradley fit the bill.

It's been a wonderful experience, dealing with all facets of the game, and Bradley feels fortunate to be in such a unique position.

He communicates well with superintendents and pros, though he wasn't wishing the best of luck to Woodlands Country Club host pro Chris McClure on the last of a nine-hole team scramble match at a Tour stop in Falmouth, Maine. Bradley, McClure, tour agronomist Jeff Healey and 45-year Tour pro Fred Haas cased the course with keen eyes to tourney stake placement.

After Haas dunked a chip shot for what seemed a match-winning birdie, McClure canned a tricky 15-



Photo by Dr. Carman Pettapiece

Mickey Bradley at a Hogan Tour stop at The Woodlands in Falmouth, Maine.

Bradley's itinerary is a heavy one: 32 weeks a year and 22 tournament stops. But it's a long way from removing tree stumps at \$2.75 apiece.

foot downhill to gain a deadlock. Both teams had two-under-par 34s.

Woodlands, now in its third season, was the toughest of 30 Hogan tracks last year. Only winner Brandel Chamblee broke par, by one stroke. Bradley was called upon for 60 rulings. This year, there were half such knotty questions.

Improved conditions, especially cleared rough, propelled several into red numbers. New course superintendent Jeff Smith had followed up neatly on the two-year spadework of Ken Flisek.

Because of uncertain course situations last year, Bradley was required to be at 28 of 30 tour stops

from a week to a few days in advance. This year, only 22 sites will be visited early.

Other PGA officials usually arrive before tourney time. Bradley considers huddles with them on course setups most informative.

There is a downside to such extensive travel. He's away from home 32 weeks annually. He treasures time spent with wife Julie and daughter Micha, 1.

The Bradleys reside in a home on Gulf Hills Course in Ocean Spring, Miss. Bradley first caddied there at age 15, using near-scratch golfer-father Donald's and grandfather Norm Blessey's clubs.

There have been some scary as well as light moments in Bradley's testing job.

Last year at the Country Club of Louisiana in Baton Rouge, a water moccasin snake held sway over the 9th fairway.

Course superintendent Tolby Strahn appeared to have dispatched the menacing creature with a powerful swing of the stimp meter.

Its stimp measure was 4-1/2 feet, according to Bradley. The snake was lugged to the maintenance building, where it revived and began crawling around, cleaning out the building in a hurry.

Tourney officials try to maintain green speed the same for tournaments as for practice rounds. The 9.5 at Woodlands was considered a good, fair speed.

PGA Class A member Bradley's baptism as a rulesmith came during his tour debut at Bakersfield (Calif.) Country Club. Pea-sized hail rained down during the first round.

Bradley was flooded with player inquiries. "Can I move the ball on the putting green?"

Bradley shot back, "Hail, Yes!"

This list made a difference

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associated with any misuse.

6. Continuity of Club Officials (5). An important issue that is unmanageable. The constant changing of club officials creates a climate of uncertainty in the superintendent's mind. Lack of short and long-term goals impede the progress of the golf course maintenance program. At times, new club officials have conflicting management priorities, causing disruptive shifts in maintenance strategies.

"Nobody asked, but..." Five year terms for club officials would anchor a sound maintenance program.

7. Equipment (10). It isn't a compliment to our industry to hear that we have to scrounge for workable equipment. When maintenance goals are established, buy the equipment to support those goals.

Too often we "put the cart before the horse" or, in our case, "playability before the equipment."

8. Pesticide Storage and Maintenance Buildings (6). A serious problem for the superintendent burdened with inadequate structures to store pesticides and equipment that fail to meet minimum standards.

Pesticide storage and disposal are regulated fiercely at all levels of government. But these new structures are costly to build and maintain, forcing golf courses to delay construction.

9. Amount of Play (8). Secretly, most superintendents would like to have the course all to themselves, with no play. But we know we must share this beautiful creation with the golfers if we are to continue working. But give us adequate time to insure the golf course is properly maintained.

When cultural practices are missed or delayed, quality is diminished. Blocking sections of time each week or month during the season is critical to survival of the golf course.

10. Tree Management (7). I don't

see this as a top ten problem. Cutting down trees is an environmental issue in most jurisdictions.

As in any listing, nominees left off deserve recognition. The problems that didn't make the top ten include: superintendents unable to read soil tests (it takes a degree in agronomy), poor record keeping (can assistants type), inappropriately-timed maintenance (did you aerify before a member-guest), and taking advice from the wrong people (think about it).

My perspective has changed since I read the article in "Golf Course News."

In the process of preparing this column I began to understand the USGA agronomists' viewpoint, and I am aware of the weak points in my own programs.

Jim Gilligan is superintendent at Richmond County Country Club in Staten Island, N.Y. He has long been a columnist for The Greensider, the New Jersey GCSA newsletter.

Rushing to judgment can cause a major crime

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a false conclusion. It made an assumption that violates a fundamental rule in toxicology: The dose makes the poison.

He now agrees with Bruce Ames, head of the University of California Biochemistry Department, who contends that animal tests are fundamentally flawed because the maximum tolerated doses of the chemicals being treated kill cells due to sheer size of the dosage.

"If dioxin is a human carcinogen, it is a rather weak one in the population exposed to high doses ... and is not a carcinogen in the population exposed to lower doses," Houk says.

It's a sham and it's a shame ... but this sort of thing happens too often.

I received a press release awhile ago from a prominent university announcing plans to study pesticide runoff from golf course greens. It contained a headline—itsself unique to press releases—that read: "Pesticide runoff from golf greens may be dangerous." Enough to

scare the most secure reader.

The third paragraph into the story, however, says: "Scientists do not know whether pesticides are present in the runoff from greens or whether pesticides in the runoff pose any risks."

Responsibility for this sort of mistake must start somewhere. Let it start with the individual.

Let's avoid snap judgments. Before acting, let's not just seek but find answers. Let's think before we speak. And let's ponder the consequences of our actions before taking one tiny step.

Int'l division formed

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America has formed a new department to develop and implement programs for its 734 international members.

Tom Akins, GCSAA director of planning, will head the department and assume the new title of director of planning and international programs.