Development Letter designed to fill a need

One of the things I enjoy doing in this space is pointing out how far-flung, seemingly irreverent stories which appear in the press are actually connected by industry trends — some subtle, some not so subtle. Such is the case on pages 1, 24, 30, 31, 34 and 35 this month.

The aforementioned stories may seem disparate but, as some of our readers already know, it is not difficult to see how everything is connected by industry trends. The Development Letter is designed to let architects and builders know exactly where the golf course projects are being considered, and by whom. This is becoming increasingly important because the mini-boom in golf course projects aren’t about to fall into anyone’s lap these days. As the story on page 1 indicates, National Golf Foundation figures indicate a slow, steady dropoff in golf course openings over the next few years. Financing remains very hard to come by and this will be reflected in the numbers of golf course projects during 1993, ’94 and ’95.

Those involved in the construction of golf courses will have to scramble for business — some are already scrambling. We believe the Development Letter will aid the effort.

Do they really have ears for hearing?

Did you hear about Mack, the man who thought his wife was going deaf? While his wife sat at the kitchen table one day, Mack walked to the far side of the room, turned his back to her and said, "Close your ears." There was no reply, so he moved closer. "Can you hear me?" he repeated.

"I hear you," his wife said.

"Butter to meet a bear robbed of her cub and feel in its folly," Proverbs 17:12 tells us. A millenium or so after Solomon penned that, a time when politics had become even more the shaper of culture, Henry Adams added a new dimension to this truth. He said: "Practical politics consists in ignoring facts, news, news, news, believe this. There are many who do not want to have their ears to hear and eyes to see.

"They prefer blessed ignorance and a cause.

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One group believes it follows perfectly, is totally believable whole truth and nothing but the truth," has its mind made up, thinks the "others" are deaf, itself refuses to hear opposing or alternative ideas.

Those on the other side of an issue are the same. Thus the twain shall never meet.

This appears the case with golf course superintendents and extremists in the environmental movement.

Even your proving a theory, exposing a misinterpretation, expanding on scientific data cannot turn the ear of some.

"We are actually the most consistent, most rabidly committed to our point of view group in any instance where there is a conflict of interest," says this one guy after hitting a 400-yard drive from about 250 yards out. He was drinking vodka out for the day:

"You've got vodka in those things?"

"That's right, fella."

"What are those white stakes that come by and this will benefit the architect, client, and the game of golf."
Soil blending, root zones

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"Namesake fiber" dominates its makeup. This simplification serves us well for root-zone mixtures, since each of these general types differs markedly in basic physical and chemical properties, and in the peatland from which they originate.

I advise you to look at each peat type as a potential component in turfgrass applications. Since all have potential benefits, each will perform differently and all are available from North American producers. But this grouping by peat type is only a beginning.

Why differentiate between peat types for use in turfgrass culture? Locally available peat types may be initially inexpensive but may not be physically compatible, especially over time. Some peats are too decomposed or too coarse to match with the selected sand. This affects the root-zone mix's mechanical stability, capillarity and structure — free air space and density.

An analogy would be the physical instability and density changes of mixing golf balls and marbles. With any surface activity, a mixture like this would be very unreliable. Also, some coarse or raw peat materials may not be biologically stable over time, and decompose too quickly when exposed to turf practices such as fertilization management. This mayresult in substrate and surface irregularities, anaerobic conditions and formation of impermeable residues. Proper selection of peat improves dependability and control of your root-zone media.

It is most important for our industry to contract laboratories which use USGA standardized test methods and services which fully characterize the root-zone components, including the peat. Our industry has made recent strides in the use of standard methods for organic carbon of the mix (using Walkley-Black, 1960) and ash content of the peat, but that effort is not complete.

Additional emphasis should be placed on organic carbon, particle size distribution and the quality of the peat alone. The quality of the peat fiber can be described by its "biostability." The carbon:nitrogen ratio is one good indicator of biostability.

Where peat is used in top dressing or core aeration, the compatibility of these materials to those of the original root-zone media is also essential. Laboratory and blending services with peat expertise help us produce superior turfgrass media consisting of optimal components for lasting performance.

As a golf course superintendent or builder, you may ask, "What are the benefits of being more discerning in my use of peat?"

The use of a specification peat materials will ultimately result in lower costs of establishment, maintenance, renovation and general management of your turf. The peat should be consistent, compatible to the sand components in particle size distribution, and free of weed seeds, sticks and phytotoxic residues.

Through proper use of peat, you will realize some of the following benefits in your turfgrass culture and performance: improved growth and establishment; better rooting stability and wear; reduced compactibility; improved stress resistance and overwintering; improved irrigation response and control; better nutrient management; improved gas exchange; increased microbial activity; and longer life of your root-zone media.

The many benefits and advantages of peat warrant our careful attention to its selection and use in turfgrass culture.


The 'Penn Pals' Are Picture Perfect At The Merit Club.

Superintendent Oscar Miles, with Club President Ed Oldfield's affirmation, specified all the grassing of this Robert M. Lohmann designed club. With a clean canvas and open palette, Oscar began with PennLinks greens, Penneagle fairways and Penncross tees, framing them with bluegrass/fine fescue/wildflower and prairiegrass roughs. You couldn't paint a more attractive picture.

Oscar chose PennLinks greens for its rapid establishment, marvelous root system, a crown and stolons that take topdressing, upright, grassless qualities and good, consistent color ... the best putting surface available.

He selected Penncross for tees because they recover from divot scars more quickly.

And the Penneagle fairways?

Oscar chose Penneagle for its upright growth, reduced thatch development, low nitrogen requirement and good drought and dollar spot resistance. He seeded at 80 lbs. per acre for immediate turf development and erosion control. The fairways were playable in 8 weeks. Oscar's crew usually mows fairways in the evening and leaves the clippings; recycling nutrients while reducing removal and fertilizer costs.

Oscar articulates it best: "The unique coloring of the 'Penn Pals' contrasts beautifully with the grassing around them, defining the target areas. And with the dew on the bents early in the morning, they're a marvelous work of art."

Oscar Miles, CGCS, overlooks the 6th hole at the Merit Club, Libertyville, Illinois.


The 'Penn Pals' Are Picture Perfect At The Merit Club.

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CIRCLE #108

Development Letter

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numbers. We started mailing and faxing sample issues of the Development Letter in November of 1992, and the response has been overwhelming. Another sample audience should be receiving its complimentary issues any day now.

Frankly, the Letter's positive response doesn't surprise us because the news therein contained is clearly of use to golf course designers, builders and their suppliers. And because this information sometimes can't wait a month to reach its audience, we publish it twice a month, via the fax machine if you like.

Finally, on page 54 you will find an advertisement for the Development Letter, including information on whom to contact here at Golf Course News about subscriptions. It seems silly to have you turn 40 pages when I could do it right here... I may as well tell you: Associate Editor Peter Blais is handling the Letter. You can reach him at 207-846-0600.