It's that time again: Open season on grousing

As of June 1st, which means it's time to endure the comments from our beloved professionals who can't fathom the course conditions insisted upon by United States Golf Association officials. The U.S. Open stops at Baltusrol June 17-20, after which superintendent Joe Flaherty Jr., who's presiding over his fourth major championship, can breathe a well-deserved sigh of relief (see story page 12). I guess Flaherty and superintendent everywhere can be thankful that Open contestants grouse to the USGA about course severity. All too often it's the super who takes the heat on such matters.

Anyway, in the spirit of Open grousing, I'd like pass along some words of wisdom on tournament preparation from Ted Horton, the director of golf operations at Pebble Beach and former head superintendent and director of golf at Westchester Country Club, site of a regular PGA Tour stop. Horton believes the sequoia-like rough at U.S. Open sites isn't necessarily unfair but far too easy, in a way. He believes good/smart players who play into the rough simply take the stroke and chop a sand wedge back into the fairway. The trick, he explains, is to grow the rough just long enough to encourage foolish players to attempt a full shot, which ideally results in a meager advancement and another shot from the rough. Pretty sneaky, eh? This may be common knowledge to many of you, but it struck me as making cunningly good sense.

If I were to comment on the military course bill currently mired in the bowels of Congress, it's almost certain to take up more space than the news update which appears on page 31 this month. Suffice to say, don't hold your breath waiting for movement on this bill, which would privatize the nation's 240-plus military golf facilities. Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.) introduced the bill last summer and resubmitted it in January. But don't be surprised if he and his colleagues don't address Senate bill S.234 until the summer of 1994, when DeConcini runs for re-election. Funny how these things work out...

Our condolences and respect mean dotty to an Oregon seed...

continued on page 45

Letters

Harvey Addendum

Dear Mr. Harvey,

I am a great admirer of yours and, as such, am reluctant to write this letter, but feel compelled to comment on your recent column concerning pesticide use by golf course superintendents. As Executive Director of RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment), the national association representing manufacturers, formulators and distributors of pesticide products used on golf courses and other urban turf, this issue is very important to me and my members.

The Wilmington, North Carolina Conference Coordinator has informed me that there are no studies which indicate that bird populations are reduced by golf course development. In fact, a number of research papers have programs with conservation societies to protect birds and wildlife habitats. For example, the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program, administered by the Audubon Society of New York and sponsored by the United States Golf Association, involves nearly 500 golf courses in 48 states. These courses are involved in nest-box projects, native grass restoration projects, aquatic environment enhancement projects and many other activities.

In addition, there are no studies which show that golf courses are polluting coastal fishing waters. In fact, you know that the pesticides used by golf course superintendents are among the most carefully tested and regulated products in the world? Each product undergoes as many as 120 different tests required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to assure there are no unreasonable risks associated with the product, including test for human, wildlife and fish health effects and environmental fate before the product can be registered for use. Then, each product is subject to state-by-state review before sales within a state can occur.

Finally, virtually every golf course superintendent in the United States is certified and undergoes training and retraining in the responsible use of pest management practice. I urge you to contact the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSSA) to better understand the association's extensive educational and regulatory efforts.

Thank you.

Allen James
RISE executive director
Washington, D.C.

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Allen James
RISE executive director
Washington, D.C.
Phillips comment
Continued from page 8

grower whose margin is ever narrowed by the slow eradication of field burning. But the golf course industry and, more important, its detractors owe these growers a great measure of credit for yielding to popular will and methodically pursuing alternatives to field burning, a time-honored routine practiced since man first discovered the miracle of agriculture (see page 1).

Growth in the golf course industry, like everything else, is an evolutionary process. Technology is developed and sometimes it's taken away. But don't let it be said that industry members aren't willing to budge on environmental issues. Look to Oregon. Look to Washington, D.C., where the Environmental Protection Agency continually ups the ante on prospective registrants. Look to either coast, where developers trade land and alter profit margins to appease various environmental commissions.

By and large, the golf course industry has a good sense of when to fight and when to move on. If only the same could be said for its opponents.