Keystone stays open while redoing greens

By MARK LESLIE

Steve Cornillier, no stranger to innovation, has added another feather to the Keystone Ranch cap. The Keystone superintendent — who with Tectonic, Inc.'s Tom Briddle proved two years ago they could renovate bunkers during the winter in half the time of summer work — is renovating the Dillon, Colo. course's unhealthy greens without stopping play, and without using temporary putting surfaces.

"In a resort environment you cannot afford to shut down," Cornillier said. "And, based on design of a hole, or a par-3, we thought temporary greens were not acceptable."

The solution? Working on one hole at a time, Briddle's and Cornillier's crews kept the front third of the greens open — top dressing, overseeding and getting 1,200 to 2,000 square feet into the best condition possible. "This way, golfers played to the intended greens," Cornillier said.

Meantime, on the back two-thirds or three-quarters of the green, they stripped the sod and removed the old root-zone mix down to the choker layer, which is 12 to 14 inches below the surface. Then they back-filled with a 90-10 (soil-to-sand) mix, keeping the original contours of the putting surfaces that Robert Trent Jones Jr. intended when he designed the famous course.

With the back of the greens renovated, Cornillier waited for the fall, when the course was closed, to replace the front portions. "Once we closed, we stripped sod off the front, dug out the old root zone, put in the new, and let it settle out over the winter. We supplemented with additional root zone in the spring and then sodded between May 6 and 20," he said.

"Everybody said it couldn't be done," said Briddle, a maverick who enjoys innovation. "Well, we proved them wrong. No green was ever closed down."

The crews have completed half the course. They will not continue this summer because of other reconstruction at the resort, Cornillier said. Instead, they will resume the work on Oct. 3, closing the back nine holes.

Saying he would recommend this method to any superintendent, Cornillier added: "The principal work is low-risk. If you have a green that is suffering and you have to completely rebuild it, you can make it work for golfers, the construction crew, superintendent and golf course owners. It's also an alternative to a temporary green, where you're never shooting to a true green. Here, you are still shooting to an original green — just a smaller portion — and it's certainly targeted golf."

An added plus, he said, was the interaction with resort guests. "People saw this operation, were very inquisitive, most didn't know how a green was built or what it was made of," he said. "It was very educational... We got great input."

Cornillier said despite prolonged and wide-ranging efforts to save the greens, their fate was sealed when nine feet of snow fell after March 15, 1993. "The grass basically rotted, even with our attempts to remove the snow with snow blowers," he said.

"We stayed with a 90-10 root-zone mix, thinking that would give us the best for what we needed in this environment," Cornillier said. "I think the original mix had too much organic material and was not properly blended. The
**GCSAA reordering**

"One of our mandates here was to get our house in order," said GCSAA Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer Steve Mona. "And that's a large part of what we've done during my first five months here.

Indeed, Mona is a product of Andersen's impact. Since the study was issued, GCSAA has seen the departure of longtime Executive Director John Schilling and the hiring of Robert Ochs and Director of Membership Services Diana Green. Per Andersen's recommendations, GCSAA has created a completely restructured hierarchy, with Mona filling the newly created position of executive director and CEO (Schilling was merely the former).

The association also created the positions of chief operations officer — filled by Joe O'Brien — and chief financial officer, filled by Julian Arrendondo.

Since the Andersen study, GCSAA has suspended overseas publications; worked more closely with allied organizations, particularly the United States Golf Association; and joined the chemical trade association RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment), among others, in seeking higher yield investments for association funds; developing a new employee handbook; investigating flex-time scheduling; expanding the work week from 37-1/2 to 40 hours; and hiring a compensation consultant to analyze roles and salaries (see related story on page XX).

Two years ago, GCSAA withdrew its annual meeting from the United Kingdom. That is a trend that is going to continue.

"We'll be making a donation to the USGA this year," promised O'Brien, adding that GCSAA plans to build bridges and mend fences with other organizations as well.

Serving membership needs will be the goal of all GCSAA research and education, he added. The research committee (for mally scholarship and research) is scheduled to meet in September to adopt an official agenda. In the meantime, O'Brien has informally researched committee needs. "I've said he found several common interests.

First, he said, there is a desire to focus on health and human safety, especially in light of the University of Iowa study on increased cancer rates among superintendents. Second is emphasis on doing research on golf courses rather than at university test plots or in laboratories.

Edward Keister, who is currently the drawing board for maintenance specialists, especially mechanics.

"Head superintendents report having a difficult time finding qualified people for that position," O'Brien said.

In no way, O'Brien assured, is adding specialist training a forerunner to a third run at a bylaw amendment to increase membership classifications. That measure was resoundingly defeated at the last two annual meetings.

"We tried to pretty clearly regard ing increasing membership classes," O'Brien said, "It certainly wouldn't be prudent to bring it up again without a lot of reaction from the membership.

Prior to coming to GCSAA, O'Brien spent 18 years in a variety of administrative positions with the Professional Golfers Association. During that time he witnessed the growth in stature of the club professional. A similar professional image is what many superintendents hope to attain.

"At almost every meeting I've attended, infrastructure and human resources have been a hot topic," O'Brien noted. "Members want help from national headquarters in building up their image.

They have invested a lot of time and money in their development, and they're doing a good job in a high- risk occupation. They want to connect with the public. And they want the people they report to to recognize the validity of their advice as educated course managers."

**Irishman apprentices in America**

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Irishmen in the United States, even when he said, "I am not sure what those positions will be."

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Meanwhile, Clemson is in the midst of constructing an 18-hole handicap-accessible golf course designed to be a "working laboratory" for researchers and students.

**Legislature gives Clemson a boost**

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By PETER BLAIS

Strengthening ties with state and regional chapters, meeting with numerous committees, finding tenants for the association's excess office space, re-assigning staff and re-establishing ties with allied golf associations have been among the major chores undertaken by new Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Chief Operating Officer Joe O'Brien.

The GCSAA board of directors named O'Brien to the newly created position in January, about the same time it appointed Julien Arrendondo as chief financial officer. The two have formed a sort of Mr. Inside/Mr. Outside tandem to assist new Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer Steve Mona.

"Julian oversees internal services like MIS (Management Information Systems), accounting and graphic services," O'Brien said. "I deal with those outside the headquarters building, like members, committees and other golf organizations."

O'Brien expected to have met with the 10 Golf Course Superintendents he oversaw by mid-June. He has also talked with many members of the association's 113 affiliate chapters and is laying the ground work for September's chapter relations meeting. Many of his final's gathering was the key to passing January's controversial by-laws amendments, many of which were overwhelmingly defeated the year before.

"That's a start for the foundation for the national organization," O'Brien said. "They do excellent work, particularly in the areas of scholarship and research. We're looking at going to them to help them."

The national association recently hired a new real estate broker to market its excess office space. O'Brien said GCSAA staff only occupies five-eighths of the new, 40,000-square-foot office building. Less than half of the old building, which GCSAA still owns, is rented, the COO added.

"The association could eventually need all the space. But that day is far off in the future," O'Brien said.

Following the annual meeting, O'Brien said the board directed GCSAA's 72-member staff to focus on serving the members' internal staffing needs, rebuilding relationships with other green industry associations, and returning the organization's focus to meeting members' needs.

A few people have left, notably Government Relations Manager Kirk Kahler, Tournament Manager John Kahler, Tournament Manager Janet Rose, O'Brien said. Several others have been reassigned.

"We found a lot of talented people inside these walls," O'Brien said.

The new upper management staff has received recommendations in the Arthur Andersen management study conducted last year, the COO said. Those found valid have been instituted, including better coordinating computer hardware and software procurement, refraining from seeking higher yield investments for association funds; developing a new employee handbook; investigating flex-time scheduling; expanding the work week from 37-1/2 to 40 hours; and hiring a compensation consultant to analyze roles and salaries (see related story on page XX).

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**Keystone beats challenge**

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