Kansas golf industry eyes golfers as donors

By MARK LESLIE

LAWRENCE, Kan. — The Kansas green industry has embarked on a novel endeavor with "enormous" potential, aiming to tap into the good will of golfers to raise support for turfgrass research.

Golfers using the GIN Handicap system are being asked in their billing document to donate $2 above their $9 payment to the Kansas Golf Association (KGA). In Kansas, 19,000 golfers use GIN, according to Dick Stuntz, superintendent at Alvamar Country Club in Lawrence, Kan., who has coordinated the effort through the Kansas Turfgrass Foundation (KTF) and KGA.

"We're small," Stuntz said. "But in states like Michigan, which has 80,000 GIN users, the potential is enormous."

Money raised in Kansas will fund research at Kansas State University. But research facilities around the country are starving for support, having been struck with major decreases in government aid in recent years. Success in Kansas could bode well for similar efforts elsewhere.

KTF members have privately discussed this project for four or five years, Stuntz said. He presented it to the KGA board in July and December.

Since handicapping services are competitive — and therefore price-conscious — the KGA hesitated to mandate the $2 charge, Stuntz said. But it approved KTF instituting a method to solicit funds on a voluntary basis.

The KTF first sent letters to the 160 to 170 clubs themselves explaining the campaign. It followed up with a reminder in March and with a letter to course superintendents in early April. Superintendents were asked "to go to their clubs and sell the program," Stuntz said.

"They know the decision-makers at their clubs. We don't. We're not asking the superintendent to lobby their club to add this amount on to the normal handicap charge. This system has the capability to double what it has collected," he continued.

To heck with golfers, cut grass higher. Jackson urges supers

By MARK LESLIE

UMBERLAND, Maine — Saying every cultural, biological and chemical practice possible should be used to manage turfgrass, yet stressing that fewer pesticides are available, Dr. Noel Jackson has urged golf course superintendents to use "total management." If the right product is not on the label, he said, "try the next one until you find what works." Jackson is an assistant professor of turfgrass science at Ohio State University.

"In our desire to zero out disease, we are starving for support," Jackson said. "We want to work with them to make sure the quality people expect nowadays, without pesticides." He cited grassy plants with no fungicides.

Yet, he asked: "What's happening to the fungicides? Where have Dyrene gone? Where has Tersan 919 gone? Where have the mercury fungicides gone? What are your alternatives?"

Against Takeall Patch, the immensely effective PMA (phenyl mercuric acetate) contains mercury and is no longer on the market.

Against gray snow mold, mercury fungicides "work like a charm." But, again, no more will be sold after next year.

Against leaf spot, one of the best fungicides is Dyrene, but it will not be sold any more. It would cost $5 million to re-register Dyrene, but only $1 million worth of the product is sold a year.

Professors say mixing can broaden benefits

GREENSBORO, N.C. — Tank mixing fungicides is not a new concept for many turf managers, but they may not be aware of the variety of benefits that the right combinations can provide, according to turf industry researchers.

The researchers pointed out that mixing fungicides with different modes of action can broaden the control of a broader spectrum of major turf diseases, as well as additional turf management benefits.

According to Dr. Karl Danneberger, associate professor of turfgrass science at Ohio State University, tank mixing can solve many of the problems of fungicides.

"I'm an idiot for telling you not to mow it at 1/8 inch," Jackson told Super Focus readers recently. "And you tell me I'm an idiot for telling you not to mow it at 1/8 inch."

"I'm trying to impress on you: Never manage turf to the quality people expect nowadays, without pesticides."

"It's hard to imagine why they would get that wrong," Jackson said. "We're small," Stuntz said. "But in states like Michigan, which has 80,000 GIN users, the potential is enormous."
Duo puts new face on Incline Village course for 30th

By DOUG SAUNDERS

LAKE TAHOE — "Two heads are better than one" has become an idiom of success at Incline Village, where two men trained in turfgrass management are leading an extensive overhaul of its nationally ranked Championship Course.

Leading the restoration are two superintendents: director of golf Mike Hair, and head superintendent Gary Skolnik.

Located on the north shore of Lake Tahoe, Incline Village features a classic Robert Trent Jones Sr. design, the architect once called the "ideal mountain golf course." The 6,915-yard layout rolls through thickly wooded, hilly terrain that offers spectacular views of Tahoe and the surrounding peaks of the Sierras.

The golf course is celebrating its 30th anniversary this summer. It was built as the centerpiece of Incline Village, a real-estate project that has grown into a thriving town. The Incline Village General Improvement District, which owns and operates the course, has undertaken an extensive overhaul of the course and its operations to make a resort worthy of recognition for the next 30 years.

Hair came to Incline from Colorado, where he was head super and general manager at South Suburban Country Club near Denver. His selection as Incline's director of golf in 1989 is testimony to the increasing number of superintendents moving into managerial positions.

Gary Skolnik from Bishop, California was an avid golfer at a young age and also worked in landscaping through his teens. Blending these two loves led him to enroll in the turf program to earn his Class A classification.

"So when I heard about the opening at Incline, I jumped at the chance," said Skolnik. "The Wigwam and my favorite course, Spyglass, are both Trent Jones Sr. designs. So when I heard about the opening at Incline, I jumped at the chance."

Gary Skolnik, superintendent

Palm Springs.

Skolnik's two years at the college allowed him study under renowned turf specialist Melvin Kubey, as well as do intern work at The Lakes and Mission Hills country clubs. He was the first graduate of the turf program to earn his Class A classification.

He took his knowledge and bilingual talents (Spanish) to secure work at Mission Hills, the Wigwam in Arizona, and Newport Beach Country Club. He took his first head superintendent's job at Bishop in 1990, but the opening at Incline intrigued him.

"The Wigwam and my favorite course, Spyglass, are both Trent Jones Sr. designs," Skolnik said. "The trees make this golf course," said Skolnik. "It has to be a priority to save them."

Gary Skolnik is proud of the improvements at Incline Village.

The course had been run by various outside agencies and numerous superintendents for two decades. It was up to Hair to map out a strategy to bring the course up to its true potential.

"I had to approach it from two fronts — capital improvements and operational improvements," Hair explained. "To make things go, we needed to upgrade equipment and facilities first."

For years, maintenance was run out of a small area under a deck behind the snack bar. An 8,000-square-foot maintenance building took its place, while new machinery, irrigation system and carts were procured.

Three years ago, Hair hired Gary Skolnik from Bishop Country Club in eastern California. Skolnik was an avid golfer at a young age and also worked in landscaping through his teens. Blending these two loves led him to enroll in the turf management program at the College of the Desert in Palm Springs.

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According to Hair: "Bringing Gary has been a major step for our operational improvements. His bilingual skills have helped develop a loyal staff of Latin workers. The basics of maintenance are easy, but it's the implementation that demands talent."

When Incline was built 30 years ago, construction crews had to deal with granite bedrock that held little topsoil. With little percolation or filtration, the course suffered from puddling and inconsistent conditions. Some fairways were built up with large granite boulders and covered with fill after the land had been logged out.

Skolnik's first priority was installation of a state-of-the-art irrigation system and new drainage lines. "We've put in over six miles of drainage in the last three years," said Skolnik, whose tenure at Incline has been longer than any other superintendent at the Lake Tahoe resort.

Soil samples also showed a high acidic content. To rectify this, Skolnik "sweetened" the soil with 140 tons of sugar beet lime. Walk-behind greens mowers were secured to develop smooth, fast putting surfaces.

Despite these efforts, there had been a major effort on the surrounding pine and fir forest. To deal with the threat of beetle infestation and more tree disease, Incline is working closely with the Nevada Department of Forestry to implement a forest management program to sustain the wooded areas that surround the course.

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Mixing can equal benefits

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application of Banner systemic fungicide and Daconil 2787 contact fungicide provides longer-term control of dollar spot and brown patch.

"Banner gives excellent control over dollar spot, while Daconil is strong against brown patch," said Dannberger. "Together, they actually expand the spectrum of disease control. This is a big benefit for turf managers when conditions favor both diseases.

"The benefits don't end with disease control," he added. "This mixing is the best option in resistance management. By combining two different chemical modes of action, you greatly decrease the chance for development of insensitive strains." Dr. Paul Vincelli, assistant professor of plant pathology at the University of Kentucky, agreed tank mixing is a good way to avoid insensitivity problems. "I always recommend that turf managers avoid exclusive use of any one chemistry," he said. "Tank mixing two chemicals with different modes of action is one way to accomplish this." He said that during extreme disease pressure, tank mixing can be very effective. "There are times when conditions may be right for both dollar spot and brown patch. That's when a tank mix may take care of both problems."