Like father, like son: Williams passes the torch

By Peter Blais

If the name Williams sounds familiar when it comes to the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America presidency, well, it should.

Incoming President Bruce Williams' father, Robert, 82, was president of the GCSSA in 1958 and is considered one of the major players in elevating the superintendent profession to the prominence it enjoys today.

Bruce, 46, who has been on the GCSSA board of directors since 1991, not only follows in his father's footsteps as GCSSA president but also succeeds his father as head superintendent at Bob O'Link Golf Club in Highland Park, Ill., back in 1979. Together they are the first father/son combo to ascend to the top post.

"When your dad is considered an icon in the industry and is involved in the golf business at his parents’ course, which they developed in the 1920s as part of a residential development, the entire family began working on the course when the Depression struck in 1929. By 1937, his parents had sold the course, but Robert had fallen in love with the golf industry and determined to remain a part of it. He enrolled at the Massachusetts State Extension as the University of Massachusetts TurfGrass Conference & Trade Show turns regional

By Mark Leslie

ORLANDO, Fla. — A new occupation is about to emerge on golf courses, according to the director of the U.S. Golf Association Green Section’s Mid-Continent Region.

“We will see a whole new profession: the scout,” Jim Moore predicted at Golf Course Expo, held here by Golf Course News. “The superintendent is often too busy to check the course. A scout can save thousands of dollars in pesticide applications catching problems before they start.

“The scout is not a new concept. In fact, Cornell University implemented a scouting service to area golf courses a couple of years ago. But the position exists rarely if at all on courses today.

“As we are less able to apply water and pesticides, scouts and others like them will be responsible for hitting ‘hot spots’ and other localized conditions,” Moore said. “Scouts will be more necessary and higher paid, so that courses can keep them.

Indeed, he said, the industry should study paying more and providing the personnel (both on- and off-site experts), materials, and supplies for the on-going improvement and maintenance of the 18-hole facility.

Winter months are the best time to doctor trees

By Laura Miller

A winter decrease in golf activity on courses throughout the United States provides many golf course superintendents with time to plan and perform tree maintenance. If you have limited funds and resources, pruning and planting tasks will help make effective use of this time.

Proper winter care will get trees off to a good start. During the winter you can prune trees, inspect recently planted trees and select new planting sites for the spring. By helping to prevent problems, proper pruning and planting reduces tree repair and replacement costs.

Although maintenance pruning of most shade trees can be done year-round, intensive pruning should be performed in the dormant season. Late winter to early spring, just before new growth begins, is a good time to prune trees.

Proper pruning cuts made in the winter close more rapidly than cuts made at other times of the year.

When trees lose their leaves in the winter, it is easier to spot problem areas and place pruning cuts, said Richard Rathje, a technical adviser with The Davey Tree Expert Co.

“The new leaves that emerge the following spring will help hide cuts made in the winter,” he said. “Also, pruning in late fall and early winter minimizes sap flow from pruning cuts on trees such as conifers, maple, birch and walnut.”

Winter pruning also minimizes damage to some tree species. The bark of conifers, maple, birch and walnut are fully exposed to sun all day, fully exposed forenoon only, fully exposed afternoon only, and partly sun all day, respectively.

Adding benefits to keep key personnel. “Top management companies do this,” he said. “But a lot of superintendents have no retirement plan. We’re losing experience because employees leave clubs and new ones don’t know the golf course. Lack of..."
Tips abound at Golf Course Expo

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He suggested: • Blow-cleaning equipment, thereby keeping clippings out of sewers. • Installing pesticide storage buildings, which can be bought for $50. • Above-ground storage tanks are a big advantage although, he said, they are “fading fast. The public perception is that ugly pesticide-application equipment means danger.” • Aggressively advancing crew education.

Study focuses on spike impact on surface, compaction

AMHERST, Mass. — With the advent of debate over “spiked-up” golf greens from spiked shoes, University of Massachusetts Turf Program Director William Torello is studying a number of variables including surface quality and compaction.

Turf Diagnostics & Design of Olathe, Kan., is involved in the Titleist-funded study, which began in October at the UMass National Turf Evaluation Plots. Turf Diagnostics will define the soil physics of the plots and apply the newly developed STRIPE (Sports Turf Rebound & Impact Performance Evaluation) Program to assess the compaction potential of various spike and non-spike systems.

Stephen McWilliams, president and CEO of Turf Diagnostics, said: “Our concern is the impact on the long-term agronomic operation of golf greens. In my opinion, the long-term cost-benefit agronomic performance of the spikeless technology needs further examination to deserve the industry’s endorsement.”

The Titleist research, in part, is needed to determine that the new technology is not pushing the turf toward dysfunction due to surface compaction, McWilliams said. “We will always have the disruption of golf green surface uniformity from foot traffic, whether it is from spikeless depressions or surface eruptions from spikes,” he said.