BRIEFS

CRENSHAW TO GET OLD TOM AWARD
PGA Tour great Ben Crenshaw will receive the 1997 Old Tom Morris Award from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. The presentation will take place Feb. 11 in Las Vegas at a banquet during the association's 68th International Golf Course Conference and Show. GCSAA President Bruce R. Williams said Crenshaw's actions over the years "exemplify what is best about the game. Ben's obvious love of golf is an inspiration."

SOUTHWEST SHOW SCHEDULED
PHOENIX, Ariz. — The 19th annual Southwest Horticultural Trade Show will be held here Sept. 5-6, featuring a full-day seminar on reclaimed irrigation water and several educational sessions. Sponsored by the Arizona Nursery Association, the event will display products specifically designed for the desert areas of Arizona, New Mexico, California and west Texas. The annual Xeriscape Conference, continuing education units, marketing panel and grower short course are part of the event.

FOUTY OVERSEES EXPANSION
NORTHVILLE, Mich. — Expansion is underway here at Downing Farms Golf Course and Michigan State graduate Mike Fouty has assumed the position of superintendent. Work on an additional nine holes began in January along with improvements on the original course. The 3,129-yard Harry Bowers design will incorporate wetlands and hardwoods. A 3,000-square-foot clubhouse is scheduled to open in July.

GCSAA OPENS WEB SITE
A new World Wide Web site makes information available to the general public about course management. The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America site is http://www.gcsaa.org. The initial phase will focus on the environment. Starting July 1, GCSAA members will have a private Member Services area they can log into at their convenience. GCSAA has also added a new Web-based member info@bottoms.org to gather feedback and answer questions.

MAINTENANCE

BUDGET-CUT THREAT TO NTEP AWAITS CONGRESS
By MARK LESLIE
BELTSVILLE, Md. — The air of neutrality and objectivity surrounding the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program would be in jeopar
dy if the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (ARS), according to NTEP National Director Kevin Morris, said Crenshaw's actions over the years "exemplify what is best about the game. Ben's obvious love of golf is an inspiration."

The difference between those [new and old tests] is like night and day," said NTEP National Director Kevin Morris. "They're improved aesthetically (dark green and dense) and some have better persistence" — that is, in relation to disease resistance.

"There is a whole air of neutrality that is hard to put a value on and could be threatened by moving from here." With many domestic and foreign visitors coming to the facility, NTEP

Old vs. new ryes like night and day
By MARK LESLIE
BELTSVILLE, Md. — Rest on your laurels in the ryegrass breeding industry and you'll get run over. That's the message from the latest National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) trial results which show the top ryegrass cultivars in the previous test is ranked 23rd in 1996.

"Randy Waldron makes it a daily chore to check the consistency of the roll in his greens.

Golf Course News: What has your work shown in terms of such environmental stresses as drought and salinity? Traffic stress? Water conservation strategies? Between us and the USDA. The USDA puts out a small bit of support and they get a lot of benefit from it, being able to say how much they've done for research. What NTEP gets is the credibility of running a national program associated with an unbiased, neutral organization — not for industry. It's a danger that people perceive us to work for industry. "There is a whole air of neutrality that is hard to put a value on and could be threatened by moving from here." With many domestic and foreign visitors coming to the facility, NTEP

Budget-cut threat to NTEP awaits Congress
By MARK LESLIE
BELTSVILLE, Md. — The air of neutrality and objectivity surrounding the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program would be in jeopardy if the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (ARS), according to NTEP National Director Kevin Morris, is that NTEP would have to move to new quarters outside USDA's research station here, where it uses office, laboratory and greenhouse space and feed and equipment storage areas.

More important than the finances, Morris said, is "this partnership

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Waldron keeps GC of Georgia immaculate

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Waldron's not satisfied with the way things look, he presses his walkie-talkie key and barks. But it's the bark of a professional who works just as hard as his crew does and is as fair as he is firm.

Talk with Waldron about this place and his profession: There is deep passion and commitment there. "My guys trust me," he says, "because they know how much I love this place."

When Waldron and his walkie-talkie play golf, the 4-handicapper usually stays right in the middle of the fairway, and somewhere on the green, where the game and a large percentage of maintenance work is performed.

"Actually, as a superintendent," Waldron says, "it is extremely valuable to play our golf courses. You do see things when you play golf. I urge Tim and his guys to play more golf to constantly see it from the golfer's perspective as well."

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Waldron came to the Art Hills-designed Golf Club of Georgia from the flat, sandy lands of West Palm Beach, leaving his position as superintendent of Aberdeen Golf and Country Club. It was April 1989 when he came up for a weekend look-see at what was then a primitive Golf Club of Georgia, where the property was on fire with azaleas and dogwoods in bloom. The wide-eyed 30-year-old was overwhelmed: in West Palm Beach, the only thing that frequently blooms is a good sunburn.

"I'm a guy who's been in flat Florida all my life," Waldron says. "That was my first impression. How pretty everything was."

A month later, faced with many year's worth of concentration on a world-class, 36-hole project that would require everything he had, Waldron knew he had to bring with him a personal determination, in his words, not to fall on his face. He would come to command 50 employees and a substantial annual budget.

But he was armed with an enormous amount of experience, beginning at 19 when he worked in the backyard of Jack Nicklaus' Palm Beach Gardens estate to when he finished his associates of science degree in golf course operations from his hometown Lake City (Fla.) Community College.

Positions at Los Tree Club, the Landings at Skidaway Island, Palmetto Dunes, Gulfstream Golf Club and Boca West prepared him well. Waldron knew what he was doing, and how to do it, but here's what he faced when he came north while his wife Tami packed up the house and baby Michael: a wildly enthusiastic Japanese developer who was setting up the club's eternal reputation by chunking down some big dough, but more importantly, he was offering up some stratospheric standards of quality and design: their names would be Lakeside and Creekside.

Waldron had not yet met Hajime Yamazaki, and he was a little nervous. In May 1989, only holes 10 through 14 on Lakeside had been cleared. Indeed, there was a lot to do. A lot to do right.

"It was kind of scary on some days," Waldron says.

Waldron knew this was a magnificent piece of golf property: enormous oaks, pines, dogwoods, wildlife, ponds, lakes, and ancient wetlands covered the landscape and creeks ran through each course like sparkling spider webs. But the mud. The red, wet, sticky mud. Everywhere, the red Georgia mud.

"I had never been exposed to this red mud," Waldron says. "I can remember having to get used to that and how wet it was and all the different elevation changes."

Waldron can remember his first impressions well, but he'd surely like to forget almost flipping over his pick-up truck one day during construction. It was one of them good" of Georgia mud banks he was screeching down.

Welcome north, brother.

PUTTING LESSONS

His Jeep Cherokee quietly roams the courses — cart path only — in the early morning and late evening. Waldron uses the time alone, with his walkie-talkie, to think and observe the golf courses. He stops, greenside, and takes his ever-present putter and ball up to the green. He aims anywhere. Tap. He watches the ball roll. "I feel that the greens are where everything starts on a golf course," he says. "I'm constantly out looking for changes, too. If the green doesn't look like it did yesterday — why? Is it a normal environmental condition that affected it?"

Taz Waldron watches the ball roll again. "As a golf course superintendent, that's what we strive for — perfect ball roll. So when I'm out putting on the green I'm out there to also confirm that we have quality surfaces. And I guess that's one thing I'm known for, and that's being out there alone, looking around and putting the greens. I simply get a lot of satisfaction from looking at the product and seeing my staff do a great job."

Look around. Look at the clean, pristine fairways and greens. The crisp edge of the bunkers and the creeks. To the casual observer, Waldron says, "they think it's all been done." But it isn't done. In his mind, there's more to do. Much more.

"It really never ends," he says. "Our courses are in tremendous shape. In my professional opinion, I just don't think you're going to get any better than this. But right now we're continuing our drainage projects which have been very successful over the last two years. I'd like to put a drain under every wet spot out here because drainage is a big, big goal of ours, so our members can play under all conditions."

"Efficiency. The Audubon program. Member satisfaction. Soft spikes. Those are just some of the critical day-to-day items."

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April 1990 Issue 116

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