Of specs, crumbs & broken pottery

When it comes to green construction specifications, there isn't much common ground out there: 70:30, 85:15, tiles or no tiles...

While the U.S. Golf Association openly admits its current specs should be considered a work in progress, critics continue to unfairly blast the Gang from Far Hills at every turn. The vitriol is distasteful and, for that matter, unprofessional. But the prospect of failed greens seems to preempt an unmatched level of tension in the golf course industry.

However, there is one thing everyone can agree on: The quality of sand is integral to the sound construction and success at the golf course. In the recent International Golf Course Conference and Show, I informally polled soil mixers and course construction folks on whether the sand specified was always the sand received. The consensus? About 25 percent of the time, the sand received at the construction site is not the sand specified, and the Phoenix area was singled out as a real problem area.

Responsible mixers routinely send sand to labs for testing, but poor-quality sand is a variable the industry must demystify before we can argue about better specs. • • •

On the architectural front, Rodney Wright has amicably left partners Robin Nelson and Neil Haworth to start his own design firm. The remaining two components will continue their current arrangement within the offices in Hawaii and Singapore. However, Wright will also set up shop in Singapore. Having established itself in Asia-Pacific, the new firm of Nelson Haworth is beginning to look East, to America... The American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) session in Orlando was well attended and extremely informative, especially a panel discussion featuring Rees Jones, Bobby Jones (yes, they sits next to each other and chatted amably throughout), Art Hills, Ed Seay, Pete Dye and Pete Dye. At one point, ASGCA president Jeffrey Brauer asked the panelists who recommends green construction to USGA specs. Everyone raised their hands but Pete Dye, who extolled the virtues of sand, dirt and broken pieces of pottery. Then Seay chimed in, saying he's had great success with soil mix by Mike Profile, which is “basically up broken pieces of pottery.” • • •

During the USGA session in Orlando, I was interested to see how Golf Course Groonomists,arris Hartwig, moderator praise on the practice of top dressing with crumb rubber. A few months back, our front-page story on crumb rubber was met with yawns and skepticism. But according to Hartwig, superintendent Mark Hoban has been using the stuff with success at the Standard Club in Deluth, Ga. Because of its lower density, crumb rubber does not move down through the soil profile like sand does. Hoban has discovered that light, frequent applications curb turf abrasion and compaction in high-traffic areas. Unexpectedly, they also make for better green-up come spring. Hoban even top dresses portions of his greens that are not the sand specified, and the Phoenix area was singled out as a real problem area.

Letters

HOVER MOWER MANUFACTURER Responds

to the editor:

In an article you authored in the March issue of Golf Course News entitled “Hover-mower manufacturer recapitalizes” (p. 87), we found some inaccurate statements; we feel they need to be corrected.

Flymo is referred to as a “British company with U.S. distribution” while Grasscraft is said to be manufactured by Precision Small Engine Company, in Pompano Beach, Fla., has been selling direct to the public in all of North America, the Caribbean, Europe, Australia and the West Indies for more than 17 years. Flymo units have been manufactured by Precision in our Pompano Beach, Fla., facilities for over 5 years. Not only are Flymo hovering trimmers made and sold here but they are also tested on Florida’s year-round golf courses.

You quoted Steven Searle of Grasscraft as saying that, due to their domestic manufacturing, “we can offer lower pricing and better service.” Precision guarantees the lowest prices in the industry, starting as low as $699.95 for the Flymo GTX12. And Grasscraft didn’t answer their toll-free number you printed at the end of the article, even though we repeatedly tried to call and get some of their “lower prices” and “better service.”

Douglas Oakford, Grasscraft’s vice president of sales, is also quoted in the article. He claims the 2-cycle engine “bores a little bit and you may have to pull off” when you attempt to mow “heavy lawns.”

Missive GEese have been located!

To the editor:

Re: “Canada goose count is down” (Golf Course News, February 1996)

Don’t worry. All the missing Canadian geese plus their offspring are here in Connecticut. Please re-instate the hunting season.

Bob Chailfourn, CGCS Sherrington Golf Club

Groton, Conn. Ed. — Phew! Closing goose season in the Atlantic flyway must have been a trick. No state fish and wildlife officials can rest easier... As for you, Mr. Chailfourn, have you considered a border collie?

Contributing Editor Terry Buchen filed the following report, which updates a story that appeared in the April 1995 edition of Golf Course News:

To the editor:

The back nine of The Links of North Dakota at Red Mike Resort in Williston, N.D., opened for play on July 4, 1995, with 8,000 rounds being played last year. The course needs 1,000 to 1,100 rounds per year to break even, so this year is looking good for us,” stated Stan Weeks, superintendent and part owner.

In the name of Red Mike Hill, where a horse thief was hung back in the late 1800s, the course has red golf carts, red golf tees, red golf pencils and red-colored letters on its billboard
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