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 brings with it 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 lasting of putting surfaces. In Orlando at 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 is 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 golf course specs.

On the architectural front, Rodney Wright has amicable left partners Robin Nelson and Neil Haworth to start his own design firm. The remaining two components will continue their common front within design offices in Hawaii and Superintendents League 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 sat next to each other and chatted amably throughout), Art Hills, Ed Seay, Pete Dye and Pete Dye. At one point during 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 like Mike Profile, which is basically broken up pieces of pottery.

During the USGA session in Orlando, I was interested to see a panel of Agronomists/Grass Growth Technology who were passionate in their praise of 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 Hartwigger, superintendent Mark Hoban has been using the stuff with success for three years at the Standard Club in Duluth, 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 tops dress portions of his main course with crumb rubber.

What might the future bring?

I never think of the future. It comes soon enough," said Albert Einstein. "My interest is in the future because I am going to spend the rest of my life there," said Charles Kettering, an early-1900s electrical engineer and inventor. Whatever your thoughts of the future, it will come. And folks in the golf industry may be surprised by some of the advances it brings with it.

Two very interesting comments were made at the International Golf Course Conference and Show, both pertaining to the future. Golf course architect and Old Tom Morris Award-winner Tom Furio said that instead of improvements in golf balls, clubs and other equipment, he firmly believes the greatest changes ahead will be better playing surfaces (a thanks in advance here to the plant breeders in this equation).

Meanwhile, one of my favorite superintendent's — Chief Agronomic Officer Kevin Ross of Country Club of the Rockies — put equipment advances in perspective. "We’re setting our irrigation systems with computers now — and from hand-held radios at that," he said. "I don't think a remote-control sprayer is too far away, where you could follow it along controlling it with a joystick. Golf’s technology has also come a long ways. They may someday invent a laser-controlled mower."

Satellites once reserved for the world’s governments are now beaming information down to golf course superintendents and managers. "The kids in college now are way ahead of us in technology in the field of computers," Ross said. "They have massive amounts of computer experience because they learned it in high school. These folks have had computers since they were 14, 15 years old. It will give them a big, big benefit in this field in the future. I’ve taken night courses on the computer. You have to keep up..."

On the other hand, what about golf course design — where only a handful of architects use computer software in their work and where some consider even the idea a ploy on the House of Lords?

A panel of American Society of Golf Course Architects members — Pete and Alice Dye, Robert Trent Jones Jr., Rees Jones, Ed Seay, Jeff Brauer and Art Hills — unanimously suggested in equipment has helped course design. "Dye's philosophy is when you have a maximum site. But you can’t when you have a minimal site," Bob Jones said.

"Donald Ross doesn’t have an original golf course and neither will we in 50 years. So, [to the audience] have at it [in renovating older courses]," Ross stated. "I don’t..."

The panel also had some interesting comments on entering the 21st century.

"More and more different people will be playing and we will adapt our golf courses for them... We will use less water and have a new word for pesticides..." — Alice Dye.

"We will build seven, 11-, 12- and 14-hole golf courses —" Continued on page 13

Letters

HOVER MOWER MANUFACTURER RESPONDS

To the editor:

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

Fiumo is referred to as a "British company with U.S. distribution" while Grasscraft is said to be manufactured "domestically." Fiumo 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 pace needs to increase 10,000 rounds per year to break even, so this year is looking good for us," stated Stan Weck, 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 Continued on page 12

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To the editor:

The following report, which updates a story that appeared in the April 1995 edition of Golf Course News:

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