Asian market remains strong

Just returned from Singapore where the annual Golf Asia Exhibition was held for the fifth time and, from all accounts (or all those that matter, meaning exhibitors), this show ranks with the best in terms of foot traffic.

As usual, the trade show floor is divided into a Commercial section (where exhibitors sell golf balls, clubs and shirts) and an Industry section, featuring maintenance equipment. The Industry section enjoyed strong, qualified attendance for three of the four days, while the Commercial section consistently packed, especially over the weekend. Good news for exhibitors, to say nothing of Golf Asia ‘96 organizers, International Management Group of Cleveland and Singapore-based Connexx Private Ltd.

Despite the show’s apparent success, expect some changes in 1997. For example? Well, architects will likely move from the Commercial to the Industry side next year, as designers more naturally fit in with mowers than titanium shafts. However, the move may be lessening in 1997. Why? The Southeast Asian market has matured to the point where developers needn’t trade shows to discover which architects are working in the region. Savvy developers — and there are an increasing number in Asia-Pacific — already know who the architects are.

Golf prospects in Asia-Pacific remain strong as new markets are emerging faster than older markets fade away. A good sign. Further, these older markets refuse to crash and burn. Rather they are evolving from white-hot development markets into more mature, dependable maintenance-driven markets.

The Philippines is the new hot spot, as virtually every golf course architect active in Asia-Pacific is either working or looking for work there. India is running a close second, with Vietnam and Indonesia still developing courses at a strong pace.

China remains the mystery guest. The sheer numbers there — people and dollars — prompt many to salivate almost continually. But others remain dubious, skeptical of the future.

In terms of genetic advances the future is definitely now

Remember all those old jokes about what you get when you cross a banana with a giraffe or with a blobfish? Well, we’re there, at that very point in man’s history when he can play creator (lower case)? My favorite for instance is that geneticsists actually have inserted firefly genes into tobacco to give us that suave day-glow effect. This week, Orwells. If we were discussing something other than turfgrass, this could get scary. Thankfully, I think our friends at the turfgrass genetics labs won’t be causing the trouble that mankind may possibly come out of the hospital and animal laboratories of the future, that is, Dr. Franklin Glee here, methinks; and, therefore, the golf industry can rest easy.

A whole new turf world has opened up — propelled into the future by extraordinary scientific advancements borrowed from other fields of endeavor.

You want herbicide-resistant bentgrass? It exists, is growing in the fields, and will be on the market before you know it. You want drought-tolerant turf? Salt-tolerant turf? You can hold your breath for the wait — we’ll get them soon. With funding, it will take three to five years maximum, says Dr. Mariam Sticken of Michigan State University (see story page 15). And that is but a millisecond in the normal timeframe of turfgrass development.

How important is this new wave of genetic research in what Dr. Sticklen calls the Green Revolution? She tells this story of another revolution, the Green Revolution of the 1950s: The mayor of New York writes to President Jackson, saying, “Dear Mr. President: There is a new revolution called the railroad industry. It has enormous vehicles called trains that move at the breakneck speed of 15 miles per hour. Not only do they move in trains, but they frighten cattle and women and children.” The mayor asks the president to stop the revolution.

“Mr. Jackson did many stupid things,” says Dr. Sticklen, “but, Continued on page 49

Letters

IN DEFENSE OF ALGAE FANS

To the editor:

I am confident that superintendents will continue to feel comfortable in sharing ideas through your “On the Green” column. Freely comparing main- tenance practices in the interest of propelling our profession forward and simply helping each other is one of the many facts that make this publication unique. I have read many ar- ticles, including some in your publication, that have been very helpful. Some, of course, cannot be used on every golf course, or in every situation.

Mr. Ray Kimmel of Parkview Reservoir, Freeport, Maine, hopefully realizes the importance of open discussion of new ideas, knowing they may not work in every application. Mr. Kimmel, therefore, was out of line to complain about the use of a fan to help combat algal problems (GCN, April, page 10). In giving Mr. Kimmel the benefit of the doubt, he probably knows the fans works in many in- stances — and what an opportunity for some free advertising!

Mark Leslie, Managing editor

by J. Barry Mothes in the March issue of Golf Course News and couldn’t agree more. Walking is one of the fundamental traditions of the game of golf, and it’s inconceivable that more golf course developers, owners and operators can’t figure out a way to maintain cart revenues while enhancing customer service.

Last spring, Greenwood Develop- ment Corporation announced a non-restrictive walking policy on all three of our courses at Palmetto Dunes — the Robert Trent Jones, George Fazio and Arthur Hills — as well as our Robert Cupp course at Palmetto Hall Plantation. Our guests simply pay one fee, whether they choose to walk or take a cart or walk, so there’s no lost cart revenue.

No one has complained about the one-price, ride-or-walk policy. In fact, they appreciate the fact that instead of saying “no” to walking we can now say “yes” anytime. Speed is not the issue; I agree with Mr. Jackson that the pace would be quicker, because it’s usually the better player that wants to walk. As for volume, our courses that allow golfers to walk play anywhere from 160,000 to 180,000 rounds a year. The key is customer service — and preserving the traditions of this great game.

Brett Borton, Director Advertising and P.R. Greenwood Development Corp.

Hilton Head, S.C.

The NTEP needs your help!

To the editor:

Just this week, with the pre- sentation of the FY97 budget by President Clinton to Congress, the United States Dept. of Agri- culture (USDA), Agricultural Research Service (ARS) can- celled its funding of the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) effective Oct. 1, 1996.

The USDA, ARS apparently considers the U.S. turfgrass in- dustry a very low priority because with this action, the USDA canceled essentially its only fund- ing in support of the turfgrass in- dustry. If this decision is not reversed, the USDA will have severed ties to the turfgrass in- dustry for at least 70 years of financial support.

The good news is that there is still time to reverse this deci- sion. The USDA needs to know that:

1. Turfgrass is a $30-35 billion industry in the U.S.

2. The turfgrass industry is growing faster than any other segment of agriculture. Many states including Florida, Mary- land and North Carolina have documented that turfgrass is their number one or two agricul- tural industry.

3. NTEP fits perfectly into USDA objectives such as Inte- grated Pest Management and Sustainable Agriculture (reduc- tion of inputs while maintaining quality). NTEP is an excellent example of how private indus- try, state universities and the federal government can cooper- ate to address critical issues in a cost effective manner.

4. Much positive publicity has resulted from past USDA support of turfgrass research and the NTEP. This publicity is crucial to a positive image of USDA among a growing urban population.

If you are interested in saving this fine industry, we would appreci- ate you contacting your senators and congressmen and telling them you support turfgrass re- search funding by USDA. Also, the following individuals within USDA need to hear from you:

Secretary Dan Glickman,

USDA, 2441 Old Red Bank Rd.
Room 200A
14th & Independence Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Phone: 202-720-3632

Floyd Horn, USDA, ARS Administrator

14th & Independence Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Phone: 202-245-5555

Dr. Edward Knpping

Deputy Administrator,

USDA, ARS, BAC-Wes, Bldg. 005, Room 123
Bellevue, MD 20705

301-505-5654

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact NTEP by phone (301-504-5125), fax (301-504-5167) or via the Internet (rmorris@ars.usda.gov).

Kevin Morris

National Director, NTEP

Beltsville, Md.

MORE LETTERS, PAGE 14

In terms of genetic advances the future is definitely now
MILL CREEK NEARS GRAND OPENING

Christening of the first 18 holes at Mill Creek in Geneva, Ill., is scheduled this summer. The Chicago-area layout will eventually include 27 regulation-length holes, a nine-hole par-3 track, and a golf learning center. Roy Case designed the golf facility for developer Kent Shodeen. The course will help store the 250 million gallons of storm water Mill Creek could generate.

Phillips comment

Continued from page 10

nation's bureaucracy and total unfamiliarity with the game. Many believe these factors peg China as the ultimate short-term investment.

Whether mainland China will emerge as a viable, sustainable golf market was the topic of much discussion in Singapore, mostly because Stephen Allen — a former Golf Asia organizer who left to start his own trade show in Hong Kong — is moving his second-year exhibition to Shanghai. In a Golf Course News exclusive, Mr. Allen explains his motivation for the move, in addition to his views on the Chinese golf market. See page 39.

Congratulations to GCN Managing Editor Mark Leslie who earned second prize in the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Writing Contest (see story page 32).

The winning entry was Mark's front-page story on last year's harrowing weather patterns ("Courses, supers withered by drought," October 1995). First prize went to Dave Anderson of the New York Times.

As he has been with GCN since the publication's inception eight years ago, it's hard to think of anyone who has written about maintenance issues longer or more eloquently than Mark Leslie. His recognition is richly deserved.

Everyone wants government out of their lives, right? And everyone, Republican and Democrat, seems to support smaller federal government these days, right? And with the proposed abolition of the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP), golf industry types have the opportunity to follow through on the rhetoric, right?

Right...?

Tough call. The fertilizer has hit the fan in Beltsville, Md., where Kevin Morris directs the NTEP's important work. Important to us, that is. Unfortunately, NTEP is a victim of proposed budget cuts.

Read Kevin's letter to the editor on page 10 for details.

In the 1990s, when citizens speak publicly of "special interests" lobbying to preserve their particular niches in the federal budget, their voices carry a palpable measure of scorn. But what happens when we're the "special interest"?

I guess we'll find out soon enough.

CORRECTION

Because of an editing error, there was a mistake in the March Golf Course News story on Buffalo Shoals Golf Club in Statesville, N.C. [page 51]. The architect for this project is Gene Bates of West Palm Beach, Fla.

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