MECHANICS' CORNER

Inform uninformed of winter chores

By GLENN PETERS

In the years that I have worked as a golf course equipment technician, people always ask me: "What do you do all winter?" This is the question I am asked most frequently, both by people who play the game and those who seem to think that there couldn't be very much to do once the temperature drops and the snow flies.

What follows is a brief synopsis of what happens at the Sunset Ridge Country Club maintenance facility during the winter months.

First and foremost, I prioritize what equipment will be worked on and in what order. Once this is done, the work begins with a visual inspection of each machine for obvious problems and, then, a thorough pressure washing is done. Hoods, fenders and body panels are removed to clear any accumulation of grass and dirt.

The most important aspect of our maintenance program, which affects both course playability and condition, is the sharpening of the cutting units.

All cutting units, from greens to rough, are sharpened during winter maintenance. Oil changes, lubrication, tune-ups and overhauls are performed at this time as well. As the maintenance on each piece of equipment is completed, it is inspected again and then waxed. Waxing of turf equipment...

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NEW COLUMN

This is the first of a new column, Mechanics' Corner, dealing with innovations in golf course equipment mechanical work. The following article appeared in the Sunset Ridge Country Club (Northbrook, Ill.) newsletter to inform members that the well-conditioned course they enjoyed during the summer was due, in large part, to the work done during the winter, according to Equipment Manager Glenn Peters.

Engelke: Continuing Texas A&M's pioneering character

Dr. Milt Engelke is project manager of the Turfgrass Breeding, Genetics and Management Program at Texas A&M University, where his major emphasis is developing turfgrass for the arid and semi-arid regions of the South and Southwest.

He released Prairie buffalo grass in 1989 (the first turf-type buffalo grass), three strains of creeping bentgras (Cato, Crenshaw and Mariner) and four strains ofryegrass (Pulsadies, Crowne, Cavalier and Diamond). Engelke earned his PhD in plant breeding from the University of Wisconsin/Madison in 1974 and received the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Distinguished Service Award in 1994.

Dr. Milt Engelke

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Courses battle plague of vandals

By MARCIA PASSOS DUFFY

KEENE, N.H. — Early one morning this September at Bretwood Golf Course here, Thomas Barrett saw something that would cause any superintendent’s heart to sink: scarred greens.

Joy riders had stolen golf cars during the night and had spun "doughnuts" on the 9th and 10th greens at Bretwood’s 36-hole public golf course. One golf car was in the Ashuelot River; another had a broken axle.

"It was frustrating... We work so hard all year long to keep the greens looking good,” said Barrett, who is part of the 30-year-old family-run business.

Two mornings later, the vandals were caught — red-handed — doing more damage. Keene police arrested five people, including two juvenile girls, on the golf course. But the damage they left behind totaled about $1,800 to the golf cars and about $7,000 to the greens.

Barrett’s story is not unusual. Many golf club owners and superintendents have their courses vandalized at least once a season.

"Vandalism to golf courses has been around as long as golf courses have been around,” said Bruce Williams, president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and superintendent at Bob O’Link Golf Club, an 18-hole private club in Highland Park, Ill.

Like other superintendents, Williams, who has worked at Bob O’Link for 20 years, has his own horror stories to tell. "People have poured gasoline on greens and tried to light it on fire... They’ve driven cars on the course and knocked over trees. People steal flags and signs. Our halfway house was burned to the ground. Once our... Continued from page 26

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Some of the damage caused by vandals at Bretwood Golf Course in Keene, N.H.
Mechanics' Corner: Educate the masses

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It pays off by protecting the

program does not sound time-

The goal of this mainte-

ment may seem unnecessary;

consuming, it is.

and then by preventing the

acquiring the paint and aiding in cleaning
during the season.

Although this maintenance

work in time for the upcoming golf season. So, as the 1996 golf season approaches, the membership at Sunset Ridge Country Club can be sure that the maintenance facility will be ready, even if the weather isn’t.

MALOY JOINS GREEN SECTION MID-CENTRAL REGION

Brian Maloy, the construction superintendent during a recent renovation of Great Southwest Golf Course in Grand Prairie, Texas, has joined the U.S. Golf Association Green Section as an agronomist. He will work with Mid-Continent Region Director Paul Vermeulen, who left an agronomist’s post in the Western Region to succeed Jim Moore. Moore is director of the newly created Construction Education Program. A superintendent for 10 years, Maloy worked at Indian Creek Golf Course in Carillon, Texas, and Oakridge Country Club in Garland, Texas. He holds bachelor’s degrees in agronomy and horticulture and a master’s in horticulture from Iowa State University.

Q&A: Engelke

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One problem is, we don’t re-
tire old varieties. We just add

more. Competition is healthy and ultimately provides greater choice for the consumer as long as the consumer is properly informed.

The USGA initiated Green Sec-
tion Research in 1982 and began

intensely funding breeding pro-
grams. With the exception of Poa

State, little effort had been made in
golf turf development. Efforts by

the University of Arizona, Uni-

versity of Rhode Island and Wash-

ington State University yielded im-

proved bentgrasses — SR1020,

Providence and Putter, respec-
tively. Most of the breeding effort
in creeping bentgrass was an aside
to the primary mission of their programs and consequently very little support was available for timely or rapid advancement.

GCN: Where can we expect to see the greatest advances in turfgrass research in the next 10 to 20 years?

ME: Biotechnology will play an even more important role in the development and advancement of new turfgrasses, although it will be somewhat hampered in the short term due to restrictions on the exchange of genes and germplasm resources. In the long term, we will be able to transfer desirable genes across plant species to accelerate the development process. The turf industry will likely face many challenges due to the self-interest of selected user groups. We have already seen major efforts to restrict turf use in many Southern cities because of the perception turf consumes too much water. Educational efforts are needed to promote turf as the “glue” that unites the environment and helps keep it intact.

GCN: Do the golf-related as-
sociations do a good job of allo-
cating their research dollars?

ME: The USGA, GCSAA and similar organizations have funded research for decades, mostly in small grants to numerous individuals and institutions. Unfortunately, most of these dollars were only supplemental or generally of minor nature, meaning a significant piece of research was seldom accomplished. With the advent of the USGA Green Section research effort, the number of grants were significantly reduced. However, the level of funding substantially increased, enabling serious research efforts to be put forth in fewer but significant areas. The initial emphasis targeted breeding (which requires a long-term effort with significant funding) along with understanding the physiological development and performance of grasses under stress conditions. The shift in attitude enabled the industry to substantially improve varieties and management strategies because funding was consolidated into significant and continuously accountable grants.