DNA fingerprinting pegs rogue cultivars

By Larry Kieffer

TAMPA, Fla. — Developing techniques to identify “off-types” of Bermudagrass through DNA analysis has become a market-driven research project in Florida. Superintendents in the state increasingly face job insecurity as these off-types appear on their golf courses, particularly on the greens.

The objective is to find a reliable means of verifying a cultivar before it is planted. With his job on the line, the superintendent wants to make sure he is getting what his boss is paying for.

“We have found that DNA fingerprinting has proved to be a powerful tool for identifying off-types in Tifway Bermudagrass,” said Dr. Phil Busey, one of four researchers with the University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

“The recent minimum wage hike ... Superintendent Brett Har ris shares a novel approach to turf cultivation ... just say, ‘street cleaner’?”}

Minimum Impact

Course managers and supers need not despair over the recent minimum wage hike ... 13

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What’s new in the marketplace? ... 50

Course marketing entering new media

• The Internet

By Peter Blais

ST. GEORGE, Utah — Developers of a golf and residential community in southwest Utah have started their own web page to keep the 2,000 investors informed about the project’s status on a daily basis.

Golf Ventures Inc., a publicly traded company specializing in golf and related real-estate development, is building Red Hawk International Golf Community, located 30 minutes from Zion National Park and 90 minutes from Las Vegas.

Through its web site — www.gvim.com — GVI keeps investors apprised of daily developments at the 670-acre project, home to a 27-hole Fred Couples/ Gene Bates-designed golf course, clubhouse, tennis facilities and 945 residences. The first phase, 18 holes and 114 dwelling units, should be completed by spring 1998.

“We use a digital camera to take photos and update them on the web page on a regular basis,” com-
Red Hawk web page

Continued from page 1

pany President and major shareholder George Badger said in late August. "We'll use photos of the groundbreaking this Friday [Aug. 23]. We can display the golf architect's drawings or sketched designs of some of the amenities.

"The information is accessible to brokerage and investment firms who deal with potential investors. We can put SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission] filings, stock values and real-estate values, as well as photos of what is actually happening on the course or house lots right on the web page. It's a great marketing tool."

Red Hawk is GVI's flagship project. The St. George area is being marketed as a second Palm Springs, cooler in summer and hotter in winter than nearby Las Vegas. Badger said. The company president expects Red Hawk to draw most of its members and homeowners from the Utah Front Range communities of Salt Lake City, Ogden, Provo and Logan as well as from the surrounding states of Montana, Idaho, Colorado and Wyoming. Public play will be allowed until the course reaches 300 members, according to the company.

"We're looking at four other projects that are within a couple of hours of St. George by air," Badger said.

control of crabgrass, goosegrass and other tough weeds. Consistent control that lasts for up to 26 weeks depending on the rate you choose. For even more confidence and security, Barricade keeps golf shoes and everything else on your course stain-free. And since you're applying as little as one-fourth as much active ingredient, you'll reduce worker exposure and lessen the environmental load. What's more, its low water solubility means Barricade will stay right where you put it, even on slopes and hillsides. Choose from two different formulations; on-fertilizer and sprayable.

Barricade really can provide the added confidence and security you need. But only if you apply it.

For more details, talk to your authorized Barricade distributor, Sandoz sales representative or call 1-800-248-7763.

Minimum wage

Continued from page 39

his starting pay scale from $5.50 per hour to $7 to $7.50 per hour in order to attract better quality applicants and lower employee turnover.

"We get around 20 applicants for job openings now," Sloan estimated. "We were only getting two to three before. Our choices were much more limited. I'm glad the minimum wage is going up. The jobs we ask people to do on a golf course aren't the easiest in the world."

Across the border in Jackson, Miss., Country Club of Jackson superintendent Stephen Harrell said the minimum-wage increase would have little or no effect on courses in his area.

"If it had any, it would just be with the summertime help," he said. "But courses around here hire a lot of summer help from the Mississippi State University Cooperative program. Alabama courses pay the $5.50 an hour plus room and board to work there. We have to pay them at least $5.50 in order to compete. The last thing the members want to hear is the course is in bad shape because we don't have enough people to maintain it."

Even in the poorer sections of the Northeast, laborers generally make above minimum wage.

"I start new people at $5 to $5.50 an hour, depending on experience and references," said Jim Hodge, head superintendent at Val Halla Golf Club in Cumberland, Maine, and the state's representative to the September Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Chapter Relations Meeting. "If people return the following summer, they can generally expect a raise."

"I don't think we'll have to raise our starting wages 50 cents just because the minimum went up that amount, though. People like working here because they get to play some golf, work outside and are done for the day around 1 p.m. They like this a lot better than flipping burgers."

The issue was discussed at the GCSAA's annual Chapter Relations Meeting. GCSAA media spokesman Jeff Bollig said a recent survey noted that golf courses typically pay well above the minimum wage, i.e. an average $6.49 for greens crew workers, $7 for gardeners and $8.56 for office assistants.

"We've gotten a lot of questions about it on our web site," Bollig said. "One of the concerns was that raising the minimum wage would have a trickle up effect that would cause golf courses to raise wages on the lower end. An increase in the minimum wage could do that in some cases."
Advertising can be effective: if done correctly

By MARK LESLIE

LINCOLNSHIRE, Ill. — Frequent advertising on television and radio works, but effectiveness can be gained much more cheaply, according to Vince Alfonso Jr., president of Alfonso Creative Golf Enterprises in Williamsville.

Advertising salespersons try to sell frequency, but golf course operators should pay no attention, advises Alfonso, who is leading a one-hour presentation on “Turning On to TV and Radio” during the Public Golf Forum Oct. 28-29 as well as a one-day post-conference workshop here, Oct. 30.

A sampling of the tips Alfonso will give in his presentations includes:
- Don’t be overcome by that sales push for buying frequent ads. “All of a sudden, in their first outreach, they [operators] think of big dollars or are told of big dollars and they rush for the look at other [advertising] vehicles.”
- Don’t be intimidated by appearing in your own ad. “Anticipating a TV shot, the first thing a person thinks is, ‘I’m not able, I’ve got to hire a professional.’ They need to do some homework first. The idea is to equip them with the information they need to go home and get the job done.”
- Don’t be frightened by the talk of $1 million-a-minute ads on the Super Bowl broadcast. “People hear that and think that in the smallest logical increment for them, it will cost $1,000 or $10,000 a minute, and they run from the idea. They operate in an absence of information and are not comparing apples and apples.”
- Road block. “If I wanted to gain new customers with radio, I would run a commercial on all the radio stations in our market (that is, say, 100,000-population cities, not New York City, Chicago, or LA). You might have four or five stations. I would run an ad at the same time of the day — preferably drive-time. It’s called ‘road blocking.’ Listeners have to hear my commercial.”
- “You’re doing this on a reasonable trial investment of dollars,” Alfonso added, “seven days a week times five stations.”
- Eliminate for new customers. “When golfers come to the pro shop and say what stations they heard the ad on, I eliminate those stations and concentrate on the stations where my customers don’t listen because I want new customers.”

The Andersons’ Tee Time with NUTRALENE formulations incorporate the industry’s ideal nitrogen source together with advanced, small particle fertilizer. In these or other fertilizer formulas you may select, NUTRALENE works two ways. You get an initial release of nitrogen followed up with a slow, controlled-release that can feed up to 16 weeks. You get it green and it stays green longer.

The Andersons' Tee Time with NUTRALENE formulations incorporate the industry's ideal nitrogen source together with advanced, small particle fertilizer. In these or other fertilizer formulas you may select, NUTRALENE works two ways. You get an initial release of nitrogen followed up with a slow, controlled-release that can feed up to 16 weeks. You get it green and it stays green longer.

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TV and Radio

Continued from page 1

The Forum, sponsored by Golf Course News Oct. 27-29 at Marriott’s Lincolnshire Resort, is the only national golf conference presenting course owners, managers, developers and superintendents at public-access golf facilities.

“Of course, when you want to market your facilities to people who are not strangers any more. The idea is to equip them with the information they need to go home and get the job done.”

“Anticipating a TV shot, the first thing a person thinks is, ‘I’m not able, I’ve got to hire a professional.’ They need to do some homework first. The idea is to equip them with the information they need to go home and get the job done.”

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“People hear that and think that in the smallest logical increment for them, it will cost $1,000 or $10,000 a minute, and they run from the idea. They operate in an absence of information and are not comparing apples and apples.”

“Road block. “If I wanted to gain new customers with radio, I would run a commercial on all the radio stations in our market (that is, say, 100,000-population cities, not New York City, Chicago, or LA). You might have four or five stations. I would run an ad at the same time of the day — preferably drive-time. It’s called ‘road blocking.’ Listeners have to hear my commercial.”

“You’re doing this on a reasonable trial investment of dollars,” Alfonso added, “seven days a week times five stations.”

Eliminate for new customers. “When golfers come to the pro shop and say what stations they heard the ad on, I eliminate those stations and concentrate on the stations where my customers don’t listen because I want new customers.”

Of course, when you want to communicate with your present customer base, you use those stations.”

Use the “creatures-of-habit” approach. “I feel people set their radios to their station and leave it there,” Alfonso said. “While they’re getting ready for work they’re listening to the same station. I will run a commercial on a news talk station from Monday 6 to 7 a.m., Tuesday from 7 to 8, Wednesday from 8 to 9, Thursday from 6 to 7 and Friday from 2 to 8. I’ve bought five commercials. Everyone who listens has heard it in two time frames.

“After two weeks, those people can’t distinguish if I’m on there every day or not. In 18 years I’ve done this and people have told me they hear me every day on the radio. I’m not there but they think I am. I multiply my dollar value by buying that particular schedule.”

“A radio station won’t tell you that because they’re making their money selling frequency.

They want you to buy two spots an hour for five days. They’re not lying because it will work, but you don’t have to do all that.”

“Be constant with advertising. It pays big long-term dividends.”

“If you’re on the radio for nine weeks, even if you’re not on afterward, golfers think you are.”

“During his seminar, Alfonso will delve into use of local stations’ in-house talent, independent production companies, cable stations, pre-commercial planning and post-production costs, among other issues.

“I’m trying to encourage golf course owners to turn the tide — to learn the whole story, not the half-truth about TV and radio advertising,” Alfonso said, “so they can be better equipped. Maybe TV or radio will work for them.

“The point is that a course with a $12 or $25 greens fee had better have a mission, know what and how they want to communicate, put out a budget and get the job done as best as they can using everything at their disposal.”

In a room of 350 PGA pros at a recent function, only two acknowledged using TV or radio, Alfonso said, adding that golf owners and operators have simply not kept pace with technology.

“We’re catching up fast,” Alfonso said. “Computers in the golf shop are not strangers any more. The same thing is happening in terms of how we market our facilities.

“It’s no longer just the big courses that spend television and radio money. We all want the most efficient use of our advertising, promotion and marketing dollars.

“In this workshop, we want people to learn more about these types of opportunities which can only benefit them economically. That’s what this is all about. How can I gain information that will help me go home and improve my bottom line?”

Alfonso’s 8 a.m.-5 p.m. session will include information on what to do and not do in TV and radio promotions, what to say and when and where to buy advertising. It will also feature critiques of attendees’ video and radio spots as well as two “Star Search” periods.

“We want participants to send us video and radio spots ahead of
Ree Star
Continued from page 39

Yonke. Like Yonke, Jeff was reared in daily operations. He
carried Colbert's Golf Manager
of the Year in 1990 and has man-
aged 10 courses. He is in charge
of marketing all Fore Star prop-
erties and manages Picacho Hills
Country Club in Las Cruces,
N.M. Gary oversees Fore Star's
financial and administrative func-
tions. A certified public accoun-
tant, he served 16 years as chief
financial officer of AGF Indus-
tries, a $500 million company.

Fore Star has grown steadily,
adding one or two courses annu-
ally. In addition to Meadowbrook
and Picacho Hills, the company
operates Hollywood Park Golf Cen-
ter in Los Angeles, Hound Hollow
Golf Center in Portland, Ore., The
Links at Sierra Blanca in Ruidoso,
N.M., and Scott Park Municipal Golf
Course in Silver City, N.M.

"I've seen other companies
have growth spurs where they've
added a bunch of courses at
once and then played catch-
up until they could manage them
efficiently," Yonke said. We want
to have a more planned growth
and stay within our means to be a
daily part of each operation.

TV and radio
Continued from previous page

time if possible — for critique
purposes," Alfonso said. "We want
what they think are their best and
worst commercials. They might
have loved one but it was a bomb,
or vice versa. We'll discuss them."

The idea of Star Search ses-
sions, he said, is "to find that
latent personality and bring it out
that day. We will videotape it and
show them just what they look
like doing their own commercials.
Some people may not like how
they look on TV or sound on ra-
dio, but it may be just the ticket.
This may have tremendous value."

Learning how to most effec-
tively use all media for promo-
tions can exponentially multiply
profits, Alfonso said. "Everything I've
done in the last 10 years," he said, "has three
components: direct mail, radio and
television. Research shows that if
you were able to communicate your
message in one medium, you have
made one impression.

If a person hears the same
message on the radio that they
see in the newspaper, you have
made more than two impres-
sions... When they then see a
billboard saying the same thing,
and co-owns another facility. But
the firm prefers leases.

"Our last two courses have
been leases from municipalities," Yonke said. "They fit well into
our niche. Municipalities have
usually overlooked certain
things for many years. We try to
focus on those first. It's often the
lack of an on-site manager. The
golf pro and superintendent usu-
ally answer to different people
within the city government and
it makes it difficult to get things
done. We put one person, the
general manager, in charge of
both positions and things run
more smoothly."

Fore Star found some major cap-
ital improvements were needed
at Meadowbrook. The company
sunk more than $1 million into the
complex, including a total club-
house renovation that "gave us
the opportunity to run the opera-
tion smoothly," Yonke said.

Though small compared to
some major management compa-
nies, Yonke prefers to see Fore
Star's size as an advantage.

"Large companies have to pri-
oritize their problems," he said.
"An individual course that is part
of a six-course group has a better
chance of someone noticing its
problems and getting them taken
care of than one in a 200- to 300-
course portfolio."

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while fighting the effects of adverse conditions.

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