

GOLF COURSE NEWS

THE NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

A UNITED PUBLICATION
VOLUME 8, NUMBER 10
OCTOBER 1996 • \$4.50

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By LARRY KIEFFER

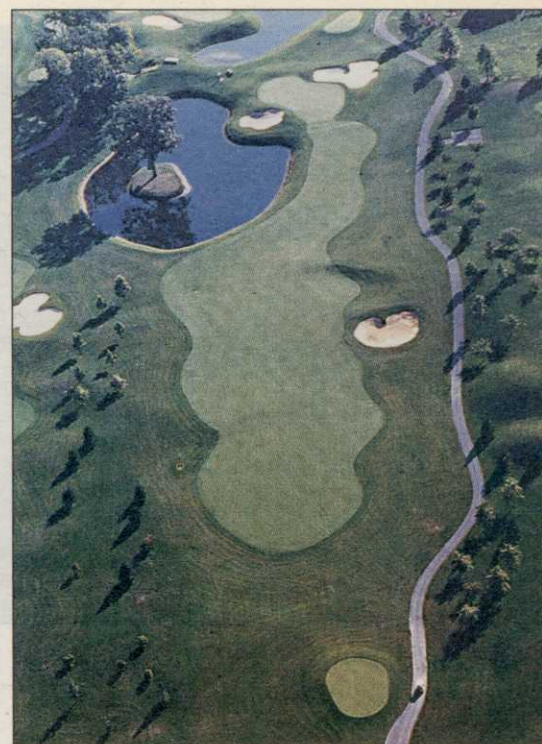
TAMPA, Fla. — Developing techniques to identify "off-types" of Bermuda grass through DNA analysis has become a market-driven research project in Florida. Superintendents in the state increasingly face job insecurity as these off-types appear on their golf courses, particularly on the greens.

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 Bermuda grass," said Dr. Phil Busey, one of four researchers with the University of Florida's Institute of Food

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FERTIGATION OVERVIEW

This blimp shot of the 10th hole at Bent Creek Country Club in Lancaster, Pa., was taken last August at the height of heat and humidity season. How did superintendent H. James Loke maintain such color and plant vitality? The answer is fertigation. See this month's Super Focus on page 22.

Biosolids gain favor

By MARK LESLIE

OGUNQUIT, Maine — Nutrient-rich, disease-suppressant "biosolid" compost is gaining support and becoming a player in the world of golf course design and maintenance.

Some took notice when Firestone Country Club used a biosolid compost to rebuild its greens two years ago. Others have watched as several courses in Ohio purchased the Kurtz Bros.' sludge compost product, Technigrow.

Now courses are contracting companies like Kurtz and Brown & Ferris Industries (BFI) to provide biosolids for the root-zone mix on greens in new course construction and

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Forum Update
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U.S. OPEN GOES PUBLIC IN 2002

Score another victory for public-access golf in America: The U.S. Golf Association will, for the first time, conduct its Open Championship at a publicly-owned facility: the Black Course at Bethpage State Park on Long Island (the par-3, 17th is shown here). For story, see page 3.

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-

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• TV and Radio

By MARK LESLIE

LINCOLNSHIRE, Ill. — Intimidated by the mere thought of doing a television or radio commercial — the dynamics, the costs, the stage fright — most golf course operators flee exclusively to other media to promote their facilities.

Resist no longer, urges Vince Alfonso Jr., president of Alfonso Creative Golf Enterprises in Williamsville, Ill. Alfonso will conduct a one-day seminar, "Marketing Your Course on TV and Radio," following the Public Golf Forum here this month.

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THE GAME'S THE THING

Architect Ken Kavanaugh said he won't compromise the game for appearance's sake. See story page 29.

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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 lead-

ing 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 withdraw to 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 all week 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 from 6 to 7 a.m., Tuesday from 7 to 8, Wednesday from 8 to 9, Thursday from 6 to 7 and Friday from 7 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 \$28 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."

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 serving course owners, managers, developers and superintendents at public-access golf facilities.

"No one in the industry, to my knowledge, has ever done a television and radio workshop where you can spend a day to get information on how this all works," said Alfonso, past president of the National Golf Course Own-

ers Association and former co-owner of The Rail in Springfield whose background also includes many years managing some widely known music stars.

"Most [general managers and pros] are dependent on the professional at the local TV or radio station, or on the station's sales department, or an independent production firm. Some of these people are phenomenal. Some are very responsible and stay within budget. But an owner of a course could benefit greatly by learning more about it themselves."

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

Continued on next page

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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Fore Star

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Yonke. Like Yonke, Jeff was reared in daily operations. He received Colbert's Golf Manager of the Year in 1990 and has managed 10 courses. He is in charge of marketing all Fore Star properties and manages Picacho Hills Country Club in Las Cruces, N.M. Gary oversees Fore Star's financial and administrative functions. A certified public accountant, he served 16 years as chief financial officer of AGF Industries, a \$500 million company.

Fore Star has grown steadily, adding one or two courses annually. In addition to Meadowbrook and Picacho Hills, the company operates Hollywood Park Golf Center 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 spurts where they've added a bunch of courses all 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 sessions, 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 radio, but it may be just the ticket. This may have tremendous value."

Learning how to most effectively use all media for promotions 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 impressions... When they then see a billboard saying the same thing, you don't have three messages but maybe 9. And when they watch the news that night and see it on television, it's not four impressions, it's 16."

To register for the Forum and/or the post-conference workshop contact the *Golf Course News* Conference Group at 207-846-0600.

"We've added one or two properties a year. I see that continuing, especially since it takes three years to get a course operating the way you want. The first year you fix what's broken. The second you institute a marketing plan. The third year, hopefully, all your work begins to pay off."

Fore Star's primary focus is on acquiring long-term leases coupled with purchase options, if possible. It also provides man-

agement and consulting services 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 usually 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 capital improvements were needed at Meadowbrook. The company sunk more than \$1 million into the complex, including a total clubhouse renovation that "gave us the opportunity to run the opera-

tion smoothly," Yonke said.

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

"Large companies have to prioritize 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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