Stressed Out!

Superintendents and their turf living too close to the edge, say researchers

By Mark Leslie

Montreal — Declaring that "pre-stress conditioning" will be the new buzz word in turfgrass management, Dr. Joseph DiPaola told Canadian superintendents here they should develop long-term agronomic plans for their golf courses.

Speaking at the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association's International Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show, DiPaola said: "Our job is very simply to grow tomorrow's turf today. We have to be in a position of putting plants in place for next month, for next summer, well in advance of stress..."

"The heads-up is that we are going to be hearing more about pre-stress conditioning... We don't have all the answers right now. But we've got better answers today than we had five or 10 years ago. We can

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Course taking shape atop Montana Superfund site

By Mark Leslie

Anaconda, Mont. — It's a legend before its own time, designed by a legend in his own time. Old Works Golf Course won't open until May 31, yet it has already made its mark: A Superfund cleanup site, which Jack Nicklaus called "one of the ugliest properties I've ever seen," transformed into a golf course that builder Chip Roe lauded as "breathtaking."

The former copper mine closed more than 90 years ago, but left behind a legacy of arsenic over its 250 acres. Turning it from a moonscape-like wasteland into a safe golf course

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GolfSouth finds partner and funding source in ClubLink

By Hal Phillips

Greenville, S.C. — To compete for today's course operations contracts, it takes more than for-profit management credentials. It takes deep pockets. The pockets at GolfSouth LLC just got deeper following its alliance with Canada's only publicly owned golf course company, ClubLink. ClubLink and the founders of GolfSouth — N. Barton Tuck, Jr. and Derrill E. Hunter — have agreed the Toronto-based firm will initially fund certain capital for GolfSouth through loans. The pact also gives ClubLink an option to acquire the shares held by Tuck and Hunter in exchange for ClubLink shares.

For ClubLink, which operates six private clubs in Ontario, the alliance means a toehold in the U.S. market. For GolfSouth, it means the ability to compete with the increasing number of management companies which boast built-in funding sources. Among those firms hell-bent on acquisition are Santa Monica, Calif.-based

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PGA Tour, Deere ink 3-tiered deal

By Hal Phillips

Moline, Ill. — In a deal that impacts three distinct segments of the golf industry, John Deere has reached an unprecedented nine-year agreement with the PGA Tour to provide turf equipment to the Tournament Players Club (TPC) network of courses, assume title sponsorship of the Quad City Classic and provide 385 acres for a new TPC course development here.

The nine-year partnership — comprising three consecutive 3-year leases — was announced at an April 2 news conference at Deere's world headquarters.

Other golf industry corporations have associated themselves with professional tour events, including The Scott Company's sponsorship of The Tradition,
Metamorphosis: Nicklaus, Roe turn Superfund site into course

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presented immense technical and engineering problems — problems tangled in a web of legal hassles, extraordinary safety procedures and a sense of (as Roe said) "doing something for the children."

"It has transformed this whole piece of property," said Old Works GC superintendent Fred Soller Jr. "Plus, the scope of the entire project has attracted a lot of interest from the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] and scrutiny from people around the country waiting to see if it will fly."

Indeed, has any project drawn so much attention from so many varied groups? The federal and state EPAs had representatives on site every day during construction. The Montana Fish and Wildlife Department, U.S. Department of Justice, environmentalists of every ilk, sportsmen, townspeople... they all kept close tabs on the work.

"There are 100-year-old pictures that show not one blade of grass was growing on that 200 acres," said Kirk Welsh, director of field operations for North America for Nicklaus Design.

Soller confirmed the deadness of the property in his initial contact with the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program. He listed "none" under "existing species." Yet, today there are moose, elk, deer, bluebirds... "You name it, it's amazing," said Welsh.

Twenty-one holes of bentgrass tees and greens, fescue-bent fairways and fine fescue roughs are entering final stages of growth in preparation for the May 21 opening and Nicklaus' personal inaugural round sometime in July.

"When grass started turning green people were driving off the road," said Sandy Stash, general manager for the County of Deer Lodge. "Existing species." Yet, today there are moose, elk, deer, bluebirds... "You name it, it's amazing," said Welsh.

ARCO sought a better way out. Grabbing hold of an off-the-cuff suggestion of a golf course from the then-county manager, the company began several years of negotiations with the federal EPA. The struggle, she said, was convincing the state, EPA and Department of Justice that this was a good idea.

"Once they bought into the concept they were a wonderful partner," Stash said. ARCO spent about $15 million building Old Works. It will be turned over to the County of Deer Lodge and operated by the local golf authority board.

Approvals aside, building a golf course on a smelting site, with its ovens and flues, was a chore that consumed most of Tom Roe & Son Construction's time for nearly three years.

Some parts of the work took twice as long as normal — two weeks instead of...
First, Soller explained, sub-drainage was installed. Roe capped this with 2 inches of crushed limestone as a buffer zone between the subgrade and the cap. An 18-inch layer of heavy clay material was then spread over the whole site, and on top of that, a sand-loam material in which compost was incorporated. Roe’s crews spread 60-mil PVC liner under the bunkers, greens, tees and the site’s two lakes. Special care was taken with the greens. Herringbone drainage was installed. The liner was cut and fit down in the drainage, with the intent that no water will penetrate. Engineers felt that the gravel layer of the greens might puncture the liner, so a 3/8-inch felt material was laid over the liner. Only then were the normal U.S. Golf Association-spec greens built — minus only the choker layer.

The materials used? The subgrade took 600,000 cubic yards of material, while trucks hauled in 550,000 cubic yards of heavy clay and 150,000 cubic yards for the growth cap, said Soller. Chip Roe estimated that there were 500,000 square feet of liner under one of the two manmade lakes and 200,000 square feet under the other. The water supply, Soller said, comes from on-site wells and from water captured by the lining material. The front nine drains into a lake on the 5th hole. When that overflows, it feeds into the second lake on the back nine, which serves as the irrigation pond.

Perhaps most eye-catching of all the facets of the course is the jet-black sand in the bunkers. Created decades ago when water was pumped into the hot slag from the mining operation, the sand, Nicklaus said, is the best material he has ever hit out of in his life. "Thomas Turf Labs tested it out beautifully," Soller confirmed, "and it gives the course a really unique appearance."

A number of waste bunkers (called "low-maintenance bunkers" on this Superfund site) give the course aesthetic flash as well. Through it all, Nicklaus has carried the mining theme through to the finished product. Old flues and ovens provide a fascinating backdrop to the fairways, greens and tees.

"The idea," Nicklaus said, "was to put up signs at each hole to give a brief history for people to understand what’s there... the historic period, how it was used, what it was used for, for people to read as they go. It’s like a museum."

The result is a Nicklaus design that sits halfway between Glacier and Yellowstone national parks, with a $20 green fee.

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