

Turf speakers bureau the next step in battle for public opinion

For years we've urged superintendents to take a larger role in their communities, to join local conservation commissions, to speak to garden clubs, to share their knowledge of turf and the environment with potentially skeptical neighbors. What better way to convince people that course managers aren't the spray-wielding, leach-happy, pesticidal maniacs they're often portrayed to be?

In this vein, we offer our applause to RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment), the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) and the Pro-

fessional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA). These three organizations have taken it upon themselves to form a speakers bureau, supplying turf-industry toastmasters, if you will, to groups in the Midwest and, eventually, nationwide (see story page 53).

Modeled after a similar and successful program administered by the American Crop Protection Association, the Ambassador Speakers Program is a vital step forward in the battle for public opinion.



Hal Phillips,
editor

However, even a program as admirable as the Ambassadors will not succeed on its own. While national or regional exposure is never a detriment, we are convinced that golf's positive environmental story must be disseminated on a local level to truly take hold. In other words, a superintendent can make as important an impression on his or her Rotary Club as any heavyweight can at the Pennsylvania Legislative Summit.

Think and act national. Think and act local.

The perils of a second Clinton Administration?

While a Republican Congress and Democratic president cross swords over the next four years, and maybe share lock-up cells, perhaps the golf industry will survive. But will it be more difficult?

Although Congress has fulfilled 80-odd percent of the Republicans' Contract with America, there is no sight of major tax reform — no across-the-board cuts, no corporate gains tax reductions, no elimination of the estate tax, no flat-tax proposal, let alone campaign finance reform.

Election-year promises? Seems so, so far. And though conservatives may lick their chops at the thought of our president in the slammer, I can think of no more disruptive occurrence for our society. That would put the nation — and the economy — in limbo... or worse. The golf industry continues to move along, probably about 400 more courses in 1996, and it does not need a national emergency of this magnitude. Contemplate it just for a minute, please.

Plus, the Bible urges us to "pray for your leaders..." so that you can live in peace. With the New Year being ushered in, this appears to be a good time to begin.



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

One sign of the impact a second-term Administration can have is new limits on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Nation Wide Permit (NWP) 26, which considerably tightens development around wetlands (see page 1). What can be wrought by a second-term official — they need only be a Cabinet member — who needs not worry about re-election?

"When the Democrats got re-elected, the regulatory people felt a little more aggressive," surmised Ron Boyd, president of Williamsburg Environmental Group, Inc. when talking about NWP 26. "Once Clinton got re-elected they tightened up on these 'Nation Wides' and took the chance the Republicans wouldn't override it."

Speed kills: According to U.S. Golf Association Green Section Mid-Continent Director Paul Vermeulen, in 1976 Seattle GC had the fastest Stimpmeter readings on the West Coast: 8 feet, 5 inches. San Francisco and Bel-Air were at 6-10 and Los Angeles Country Club was at 7-0. At an increased speed of a foot every 10 years, pretty soon we can all putt on the NASA launching pad.

Never say golf course architects are humorless. Asked what effects the Baby Boomer

generation will have on golf courses, American Society of Golf Course Architects comic Jeffrey Brauer mentioned one impact I bet you never thought of: "The course managers will have to stock more Maloox and Pepto Bismal." Not to be outdone, colleague John LaFoy recalled: "At Birmingham CC they put railroad ties along the perimeters of all the golf holes. The members said it really was nice but it was hard getting the carts up over them."

Some of my favorite comments from the Maintenance Track at Public Golf Forum (see Forum-related stories on pages 15 and 62).

• "You can spend a long time in a filing cabinet, or you can get a computer." — Kevin Ross, superintendent at Country Club of the Rockies

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Letters

FLORIDA MAYOR'S ACTIONS TOUCH NERVES IN WISCONSIN

To the editor:

The Tallahassee, Fla. mayor obviously thinks, as do so many politicians, that rules apply to others and not to him [*GCN*, November 1996].

In my opinion he is the one who should be suspended without pay, not the golf course employee who was doing the job he's paid for. If the rules apply to other residents, members and non-members, why don't they apply to the mayor?

Scott Krause,
owner/manager
PGA Master Professional
Course operations
consultant
Muskego Lakes CC
Muskego, Wis.

To the editor:

Mike Osley, the employee of Hilarare Golf Course in Tallahassee, Fla., who turned the sprinkler system on Mayor Ron Weaver ought to have been commended instead of disciplined with suspension and loss of pay [*GCN*, November 1996].

Does Weaver, being the mayor, believe he is above abiding by course rules which others are expected to follow? Apparently he had no business playing before the 7 a.m. opening hour and fully deserved the soaking, perhaps even a reprimand.

Les Willard, owner
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Crist: Legal footing?

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the soft spikes revolution, if its implementation is not carefully managed.

In my view, two main things are needed: (1) education of the consumer who buys the shoes, e.g., pamphlets and warnings in the shoe box, such as Foot Joy and Etonic are already doing, and (2) generous use of signage at facilities, posting areas and conditions that may be dangerous to soft spike wearers.

The bottom line is that soft spikes do not impart as good a "grip" as metal spikes do. And people are going to slip and fall using the soft

spikes in the precise activity for which they were designed and sold. If an injury is serious, given the nature of our system, litigation will follow. The shoe companies and the facility operators will do much better in resolving the liability dilemma if they can point to an appropriate consumer education program about the risks associated with soft spikes, and adequate on-course signage informing and warning players about particularly dangerous areas and conditions.

"Yes, your honor, I'll never play golf, or even walk again. But on the other hand, their greens are beautiful."

I wouldn't want to be sitting in court somewhere hearing those words.

Leslie comment

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and *GCV* editorial advisor.

• "It's agronomics [not the beauty of a course's trees] that will carry you into the future. You all like trees, but I'll tell you: The game of golf is played from blade to blade — not from limb to limb." — Bob Brame, director of the USGA Green Section North-Central Region.

• "It's wrong to think of golf course maintenance as a deep

black hole. The golf course operation is the [facility's] biggest money-producer." — Tommy Witt, superintendent at Wynstone Golf Club and a director of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

• "We all have customers. Our customer is the employee." — Ted Horton, vice president of resource management, Pebble Beach Co.

Also from Horton: "Golf course superintendency is a tough job. Don't wear yourself out. Don't wear your employees out. Take care of your health first, your family next, and the job will take care of itself."

...

The father-son relationships in the world of golf course design are educational (see story, page 35). Jay Morrish sent son Carter off to study landscape architecture, then to work for Wadsworth Golf Construction Co. for several years. As the elder Morrish explained: "One day Brent [Wadsworth] called me and said, 'You either have to take him back, or I have to promote him.' So I took him back and told him, 'You think your education is done, but it's not. So he enrolled in a Tulsa school specializing in drafting and took a crash course in turf management. You still are not even close,' I told him, so I sent him to work with [superintendent] Gary Grigg at Shadow Glen and told Gary, 'You have a slave for the growing season. Teach him.' Then he came back and I said, 'Now, you are in a position to start learning something.' He has done it all now."

Asked if his 18-year-old son, a student at the Air Force Academy, has shown interest in joining his golf course architectural firm, Design 3, W. Bruce Matthews III said: "Yes, he has. I look at him as being the corporate pilot."

...

The chemical revolution in the golf industry has died, overthrown by a new type of revolutionary, according to Tom Mead.

Mead, formerly of Crystal Downs and now an agronomy consultant with course architect Tom Doak, reported the trend is toward using fewer chemicals and more biologicals — because of pressure both from superintendents and the government.

"Of our clients, everybody is more aware of the environment in 1997," Mead said. "The environment is discussed from the beginning. It's a key part of the discussion."

"I started in 1969 and land-use issues weren't even known at that time. It has evolved to where we are right now: Everyone is fairly sophisticated; there are a lot of different viewpoints; and it's become more complicated because there is more input from different backgrounds, which makes the product better overall."

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