Stress tests bear fruit
Super-dwarf Bermudas gain favor

By Mark Leslie
BELTSVILLE, Md. — Turfgrass breeders are concentrating more on warm-season varieties than cool-season types and their work is bearing fruit, some of it extraordinary, according to the national director of the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP).

Advances are being reported on the zoysiagrass and seeded Bermudagrass fronts, yet vegetative Bermudas may prove the greatest immediate impact on golf courses, said NTEP’s Kevin Morris. “Even though bentgrass is the ultimate in quality in the South, as some of the newer Bermudas come out that rival the bents in texture, people will move away from the bents in stressful areas,” Morris predicted.

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Operations biz has new Player: Gary

By Hal Phillips
SINGAPORE — Not content with its considerable presence in the design, golf academy and club-manufacturing markets, The Gary Player Group has entered the course operations business, touting a full-service ability to develop, manage and brand its member clubs.

Unveiled here at Golf Asia ’97, Gary Player Management Services (GPMS) has already signed its first club, Verdemar Golf Club, a Philippine project still in the early stages of development. However, don’t read too much into the GPMS decision to launch in Asia-Pacific, where its sister course-design and academy division services are better established, compared to the U.S.

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Participation rates lag, compared to course supply

By Peter Blais
Golf’s two main growth indicators, the number of golfers and rounds played, remained relatively flat at 25 million and 477 million, respectively, in 1996, according to a National Golf Foundation (NGF) report.

But while demand continued stagnant, the golf industry continued to increase the course supply at a near-record rate, with 442 courses coming on line last year. Though concerned about this seeming demand/supply imbalance, the NGF and others remain optimistic about golf’s future, pegging their hopes on the continued interest of aging Baby Boomers and the newfound interest of their offspring, the so-called Echo Boomers.

“I don’t think those numbers are a true indicator of the interest in the game,” said Myrtle Beach, S.C. architect/developer Ken Tomlinson, who

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