Sugarloaf's Ed Michaud: A man of two worlds
By MARK LESLIE
ARRABASSETT, Maine — Ed Michaud may just transform the phrase "jack of all trades, master of none" into "master of both." The Sugarloaf Golf Club superintendent has kept his course in the No. 1 ranking in this state for years while gaining each year, the territory at Sugarloaf USA Ski Area the best resort park in North America, while ranking Sugarloaf one of the top five resorts on the continent for snowboarding.

From the world where he for nine years has maintained the "bunkers," "berms" and "greens" of Sugarloaf Golf Club, Michaud five winters ago began sculpting Sugarloaf USA's snowboarding world of "pipes," "parks," "table tops" and "pyramids."

His reputation for keeping the golf course in top shape despite the battles with heavy and lingering snows may already have been overshadowed by his wintertime work, where local boarders and skiers revere his artistry and where Sugarloaf owner American Ski Co. (ASC) is sending him around the country preparing slopes for national snowboarding championships.

Instead of carting around hose, plug-cutters and other greenkeeping paraphernalia behind his truckster, Michaud is operating a Snowcat with a Halfpipe Grinder mounted on the front, or dragging a mammoth Pipe Dragon behind a Bombardier groomer.

In addition to building Sugarloaf's giant slalom and half-pipe for the only giant slalom and half-pipe for the only Men's Journal last year listed Sugarloaf USA's nationally top-ranked terrain park, above right.

"Aesthetics isn't as big in the park, but it's very important first thing in the morning when you're standing there and it's all groomed perfect — no chunks or ridges. Whether it feels like it's riding wonderful because it looks so appetizing," Michaud said.

"It's the same idea of the aesthetics on the golf course when you're the first one out there, and it's all stripped up and everything looks crisp and sharp. If it looks good and you get that good first impression aesthetically, then it plays well. Whether it plays any different or not doesn't matter, because in your mind it is playing better because it looks so nice."

Maintaining an edge with his two jobs is a balancing act for Michaud.

"This time of the year [mid-March]," he said, "I feel the pressure of getting behind on the golf course job. I haven't had time to shop for the best price on equipment. I come down here [maintenance complex] April 1, a month before the crew begins. So, it's difficult. I could be busy enough with planning, working on the computer and getting the course when his work is done!

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Tifton Lab earns A2LA accreditation

TIFTON, Ga. — Tifton Physical Soil Testing Laboratory, Inc. became an accredited laboratory on Feb. 4 by the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) for technical competence in the field of Geotechnical (Putting Green Materials) Testing.

The A2LA is a non-profit, scientific, membership organization dedicated to the formal recognition of testing laboratories and related organizations which have achieved a demonstrated level of competence. Accreditation demonstrates ongoing competency by the lab in performing the required tests specified by the U.S. Golf Association (USGA) for Putting Green Construction Recommendations.

The USGA recommends that only A2LA accredited laboratories be used for testing and analyzing materials for building greens according to specific guidelines. The company's president and owner, Powell Gaines, served on the review panel and offered much technical expertise to the USGA in writing the 1993 revision of the USGA Green Construction Recommendations.

Focus on Michaud

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The 3rd hole at Sugarloaf Golf Club, Maine's top-ranked golf course, under Ed Michaud's care.

Michaud's work ethic and hired him to help finish the golf course, installing the irrigation system, seeding and as a shaper.

When the work was done, Michaud stayed on to operate the complex irrigation system, and when superintendent George Howe left in 1989, Michaud was hired as head superintendent. He attended the University of Massachusetts' Winter School for Turfgrass Managers and dropped his management position in the grooming department, although continuing to work for it.

Still, the two jobs overlap.

"Last year we skied until June 1," he said, "and we had two weekends of 'Ski and Tee,' so imagine what kind of shape I would have been in running both those departments."

Which of the jobs does Michaud prefer?

"Both have good and bad points," he said. "The snowboarding job in the past was more relaxed and the expectations were less; but as I get more involved in national events and national championships, the pressure is on and the expectations are about the same as with golfers."

"The snow is not living. It gets icy, you can push snow on top of it, groom out, and it's fixed. You don't have a soil profile and micro-organisms working for or against you. Snow doesn't get thirsty or sick... You don't worry about an outbreak of snow mold."

"On the other hand, you don't get the feeling of satisfaction that you get from looking at the golf course at peak foliage. It may be the best pipe on the East Coast, but it's not alive and living and depending on you to feed and water it and give it medicine when it's sick."

Softspikes continues suit parade

ROCKVILLE, Md.—Softspikes, Inc., has filed separate lawsuits against four manufacturers of alternative golf cleats, claiming violation of intellectual properties against patents the company holds in Canada. The four manufacturers are Green Keeper, Flatspikes, Smart Spikes and Gripper Golf Cleats.

"These lawsuits are a continuation of an aggressive position the Softspikes, Inc., has taken, and will continue to take to vigorously protect our intellectual properties," said CEO Jon Hyman.

Softspikes has 12 issued patents in the United States, with 12 more patents pending. In addition to Canada, Softspikes has other patents issued in the United Kingdom, Japan and Australia.