

BRIEFS



**IGM NAMES WEST COAST MANAGER**

**PALM DESERT, Calif.** — International Golf Maintenance, Inc. (IGM) has named Z. Gordon Davidson regional manager of the West Coast office here. Davidson is a 1976 business administration graduate of California Baptist University and holds a masters of divinity degree from Biola University in La Mirada, Calif. He is a member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, National Golf Course Owners Association, National Recreation and Park Administration and U.S. Golf Association. "Z's experience in the contractual maintenance business will be a great asset to our team," said Scott Zakany, executive vice president of IGM.

**HEART OF AMERICA SETS CONFERENCE**

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.**—The Heart of America Golf Course Superintendents Association (HAGCSA) announced its 1998 Golf & Turf Conference will be held Nov. 4-5 at Harrah's North Kansas City Hotel & Conference Center here. This is the third annual event, featuring seminars and exhibits. The conference will feature a full day of programming for certified golf course superintendents, with tested Continuing Education Units, and a full-day U.S. Golf Association program for superintendents, club managers and other decision-makers from golf courses throughout the Midwest. Classes will be offered on advanced turf, landscaping and customer service for golf course employees. More information is available from Olivia Golden, HAGCSA, P.O. Box 419264, Kansas City, Mo. 64141-6264; e-mail [ogolden@westernassn.com](mailto:ogolden@westernassn.com).

**British scientists work on grass that stays green**

By TREVOR LEDGER

**ABERYSTWYTH, Wales** — Working from a strain of meadow fescue that stays green during drought and remains lush throughout all seasons, the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research (IGER) is working to develop a perennial ryegrass with the same attributes.

IGER hopes to have seed available on the market around the turn of the century, according to Dr. Brian Clifford, coordinator of amenity and sports turf.

"All plant varieties have to go

through trials and stand up against other conventional varieties for other characteristics," Clifford said. "They have to get on a national list and meet certain DUS (Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability) trial requirements. Once you have that, you can market it in the UK."

IGER scientists said they discovered the so-called "staygreen" gene which causes yellowing in plants when the leaves are destined to die. By using DNA fingerprinting techniques to map



genes, scientists are able to "silence" the gene responsible for yellowing.

Plants turn yellow when placed under stress like heat, drought, salinity, pests, diseases, time and pollution. While the gene

does not stop those stresses, it does remove the symptom — yellowing.

Official trials at the Sports Turf Research Institute are under way and it is hoped that approval of new grass strains incorporating the "staygreen"

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Nancy Pierce at Crowbush Cove, where the ocean is always "a presence."

**The Maritimes are home for Crowbush's Pierce**

By PETER BLAIS

**PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, Canada** — There were a lot of nervous PEI course owners when head superintendent Nancy Pierce's facility, Crowbush Cove, opened in 1993.

"They were afraid Crowbush would take away all their business," Pierce recalled of the north shore course that has received numerous awards and in late July hosted the Export "A" Skins Game featuring Mark O'Meara, Fred Couples, John Daly and Canadian Mike Weir. "But golf rounds are up on the whole island since we opened. You can't get a tee time anywhere, unless you call ahead."

"The Skins game was just amazing. We had 500 people on the course on the busiest day of last year's Canadian Amateur Championship. We had more than 5,000 a day for this year's Skins game. And it was televised in more than 50 countries. The Tourist Board has gotten hundreds of calls about golf on PEI since then."

Equally gratifying to Pierce were the many calls and faxes she received following the Skins game from fellow Canadian superintendents congratulating her on the course conditions and how well that reflected on Canadian golf.

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**COMMENTARY**

**Use soil's natural storage capacity during grow-in**

By RICK KROEGER

Technology has improved mowing equipment. Ingenuity has created aeration equipment, which technology improved further. Science has developed biological pesticides. And fertilizers have become available in so many forms, it's difficult to keep up with all the new trade names.

Yet superintendents seem reluctant to abandon the old standby: "15-15-15 before planting." Because our knowledge of soil and water science has also improved, I feel it's time to re-evaluate this approach.

As the variety of readily available fertilizers has multiplied, superintendents have latched onto products which they understand and trust through experience — that is to say, through consistently safe usage.

Favorite products become favorites through predictability. Most superintendents have similar stories to tell about the time they tried "hype product X" and scrambled to recover from some form of negative fallout.

The wiser superintendents have returned to predictable, economical and environmentally responsible elemental fertilizers. They apply these to the ultimate storage system — the soil — for continuous availability, much as we store food in our pantries or refrigerators. Establishing and maintaining the nutritional balance of soil reserves allows the plant to energize its own genetic defenses against heat, drought, insects and disease. It also fortifies the plant to healthfully regenerate itself in response to close mowing and associ-

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Rick Kroeger, CGCS, is president of Kroeger Worldwide, a golf course management and consulting firm based in Rockford, Ill. Kroeger is the consulting agronomist to GolfPlan, a design firm based in Santa Rosa, Calif.

**Workbench perfected at Wuskowhan club**

By TERRY BUCHEN

**WEST OLIVE, Mich.** — One of the advantages of building a new turf-care center is the ability to incorporate new concepts along with time-tested winning ideas. Designing the equipment mechanic's workbench is one way to have some fun. And that's exactly what superintendent



SHOP TALK

Superintendent Ronald A. Brandon and his crew built this workbench complex.



## Pierce earns accolades for Crowbush's conditions

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"Mike Wier's caddie sought me out of the crowd to tell me how much the players enjoyed the course," she said. "The organizers said this was the best Skins game yet because of the enthusiasm of the staff and everyone on PEI."

The accolades may be surpris-

ing considering Pierce had never set foot on a golf course "except as a short cut to get from my house to school" when she graduated from the University of Guelph with her bachelor's degree in ecology in the early 1980s. She worked for several years as a technician in the university's Botany Department

before a job opening doing turfgrass research in the Horticulture Department brought her under the guidance of renowned Canadian turfgrass researcher Dr. Jack Eggens.

Pierce maintained turf plots at the school and at several private Toronto clubs that worked with Eggens and his staff. Pierce

found she enjoyed her time on the links and jumped at the chance to become Bob Brewster's assistant superintendent when he took over Toronto Golf Club.

"It was tough to leave the university setting," she recalled. "There's nothing quite like it — the facilities, the people, the at-

mosphere. But there was something about the golf course and being able to see the results of your work almost immediately. Plus it's just a beautiful place to work."

Pierce spent two years as second assistant at Toronto GC before migrating south to Pinehurst (N.C.) National shortly after the Jack Nicklaus design opened. She had every intention of remaining in the United States. But just two months after accepting the position, the Royal Canadian Golf Association recruited her for a post at Belvedere Golf & Winter Club in Charlottetown PEI.

"My parents were from Atlantic Canada and I had always vacationed there," she said. "It was just too good an opportunity to pass up."

After several years at Belvedere, the provincial government offered her the head superintendent position at what many people were predicting would soon become the island's top course, Crowbush Cove. She arrived in January 1992, in time to oversee the grow-in prior to the course opening in 1993.

"[Architect] Tom McBroom was here every 10 days or so that first summer," she recalled. "The course looked like it would be intimidating to maintain with all the bunkers and the wind. And we were going to have a small staff [12 people]. But I couldn't wait."

Pierce's first grow-in experience was a pleasurable one. "There were absolutely no golfers," she recalled. "You could water whenever and wherever you wanted. The greens didn't have to be cut every day. You had time to play with and fix the little things you never get a chance to do once the course opens."

"But it was also a hectic time. The seedlings were so tender you had to be extremely careful. We had a number of washouts during construction and you always had to contend with the wind. But it was a lot of fun. And the course was perfect opening day."

While perfect from day one, few guessed the course would meet with such success in so short a time. *Golf Digest* voted it 1994's Best New Course in Canada and has awarded it a coveted five-star rating. *SCORE Magazine* ranked it among Canada's top 10 layouts. In addition to the recent Skins Game, it has hosted a Canadian Tour event and the Canadian Amateur. While it has benefited from its oceanside location and McBroom's design skills, Crowbush has also thrived because of the care Pierce lavishes upon it.

"She certainly is not out of her league," said Merlin Affleck, superintendent at nearby Stanhope

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## The workbench

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Ronald A. Brandon, equipment mechanic Chris Boyce and the crew did at Wuskowhan Players Club in this Grand Rapids suburb.

"Our mechanic's workbenches were built in-house whenever possible to have total control," said Brandon, a certified golf course superintendent. "We are very pleased with the

way our equipment shop area turned out. We have great employees at our club and we put our collective heads together."

The workbenches are 40 inches high and 27 inches deep. The tops are covered with 1/8-inch plated steel that is welded at the corners. The steel is covered with Rustoleum 9100 Series 2 — Part Epoxy, which provides a firm and hard finish, Brandon said.

On areas of the benchtops that

receive extra wear and tear, the Wuskowhan crew covered the metal with 3/8-inch rubber matting. They painted the epoxy product onto the matting and the top 6 inches on the wall above the bench.

The bottom kickboard was painted a dark red for high visibility for safety and decorative reasons. The 12- by 6- by 18-inch drawers are a metal modular type that were bought locally. They

hold many everyday items, such as ball-washer parts and aerifier tines, and the contents of each drawer are clearly identified with a plastic label.

Two larger doors — 24 by 14 inches — hold grease rags, towels, lapping compound, string line, trimmer spools and heads, tow straps and jumper cables.

Electric outlets above the benches are a quad type, with all of them on a single 30-amp cir-

cuit breaker. The bench grinder, air hose with quick disconnects and drill-bit holders fit nicely while allowing plenty of room to work.

Two additional benches were built out 90 degrees from the wall-mounted benches. These contain mechanic's vises and quarter-inch solid steel for truing-up greens-mowers. Because of the 90-degree angle, mechanics can walk on three sides of the bench and easily work on the equipment.

## Crowbush's Nancy Pierce

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Golf Club and treasurer of the Canadian Golf Course Superintendents Association. "She's very good at what she does. The success she and the course have had has helped convince the operators of other courses on PEI to improve their operations."

Said Pierce: "I do the best I can. No one would ever call me lazy. I'm up at 4:30 a.m. seven days a week from May through October. We have a small staff so I'm out there cutting greens and raking bunkers. But it's a great life."

That 12-person staff was small and very inexperienced as recently as last summer when a change in the provincial government led to numerous personnel changes at provincial-owned Crowbush. "All I did was teach last summer," Pierce remembered. "And we had a tough winter. But the crew and the course came through great."

Pierce's biggest challenge since the tournament has been keeping the right amount of water on the course through the dry weather that settled over the Maritimes this summer. Crowbush is one of the few layouts on the island with double-row irrigation through the fairways and sprinklers on tees and greens. "But we're still seeing a lot of isolated dry spots and the roughs are turning brown. People still want to see green grass," she said.

Though it is changing, people also generally expect to see a man when they ask to see the Crowbush superintendent.

"Being a woman has never been a disadvantage," Pierce said. "If anything, it has been an advantage. When I'm with a group of superintendents, I'm often the one outsiders remember."

As for the future, she said: "There are days when every superintendent says 'I'm ready to quit this place.' But when I stand on the 11th hole and look out at the ocean, I know it doesn't get any better than this. Right now, I plan to stay here as long as they'll have me. I know I'd never move out of the Maritimes. I love it here."

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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