International superintendents report progress and challenges

By PETER B LAI S

ORLANDO, Florida, USA — Representatives from around the globe presented updates on their associations and the state of golf in their countries during the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's International Summit at the recent International Conference and Show.

Following is a summary of their comments:

• Indonesia — The Indonesian superintendents association (ASPGI) was established roughly three years ago, according to Garry Crothers. The association lists more than 100 members and meets every two months. The Pacific Rim economic crisis has basically halted new course construction in the country. One part-time person is involved in turfgrass research in Indonesia. But Indonesian superintendents are still seeking educational opportunities abroad while developing their own educational programs.

• Sweden — The Swedish Greenkeepers Association is committed to environmental programs, said Stig Persson. The group's environmental efforts are chronicled at the ecologyunit.com web site. The association also recently moved its office to Skytteholm, Ekero S-17890; telephone 46 823336.

• Britain — Even though more than 100 new courses will open throughout Continental Europe in 1999, new golf course development has slowed, according to Howard Swan of the British Institute of Golf Course Architects. Still, certain areas, particularly Central Europe, have huge development potential. There are three main European architects' associations located in France, Germany and Britain. The British Institute has 60 members, with half in Britain and half scattered throughout Europe.

The British Institute offers a post-graduate program in golf course architecture at a university in Surrey. The program lists 21 students from nine different countries.

• Ireland — The number of courses in Ireland has doubled in the past 10 years, according to Joseph Bedford a member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of Ireland. The 2005 Ryder Cup will be held south of Dublin.

There is a growing demand for improved playing conditions and most superintendents are hungry for the knowledge needed to provide those conditions. The Irish association has its own conference, trade show and magazine. British architect Howard Swan and U.S. professor Paul Rieke will speak at the group's 5th annual conference. Insuring job security is a major priority for Irish greenkeepers, who are working with members of the Irish Golf Course Owners Association to improve the situation.

Northern Ireland has its own greenkeepers' association. Plans are to eventually merge the two Irish associations.

Because of its small size, the Irish association will continue to depend on and need to communicate with the Ecology Unit and other European associations.

• South African GCSA — The government has challenged the golf industry to help correct some of the societal problems of the past, according to Nigel Butler of the South African superintendents association. Some superintendents are conducting training and literacy classes that extend beyond the workforce and into the employees' families. The government sees sports, like golf, as an instrument of bringing peace to the country.

• International Greenkeepers Association (Germany) — Last year the 700-member IGA signed an agreement with the German Golf Association to share a new office in the golf association's building in

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GCSAA adding staff for 1st Tee

LAWRENCE, Kansas — The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America plans to hire a full-time staffer to oversee the national organization’s efforts with The First Tee program and other junior golf programs nationwide.

GCSAA spokesman Jeff Bollig said GCSAA hopes to hire someone for the position by April.

1. The new hire would likely work in the career development office where he or she would assume responsibility for GCSAA’s initiatives with The First Tee, various junior golf initiatives, GCSAA student chapters and other youth-oriented programs. Those responsibilities are currently spread among existing board and staff members.

GCSAA’s decision to become more involved in The First Tee program and the importance of the superintendent in maintaining these new facilities led to the decision to create this new position,” Bollig said.

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