

BRIEFS



GCSAA BACKS JUNIOR GOLF

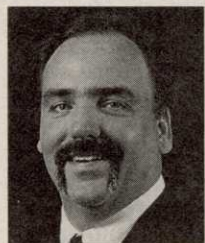
LAWRENCE, Kan. — Continuing its support of junior golf initiatives, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) has donated \$10,000 to the American Junior Golf Association (AJGA) in support of its 1999 qualifying and tournament sites. The funds will be directed for supplies used in marking golf courses for competition. "The golf course superintendent has a strong affinity for junior golf initiatives," said GCSAA President Dave Fearis of Blue Hills Country Club in Kansas City, Mo. "A vast majority chose the profession because of positive experiences with the game and golf course in their childhood."



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REDSTONE HIRES WALKER

HOUSTON — The Redstone Group has announced the appointment of Johnny Walker as superintendent of its new project, which includes the adjacent Shadow Hawk Golf Club and The Houstonian Golf Club, two Rees Jones-designed layouts under construction in Fort Bend County. Walker has been superintendent at Inwood Forest Golf and Country Club and at Weston Lakes Country Club in Houston. He is a member of the board of directors for the Lone Star Golf Course Superintendents Association and the South Texas Golf Course Superintendents Association, where he served as president in 1996 and 1997.



Johnny Walker

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NTEP OFFERS CUSTOM ANALYSIS

BELTSVILLE, Md. — The National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) has announced a new service, Custom Data Analysis, for its members and other interested parties. Developed at the request of many members and sponsoring companies, the service allows more specific data analysis than is currently presented in NTEP annual or final reports. Three unique data analysis options are offered. Option 1 provides a regional or local analysis of data using locations the client specifies. If the client's interest is identifying the top grasses for summer performance or other seasons, option 2 fits the bill. To compare the performance of only a select group of varieties, people should choose option 3.

USGA extends research into 21st century

By MARK LESLIE

FAR HILLS, N.J. — Buoyed by progress in "genetic transformation" of turfgrasses, discoveries on the environmental impact of golf and various other projects, the U.S. Golf Association (USGA) Green Section is preparing for another round of research funding.

Having poured \$17 million into research in the last 17 years, the Green Section Research Committee sent out a call for proposals in late May and expects to make final decisions on projects in November,

according to Green Section National Director Jim Snow.

The USGA doubled the research budget in 1990 when it added environmental projects to the mix. With many of those environmental questions now answered, the USGA will re-concentrate its efforts on "working with a lot of different grasses — including some native types that haven't been traditionally used on golf courses — and developing the grasses for the future that will require less pesticide and water use," Snow said. "Also, we're spending a fair amount of money

on genetic transformation."

The new funding will be a little different than in the past because the Research Committee will select projects for two- or three-year periods.

There is \$200,000 per year in the budget for projects that will begin next year, but more than \$500,000 per year for those starting in 2001, Snow said. Some of those studies will be renewed if necessary.

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Russell discovers: Yes, you can go home again

By PETER BLAIS

BANDON, Ore. — Troy Russell grew up on a dairy farm in the neighboring town of Coquille, four miles from Bandon Dunes. In fact, as a teenager, Russell raced motorcycles on the eventual course site, which was then called The Circus.

"Lo and behold, now I work here," said the 40-year-old head superintendent of Bandon Dunes, the southern Oregon links-style course hard on the Pacific Ocean.



The Gleneagles Development Corp. layout opened this spring to rave reviews and is expected to be among the finalists for top new course in various media polls. *Golfweek* already voted Bandon Dunes among its top resort courses and among the top 10 courses overall to open in the past 40 years.

"I'd be lying if I said I didn't feel a little pressure [to keep the course maintained in line with the accolades]," Russell added. "We just try to go out and do what we do. As long as they



Bandon Dunes was raising golfers' expectations even before it was completed.

[management] allow us to keep doing our job, we're perfectly happy."

Russell knew at a young age he didn't want to be a dairy farmer and eventually gave up motocross ("An ambulance ride ended my motorcycle career," he said.). But while he left the dairy farm and bike racing behind, he never lost his attraction to the southern Oregon coast.

"I love it here," said Russell, whose parents still live on the nearby farm where he grew up. "But when I was 18, I didn't want to farm and the only other thing here was the timber economy. I didn't want to work in the woods or mill, so I went off to pursue other things."

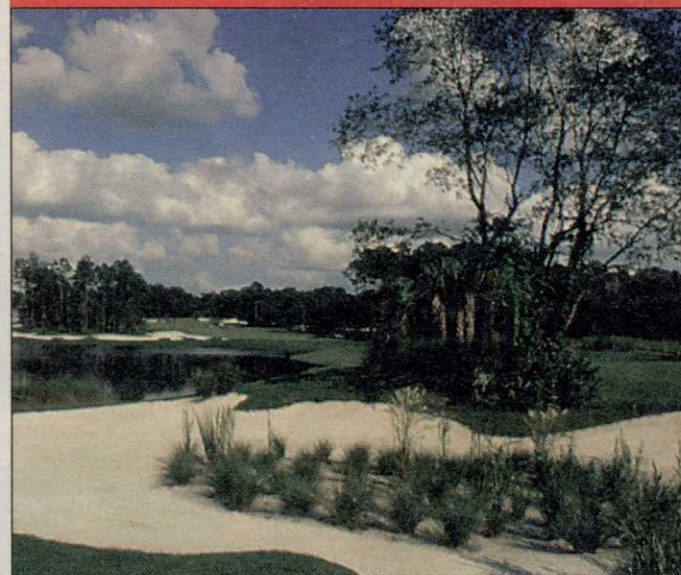


After high school, he moved to the Willamette Valley, attending Oregon State University (OSU) and eventually purchasing a Coast Range wine vineyard, which he still owns. Russell returned to OSU and received a bachelor's degree in horticulture with an emphasis in turf management in 1995.

"The first time I went through Oregon State I was in agricultural and resource economics," Russell said. "I had classes with some guys in the turf program and I always thought if I ever had a chance to go back to school, that's what I'd do. I

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GOLF AND THE ENVIRONMENT



The Legacy Club at Alaqua Lakes in Longwood, Fla., has become the third non-private course in the world to become a member of the Audubon Cooperative Signature Sanctuary Program. Taylor Woodrow Communities is the developer and operator of the golf course, which opened last Sept. 1. See story, page 15.

Flying high

Birdwatching Open looks good for golf

By JEAN MacKAY

Do golf courses provide suitable habitat for a diversity of bird species? The results of Audubon International's 1999 North American Birdwatching Open suggest that a great variety of birds can indeed be found on courses. A total of 310 different bird species were sighted in this year's one-day bird count, held May 8 to coincide with International Migratory Bird Day.

Forty-eight courses in the United States and Canada participated in the event. Because all participating courses are Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries or Audubon Signature Sanctuaries, the North American Golf Course Bird Watching Open generated valuable data about the types of species found on courses that are managed with wildlife and the environment in mind.

For the second year in a row, The Club at Seabrook Island in South Carolina soared to the top of the list of participants,

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USGA funding

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He said that "given the urgency of environmental issues and needing to know what impact golf courses had on the environment, that research has been the most important."

While the long-term development of new turf varieties is a step-by-step process, questions about such issues as pes-

ticide leaching and runoff needed to be answered quickly.

The results of that research? "It's good [news] and bad," Snow said, "but mostly good. Even the bad part is good, because we can say that with most products there is practically no chance of leaching or runoff, and even with those where there is a chance, they can be managed successfully if applied properly."

Environmentalists, he said,

"realize we're not saying there is no problem. We're saying we've learned how to manage them and we can recommend to superintendents how to apply them so that they won't have a significant impact. We realize there can be problems, so we have to keep up our guard all the time."

The high-technology genetic research may bring the grandest results.

"It's successful," Snow said.

"They [scientists] have been able to accomplish quite a bit. They've been able to make the genetic transformation by transferring genes and seeing them suppress disease, or transfer tolerance to herbicides — that sort of thing.

"They did genetic transfer very quickly — more quickly than they thought possible. That turned out to be fairly easy. That means that in the future we will be successful in getting other

genes into grasses."

The sticking point may be instilling those new genetic characteristics into a breeding program and developing the type of grass desirable for golf courses.

"That could take another five to 10 years," Snow said.

Meanwhile, there is concern about introducing genetically-transformed plants into the environment. For instance, bentgrass is a premier golfing turf, but in some agricultural fields it is considered a noxious weed. If a bentgrass were developed to be resistant to Roundup and were to cross with wild bentgrass types in the field, farmers could not control the weeds.

"Herbicide resistance is one thing," Snow said. "In terms of stress factors, probably most people are not too concerned about grasses being engineered for drought tolerance. There's not much for anyone to object to there. Delays from federal agencies probably will depend on what genes we're talking about."

Of ants and flies

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and more important for golf course superintendents, especially as chemical products are taken off the market. And the ant and parasitic fly studies are indicative of this work that is being done at universities across the United States.

At the University of Kentucky, Dr. Daniel Potter, an entomologist, started a three-year study in 1998 to evaluate the role of ants as "beneficial predators in golf turf," while developing "tactics for managing mound-building pest ants on putting greens with reduced environmental risk or impact on beneficial species."

"Ants, the most abundant insects inhabiting turfgrass, are highly efficient predators on eggs and larvae of cutworms, grubs and other pest insects," reported Potter, whose \$105,000 three-year study extends through 2000. "On golf courses, however, the positive aspects of ant predation must be weighed against the fact that some species build nests and mounds on putting greens and tees."

Potter's research at Kentucky courses revealed that virtually all of the mound-building problems in close-cut creeping bentgrass are caused by one species, *Lasius neoniger*. This species appears to be the major nuisance ant on courses throughout much of the country, he said.

Since surface insecticides usually won't eliminate these ants because they fail to reach the ground-nesting queen, Potter evaluated two methods for suppressing the mounding. The first involved using target-selective

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GOLF COURSE NEWS

All in a Day's Work.

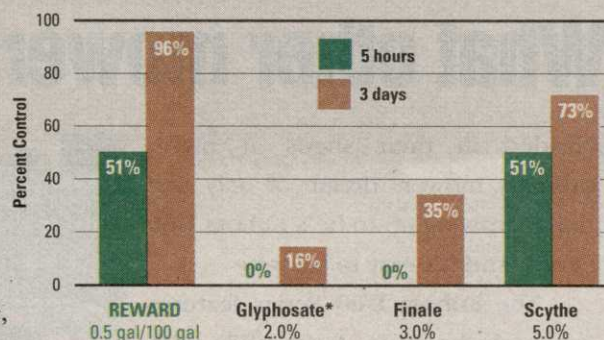


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