Natural progress for supers

Kansas State University, State University of New York-Delhi. Who is next in the sweepstakes to become the "ultimate, deluxe, hybrid" educator of future golf course superintendents/general managers? Penn State, Michigan State, Rutgers, Texas A&M, Guelph...

The list of excellent turfgrass management schools goes on and on in North America. We are truly blessed in that way. And now, advancing" into general manager positions, K-State's Colbert Hills Golf Course. "We are teaching the students that opportunities exist. When they finish here, they will have training in point-of-sales, merchandizing, the pro shop, food-and-beverage, the golf course..." They are positioned to do a great job."

"What we hope to achieve in the 21st century is to get out of the box," said Thaddeus Morales, SUNY-Delhi's turfgrass professor and department chairman, explaining the school will teach the entire "team" for golf courses: superintendent, general manager and head pro.

K-State's enrollment tripled when it announced its new curriculum in 1998. Sounds like journalism schools in the wake of Watergate. We're betting few investigative journalism. Excitement reigns today as students foresee possibilities of a more comprehensive and promising future for superintendents. It seems like a natural progression — if a person is so inclined. Many of the thousands of superintendents working today went into the profession because they loved the earth, working outdoors, growing things, etc. They had no proclivity toward general manager-type jobs, and they still have none.

But, for those who believe they may want to take that step some day, the horizons have opened up to them. And for golf course owners and developers, think about it: Superintendents already operate the bulk of a course's budget, the majority of its property, and perhaps the largest staff. Though they may not have been trained in finances and administration, they have gained the toughest training: the on-the-job type. Superintendents are also in charge of the most important asset, the thing that keeps golfers coming back — the course itself. At many facilities, why look any further to find a new general manager? In many cases, for instance, Colbert Hills is the third facility at which he has been general manager as well as superintendent.

We tip our hats to K-State and SUNY-Delhi, and we wonder: Can others be far behind? ...

Meaningful award for builders

The Editor

It was an added pleasure to meet the Golf Course News staff at the Builders' Banquet. Please extend our gratitude to your entire staff for all that they do in producing what is regarded as the best publication in the golf course industry as well as providing the highest award possible annually to the golf course builders.

What a motivating factor for this construction year! Thanks again for everything.

Sincerely,

Louis E. Miller
Managing Partner/Agronomist Golf Development Construction, Inc.

What to do with all that cash?

What do the United States Treasury and the Royal Canadian Golf Association (RCGA) have in common? Both are sitting on piles of cash — the U.S. Treasury courtesy of last year's $40-million sale of Toronto's Glen Abbey Golf Club to ClubLink, a Canadian course management firm. What to do with the extra money is the focal point of much debate in both cases. We'll leave the U.S. Treasury situation to the Washington Post editorial writers and concentrate here on the RCGA.

The RCGA has been the governing body of men's amateur golf in Canada since 1895. Among its many functions are:

- running Future Links, Canada's junior national development program, and the RCGA Player Development program to identify and nurture Canada's best amateur golfers;
- operating 10 national championships and organizing two professional tournaments — the Bell Canadian Open and the AT&T Canada Senior Open;
- developing and overseeing the Rules of Golf and Amateur Status services, handicapping and rating courses throughout Canada;
- providing $75,000 annually to the Canadian Turfgrass Research Foundation and working with the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System of Canada to improve agronomic conditions and the environment;
- publishing Golf Canada magazine seven times yearly;
- operating the Canadian Golf Hall of Fame; and
- continuing ongoing, rotating studies on a three-year basis: the golf participation study (1999) analyzing the demographics of the people playing golf in Canada; golf operations survey (1998) for superintendents, general managers and golf pros analyzing financial information from courses nationwide; and golf facility supply study (new) that will analyze the type of golf facilities in Canada and what gaps could be filled by new facilities.

RCGA representatives, 1,550 Canadian golf clubs and 280,000 golfers. So when it asks their opinions on what to do with the Glen Abbey windfall, it's likely to get 280,000 different opinions.

One of the most frequent recommendations is in the area of player development, said RCGA Managing Director of Member Programs Terri Yamada during the recent Canadian International Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show in Ottawa.

RCGA has been criticized over the years for not helping its better professional and amateur golfers improve their games to the point where they become prominent players on national and international circuits.

Sweden, with a comparable population and climate, has had great success developing world-class players. "Why haven't we had more Canadians on the PGA Tour?" is a frequent question, Yamada said. "There are a few, headed by Mike Weir. He's been quite stellar in creating excitement among Canadian youth. We want to encourage that even more."

But how to do that? That's where the $40-million Glen Abbey windfall comes in.

The RCGA has proposed building what it calls "Centers of Golf Excellence" around the country. They would include championship courses plus a training academy in the three major urban areas of Montreal, Toronto and Calgary with satellite training centers in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary and Halifax.

Ideally the Montreal, Toronto and Calgary facilities would have 18 to 36 holes, with at least 18 of PGA Tour quality so they could host PGA and Senior Tour events; a nine-hole short course for beginners, juniors and disabled golfers; and a training and teaching academy. "We want a place where kids can get good coaching and develop a camaraderie with people other than the golfers in their own area," Yamada said.

Why not use the $40 million from the Glen Abbey sale to finance these projects? The problem is that money, at least that interest, is already allocated.

The RCGA's player-development programs cost approximately $3.2 million a year. The RCGA must also find a way to pay for additional player-development programs, estimated to cost another $250,000 to $300,000, Yamada said.

RCGA membership fees yield about $900,000 annually. Another $1.5 million comes from the Bell Canadian Open. Glen_April 2000