UK-US internships a boon for all involved

East Lake Golf Club in win-win situation

By MARK LESLIE

ATLANTA — Scotland, Ireland and England gave America golf. Now more and more golf courses in America are returning the favor, accepting turfgrass students as interns for a year or on-the-job experience. In the midst of preparing to host this year’s PGA Championship in November, East Lake Golf Club is one of the most enticing among the American hosts — much to superintendent Ralph Kepple’s delight. "Interns are wonderful," Kepple said. "They are here to learn. They are willing to do most anything — as long as they know they will do something else later that they will learn on. They’re motivated. In this industry, right now that is difficult to find." "I’ve teaching these guys," said A.J. Horr, East Lake’s assistant superintendent. "Interns, including Americans, are the meat of our crew. It’s a good trade-off. They are enthusiastic about learning. They ask questions and they challenge you about why you do different things. If I don’t have the answer I will look for it. It makes me engage the students.”

Continued on page 27

Program head: Study abroad opens doors

By MARK LESLIE

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Saying that turfgrass maintenance is an international profession today, unlike any other, Ohio State University’s (OSU) program coordinator for International Programs in Agriculture said his training internships are door-openers for American and foreign students alike. Twice as many students are coming to work at U.S. golf courses as there are Americans traveling abroad under theagricultural internship program. Program Coordinator Michael O’Keeffe stressed: “We want to encourage more American students to go overseas and do this. There is an infrastructure. We obtain a legal permit for training that allows them to learn and enjoy the country [they are going to].”

Students from colleges other than OSU

Continued on page 27

Canada GSA’s president hails association’s help

By PETER BLAIS

OTTAWA, Ontario, Canada — Merlin Affleck, head superintendent at Stanhope Golf & Country Club on Prince Edward Island (PEI), was elected president of the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association (CGSA) during the group’s recent annual conference and trade show.

“I found out how professional golf superintendents were when I started this job [as head superintendent at Stanhope] 15 years ago and got involved with the association,” the new president said. “CGSA has helped me answer a lot of questions.” Affleck has been at Stanhope since 1980, head superintendent since 1984 and a member of the CGSA since 1986. He is married with four children aged 10 to 23.

During a brief talk at the conference, Affleck discussed his own course and golf in Canada’s smallest province, known for its red clay, beautiful beaches, sand dunes and quiet lifestyle. The 1994 opening of Tom McBroom-designed Crowbush Cove, which hosted the 1998 Molson Skins Game, helped elevate the game of golf on PEI and raised the standards for the rest of the courses

Continued on page 13

Continued on page 16

NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE REVIEW

Foreign workers a solution to the labor crunch

By ANDREW OVERBECK

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — With the economy booming and underemployment rates dropping, superintendents are having an increasingly difficult time finding and retaining quality seasonal workers. However, as some golf courses are already discovering, utilizing foreign labor is one way to beat the labor-market crunch.

Speaking at the New England Regional Turfgrass Conference, John Young, president of the New England Apple Council (NEAC) and head of H2a/b Employer Labor Programs, outlined the advantages and availability of a federal work program that allows businesses to bring in seasonal foreign labor.

Young, who has been in the apple business for 38 years, has used foreign labor to supplement his regular workforce for all but one growing season.

“The foreign workforce is hardworking, they want as many hours as they can get and they are willing to do the backbreaking work that local workers don’t want to do," he said.

Golf courses, Young said, are eligible for the government’s H2b program.

Continued on page 20

Superintendents encouraged to report activists

By ANDREW OVERBECK

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Citing the difficulty of keeping up with the increased anti-pesticide activism on the local and regional level, a representative from Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE), urged superintendents to be more vigilant on reporting and responding to reduced- use legislation proposals in their communities.

In his talk here at the New England Regional Turfgrass Conference, Fred Langley, manager of state government relations for RISE, covered several recent reduced-use issues and initiatives that could soon affect pesticide and insecticide use on golf courses.

Children’s health is very high on the anti-pesticide agenda, said Langley. Twenty-five states have taken up the issue of reducing pesticide use in schools and the Government Accounting Office is developing a report on school pesticide use. The state of Maryland requires elementary schools to post pre-notification and notify parents and staff prior to pesticide applications.

Use reporting and right-to-know issues are also on the forefront and are already required by California and New York State.

Continued on page 16

BRIEFS

GOLF COURSE TREE CARE BOOK READY

Golf course development and management demands a vast scope of expertise, including the knowledge to care for trees, which perform a crucial role in the strategy, playability and aesthetic presentations of golf courses. To get the most out of trees, superintendents can rely on a publication available from the International Society of Arboriculture. The book provides information to preserve and maintain trees in a manner that adds character and vitality to a golf course. golf Course Tree Management. Retail prices are $50 or $45 for ISAs members. It can be ordered prepaid, plus $7 for shipping and handling in the United States and $15 elsewhere, from the International Society of Arboriculture at PO Box 3129, Champaign, IL 61826.

WINDERMERE OFFICIALS NAMED

ORLANDO, Fla. — LinksCorp has named Chris Collins regional golf superintendent and Peter Sharp and Spyder Klyne as new assistant general managers at Windermere Country Club in southwest Orange County. Windermere General Manager Mike Shubic said Collins will also oversee golf operations at LinksCorp facilities at Eastwood Country Club in east Orlando and Kissimmee Lakes Golf Course in Osceola County. A graduate of Iowa State University with more than 12 years of experience in golf course construction and management, Collins was formerly associated with Stonehenge Country Club in Crossville, Tenn. Sharp formerly served with Hyatt and Sun International, Inc. in the Bahamas, Klyne, a PGA professional, recently came from Brandwyine Country Club in Toledo, Ohio.

RUTGERS HONORS GRADUATES

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. — The 10th Annual Turfgrass Awards Banquet was held Nov. 6, presented by the Rutgers Professional Golf Turf Symposium Attendees, Cook College undergraduate and graduate student scholarships recipients, and turfgrass industry leaders.

Continued on page 20
SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE WIDE-RANGING
TIFTON, Ga. — A wide range of topics, from the future of methyl bromide to breeding mole cricket resistance in Bermudagrass, will be discussed at the 54th Annual South-eastern Turfgrass Conference which will be held at the Rural Development Center here, May 1 and 2.

The conference is sponsored by the University of Georgia Coastal Plan Experiment Station, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in cooperation with the U.S. Golf Association Green Section, Georgia Turfgrass Foundation and University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service.

The schedule on May 1 includes a pesticide and equipment calibration workshop and panel discussions on disease, insect and weed control in turf. Talks May 2 range from the future of methyl bromide and fumigation strategies, to progress in genetic engineering in Bermudagrass; and the do's and don'ts of equipment leasing.

Information about registration is available by contacting the conference office at the Rural Development Center at 912-386-3416.

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REPORT ACTIVISTS
Continued from page 12

- The Clean Water Act is already causing use restrictions around the Chesapeake Bay area and is being considered in the Pacific Northwest.

- Individual counties and cities are also coming under increased pressure from anti-pesticide activists. In response to activist concerns, San Francisco is phasing out the use of pesticides on all city- and county-owned facilities and is setting up a system that will help to see any use of pesticides. "Our goal is to make it happen," said Langley, "there were imitators all over the country trying to duplicate these efforts."

- "Their [activists'] goal is to eliminate pesticides altogether," he said. "They define Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in a way that eliminates pesticide use. It can only be used as a last resort, and then it requires universal prenotification."

- This definition of IPM, Langley pointed out, not only runs counter to the federal government's version but also promotes activism against the user community. Further, with the advent of local control initiatives, activists are attempting to circumvent the states' control over pesticide use. The fact that anti-pesticide activists are also well-networked via the Internet makes the groups even more dangerous to the user community, said Langley.

- "We need to be more aware," he said. "The vulnerable area is tracking. We can track legislation on the national level and on the state level ... but when you get down to the local level we don't have anything that allows us to track it. By the time that we are aware that something is happening on the local level, it is already happening. What we need is awareness on the part of the industry, such as superintendents and RISE members."

- GCSAA President Scott Woodhead, who spoke later in the session, echoed Langley's call for action. "The GCSAA monitors legislation," he said. "But we can't stay up-to-date on what is happening locally. We hope that members will keep us informed on issues that arise in the future."

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- To combat reduced-use activists and to promote RISE's reduced-risk philosophy, the organization has developed the Local Issue Plan of Action (LIPA) that sets up a response framework for a company or individual to report back to their trade association and let them know what is happening on the local level. RISE also maintains a Web site, www.pestfacts.org, that outlines reduced-risk guidelines and facts about pesticide use.

- Langley hopes this will lead to a grassroots effort on the part of the user community to help set the record straight on pesticide use when local anti-pesticide issues arise in the future.
Solving the labor crunch
Continued from page 13
gram and that allows employers
to bring in workers from any
country. The program has sev-
eral requirements:
- H2b is only available after
employers test the U.S. market
in the area and it is established
that there is a shortage of avail-
able workers. The Department
of Labor requires that compa-
nies advertise the availability
of jobs in local papers.
- Foreign workers can only
be brought in to fill seasonal or
peak-load positions.
- Companies must meet local
wage-rate requirements. These
differ from state to state but usu-
ally fall between $9 and $12 an
hour.
"After getting certification
from the Labor Department, the
next step is with the U.S. Immi-
grant Service," said Young. "All
workers will have to have visas
prior to coming to the United
States and this will take 30 days."
The total time frame for getting
workers approved is about 90 days.
Young has been accessing for-

gn labor through Florida East
Coast Travel, a division of Florida
Fruit and Vegetable that sources
workers from Jamaica, Barbados
and Mexico.
According to Young, using this
program eliminates many of the
headaches associated with us-
ing foreign workers. "Anyone
who comes through this program
is 100-percent legal," he said. "You
don't have to worry about green
cards or mismatching Social
Security Card numbers."
Mexican workers gener-
ally work cheaper than those from the Caribbean be-
cause their government does not
place requirements on the em-
ployers. However, Young
pointed out that there are gener-
ally more language problems
with Mexican workers, they have
no medical program and they
are extremely unhappy if they
work just 40 hours a week.
On the flip side, Caribbean
workers have a liaison staff that
handles all worker problems.
Additionally, they speak better
English, have health insurance
and their governments provide
police checks and physicals.
There is also a predesignation
program that allows employers
to get the same worker back
year after year. "This gives us an
experienced workforce," said
Young. "We do it with 85 percent
of our workers."
As a result, workers from the
Caribbean are more expensive.
Employers must cover the cost
of travel for each one (at least $650)
and find them proper housing.
Other costs involved with
bringing in foreign workers
through the H2b program:
- Immigration charges a flat
$110 processing fee, no matter
how many workers are being
brought in.
- Travel costs will range from
nothing to the whole thing.
Workers from Mexico will often
pay at least half the travel costs.
- Advertising job availability
in local papers will run between
$100 and $500.
- Employers must provide
some form of transportation ser-
vice to take workers shopping
and to get them back and forth
to work.
"There is an available supply
of good workers," said Young.
"But you have to go through the
steps to do it. You have to deal
with the Department of Labor
which is hostile to the program
because it is their job to find
Americans work."
Therefore, Young recommends
that potential users of H2b con-
sider it only for jobs that are long
enough to spread out costs and
make it attractive to workers. Com-
panies should also team up with
others in the area to bring in work-
ers collectively.
All of the effort is worth it, said
Young. "You pay for what you
get. And what you get is a highly
motivated workforce that will
want to come back year after
year."