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 of 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 love 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."

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Checking the effect of Gradon verticutting on rooting on the practice green at East LakeGolf Club are, left to right, David Hickey, Kevin Bell, assistant superintendent A.J. Horr and Jon Crook.

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 the agricultural internship program. But 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 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.

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NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE REVIEW

Foreign workers a solution to the labor crunch

By ANDREW OBERBECk

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — With the economy booming and unemployment 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 H2/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.
IGM fills superintendent posts at four facilities

LAKELAND, Fla. — International Golf Maintenance, Inc. (IGM) has filled key superintendent positions for several of its maintained facilities:

Van Mitchell has been hired as superintendent of Highland Lakes, an upscale golf course retirement community in Palm Harbor. Mitchell oversees day-to-day operations and maintenance of the course which supports more than 100,000 rounds of golf a year.

Mitchell has worked previously with IGM in the golf industry supervising the grow-in phase of Lexington Oaks Golf Course in Wesley Chapel and as an assistant superintendent at Dunedin Country Club in Dunedin.

Fred Gehrisch has been moved to a new role as superintendent at Highlands Falls Golf Course, golf residential community located in Highlands, N.C. Gehrisch was the IGM superintendent at Newnan (Ga.) Country Club. A 15-year veteran of the industry, he holds a bachelor's degree in agronomy from Ohio State University and is working on an MBA at Keller Graduate School in Alpharetta, Ga.

Jim Vogel has been hired as superintendent of Mill Pond Golf Course, a new public course on Long Island, N.Y. A 14-year veteran of the golf industry, Vogel previously worked as superintendent at Ledo Golf Course in Long Island, where he oversaw a million-dollar renovation of the course. He is a graduate of Rutgers University Turf Program.

Blake Watson has been hired as superintendent of Warner Springs Ranch, a semi-private golf resort located in the Laguna Mountains in Southern California. Watson is responsible for overseeing operations of the 18-hole course which encompasses four lakes. Watson has 15 years of experience and most recently worked as an assistant superintendent at a course in Vista Valley, Calif.

When someone suggests you spend more money on a less effective preemergent, it's time to hold on to your wallet.

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