

BRIEFS



IGM ADDS TWO COURSES TO PORTFOLIO

LAKELAND, Fla. — International Golf Maintenance, Inc. (IGM) has added two more courses to its portfolio of golf facilities, bringing the total to more than 40. The company has signed agreements with Hunting Hills Country Club, in Roanoke, Va., and The Majors Golf Club, in Palm Bay, Fla.

Under the agreements, IGM will handle all aspects of turf and grounds maintenance, including personnel and equipment issues.

The Majors is a new Arnold Palmer signature course. The 18-hole layout measures 7,346 yards, and brings water into play on almost every hole. Superintendent Mark Patterson hopes to have the course in tournament condition following last year's stormy weather. "We're now overseeing a second growing-in period for the course, made necessary by hurricanes Floyd and Irene," he said. "They washed out much of the grass and top soil."

Hunting Hills, a 6,037-yard, tree-lined course designed by Ray Loving and built in 1970, is known for its pure bentgrass greens.

IGM is part of Meadowbrook Golf Group, which owns and operates golf facilities across the country.

AUDUBON CERTIFIES GLEN ANNIE

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — Environmental Golf, a division of Environmental Industries, Inc., announced that Glen Annie Golf Club, in Galena, Calif., near here, has achieved designation as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary. It is the ninth course in California and the 235th in the world to receive the official designation. Vince Gilmartin, Glen Annie's superintendent, has also begun restoration work on a wildlife corridor to connect habitat throughout the course. Environmental Golf manages the course.

Supers communicate through club-owned TV stations

By TERRY BUCHEN

BOCARATON, Fla. — Superintendents like to communicate to the golfing elite through face-to-face contact, newsletter columns, meetings, direct club mailings, locker room bulletin boards, speeches, magazine articles and so on. They want to

SAVVY SUPERINTENDENT



help players understand what they and their crews are doing out on the course and why they are doing it. Communication between golfers and superintendents has never been better, but there is al-

ways room for improvement to get the word out in a completely thorough and correct manner to eliminate gossip and misinformation.

In southeast Florida, superintendents at two elite private clubs have taken the process one step further through the use of their club-owned and operated television stations.

"Our private television station Channel 63 is piped into all of our homes for all types of communication that are part of

our country club community, as our members must for the most part live here to be a member," said Kenneth G. Orender, superintendent at the St. Andrews Country Club here. Orender participates in a weekly television show entitled "Golf Course Maintenance Updates" during the winter golfing high season and monthly during the summer off-season to communicate directly with his members.

"We can post closings of either of our 18-hole courses for specific maintenance operations and current or upcoming maintenance practices, by explaining when and why we are performing them, and what to expect on the golf course on a daily basis, if necessary," Orender added. He is constantly on videotape to explain anything and everything about what to expect now and in the future of all golf course maintenance and renovation techniques



F.W. "Chip" Fowkes III, with microphone, tapes a television show.

taking place.

Orender has videotaped sessions on how to fix a ball mark, how to fill a divot, and he is working on a show explaining proper adherence to the 90-degree rule. His shows are replayed on a regular basis. He uses the television-style interview as a tool to edu-

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Snyder beats drought, opens Blackstone National

By ANDREW OVERBECK

SUTTON, Mass. — After nearly three years of trying work, disastrous delays and just plain bad luck, Superintendent Jay Snyder has completed his first golf course grow-in and construction here at the Rees Jones-designed Blackstone National Golf Club, which opened May 26.

According to Snyder, who came to Blackstone National in August 1997 from an assistant's position at Indian Ridge Country Club in Andover, this may be his first and last time as a construction superintendent.

"I was at war with the place," said Snyder of the golf course that opened nine holes in spring 1999 only to be hit by extreme drought, have the wells run dry and lose all of the turf on its fairways.

"I worked on a course in Florida preparing for a PGA Tour event, but building a golf course and getting it open for play is much more difficult than getting ready for a tournament," he said.

After Colorado-based Niebur Golf finished shaping the course and putting in the irrigation in 1997, Snyder oversaw the grassing of 10 of the holes and dormant seeded another five holes before the winter hit.

In the spring of 1998, the owners and Snyder decided to finish the course themselves but faced record June rains that slowed down the job.

"On the 9th hole the topsoil was pushed out, raked and seeded three times," said Snyder. "We also had to cut and fill the 15th hole and irrigate it. We laid 1,500 feet of pipe and put in 28 to 30 heads."

In addition, the crew of 25 had to push out and seed the rest of the course, finish tee tops, complete five greens and build a 180-foot timber bridge.

The course opened nine holes in spring 1999, right before the Northeast got hit with a drought.

"It just stopped raining," said Snyder. "Wells dropped from 165 to 92 gallons-per-minute. The pond was leaking. As a result, I lost everything but my tees and greens. It looked like the Serengeti Plain."

While Snyder concentrated on saving bunker faces, greens and tees, his fairways got torched and the clover took over.

"It was devastating," Snyder recalled. "We got two black eyes from last summer."

In August, they drilled two additional wells and worked to

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Blackstone National shows no effects of the devastating drought.

Miles readies for Women's Open

GURNEE, Ill. — When The Merit Club plays host to the 55th Women's Open Championship, which opens July 20, Head Superintendent Oscar Miles won't look back on three or four years of major tournament preparation. The process has actually been more than a decade in the making.

The Merit Club opened for play in 1992; Architect Bob Lohmann worked closely with



Oscar Miles

club president and golf instructor Ed Oldfield to design the course. Yet Miles joined the development team in 1989, following a long tenure at another Chicago-area club, Butler National Golf Club.

At The Merit Club, Miles—working closely with Oldfield, Lohmann and a host of others—would build championship playing conditions into the course itself right from the outset.

"It was my responsibility," Miles explained, "to draw up the specifications for construction, the grassing plan and the in-house landscaping plan. I was also responsible for formulating all those budgets."

By bringing the superintendent on board prior to construction, Oldfield and owner Bert Getz gave Miles an enormous level of input and control.

The rewards were immediate. The Merit's original land plan, for instance, was designed to accommodate a 25-year flood frequency.

"After looking at the [Merit] plans, I could see we needed better flood man-

agement. We hired Lindley & Sons out of Hinsdale [Ill.]. They took the original plan, did a cad-cam on it, and studied the flow and drainage. Lindley came back with a new plan that gave us a 100-year flood capability."

Prior to its development, the Merit Club parcel was 300 acres of natural prairie. Seeing and studying the land in this state helped Miles formulate grassing and tree-management plans that best preserved the landscape's character.

"I knew we were going to be involved with Audubon, so I took classes on how to

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TV stations

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cate his members on renovation project requirements and capital improvement requests to make sure the facts are clearly understood.

"We, like most golf courses, are constantly trying to counteract the rumor mill," he said. "Our television station is incredibly

effective in promoting good will and getting all the facts correctly stated to our members. One of the greatest examples is during hurricane season. Our television station is the greatest communication tool I have ever experienced in the golf business to say anything that I want to say by communicating in a friendly, efficient manner."

AT FRENCHMAN'S CREEK

Further north on the Atlantic

Coast, in Palm Beach Gardens, is the Frenchman's Creek Country Club, where F.W. "Chip" Fowkes III is the superintendent. Frenchman's Creek is also a gated community — the homeowners are the only members. It also has the luxury of two club television stations that broadcast 24 hours a day.

"The beauty of television is that it takes you right into the members homes. This gives the

viewer an opportunity to watch the presentation in a relaxed setting. The documentary format that we use allows us to present our maintenance and project topics completely, without interruption, and in a factual yet familiar manner," Fowkes said.

He also participates in a monthly show called "The Answer Man," where members submit questions about any aspect of the club to David Schain, who

acts as a moderator and poses each question to the respective department manager for explanation. "This is a great way to cut down on the rumor mill by addressing member concerns right away," Fowkes said.

Fowkes also uses the television stations to explain to the members various policies and procedures, such as aerification and its benefits. He can edit in a picture of new root growth after coring a green, or show full infiltrimeter tests before and after coring while giving an explanation as to the importance of the results.

He also does visual presentations of how to properly repair a ball mark and divot; introduces key maintenance staff members to the membership; immediately addresses problems such as flooding or storm damage during hurricane season; demonstrates new equipment that has been recently acquired; and shows before and after sequences of landscape changes or improvements to the course.

Oreder and Fowkes are two of the best examples nationwide of great communicators in our profession, because the membership clearly knows who they are and understands their role in operating and maintaining the golf course. The members receive factual and accurate information right from the source, and they can understand the important role that they play in the successful operation of the courses.

"It would be really great if all superintendents had a television station at their respective courses so they could communicate to their golfers in a professional factual and accurate manner," Fowkes said, and Oreder echoed that sentiment. "We are very grateful to our communication-minded members for their help and support." †


Miles

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tie in the prairie areas properly," he explained. I eventually figured out how the prairie should tie in to the trees, to the water, or back to more prairie. The prairie became the defining parameters of this course."

Though it's not a heavily wooded site, Miles convinced the development team to hire a tree-management firm. Paying attention to the existing population helped mitigate tree loss during construction.

"Don't look at all 300 acres [when developing a grassing plan]; look at one hole at a time," he said. "And to the extent that it's possible, as early as possible, work up your own plans; work up your own budgets, and do your best to sell them to the powers that be." †



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