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 ever 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.

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 Lohnam worked closely with 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, Butter National Golf Club.

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

“At 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 working on a show explaining proper 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 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 educate.
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 aeration and its benefits. He can edit in a picture of new root growth after coring a green, or show full infiltrometer 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.

Orender 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 course.

"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 Orender echoed that sentiment. "We are very grateful to our communication-minded members for their help and support."

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**Miles**

"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."