



BRIEFS

BEST SAND TO SELL FOR VAN WEY

CHARDON, Ohio — Best Sand Corporation, a supplier of bunker sands and sand products used for the construction and maintenance of sports fields and golf courses, will be responsible for all sales and marketing efforts for Van Wey products in the southern Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia and Indiana area, including its sports turf subsidiary, Grass One.

Van Wey Sand & Gravel has been supplying the southern Ohio golf courses and athletic fields market with sand and root zone mixes for over 20 years. Best Sand is a division of Fairmount Minerals, the third-largest privately owned sand producer in the United States.

In another exclusive distribution agreement, Kirk Materials will take on the sales and marketing of Best's TourGrade Bunker Sand products in the northern Indiana region, including Indianapolis and eastern Illinois. Kirk Materials has been providing the golf course market with topdressing and construction materials since 1989.

PENN STATE TURFGRASS APPLICATIONS

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. — Applications are now being accepted for Penn State's two-year Golf Course Turfgrass Management Program for the class beginning in September of 2001. The application fee is \$35 and the deadline for applications is December 31, 2000. For more information contact (814) 863-0129.

NORTH AMERICAN GREEN PROMOTES DEEGAN

EVANSVILLE, Ind. — Greg Deegan has been promoted to vice president of sales for North American Green, a leading manufacturer of erosion control blankets and turf reinforcement mats. Deegan joined the company in 1988, and is responsible for both domestic and international sales. A civil engineer, he has worked in the environmental field since 1972.

His prior experience includes three years of water conservation and soil stabilization work in Saudi Arabia. Later, Deegan promoted and marketed water conservation products in Western Europe. Deegan is currently president of the New England Chapter of the International Erosion Control Association.

School for troubled kids turns them on to golf course maintenance, on their own new layout

By JOEL JOYNER

GLEN MILLS, Pa. — Take one brand-new golf course, 65 troubled kids and a superintendent doubling as a guidance counselor, and what have you got? You have the Glen Mills School here, running one of the most unusual golf course maintenance training programs to be found anywhere.

Most of the kids have been "court referred" to the Glen Mills School, which is dedicated to turning around troubled teens. The student body, 1,000 strong, includes mostly inner-city youths from all over the country, usually aged 15 to 18, who are sent here for offenses ranging from drug dealing and auto theft to manslaughter and gang-related crimes.

The course, designed by Florida-based architect Bobby Weed, is an 18 hole, \$6-million layout, set right on campus. Open since September, it provides students a place to learn landscape maintenance, golf course management,

agronomy and maintenance mechanics. They'll also learn how to properly apply chemicals on the 235-acre track.

Although the public is welcome at the course, the school built the course spe-

cially to serve as a training ground for the students. "The goal is to turn out technicians who can command good pay on the market," said John Vogts, superintendent at Glen Mills Golf Course, who was formerly the assistant superintendent at nearby Merion Golf Club. "For most students in the program, to leave here for a well-paid job at a golf course is an accomplishment. We help them into careers where they can start at \$30,000 a year."

The groundskeeping program is one of the largest vocational programs at the school, with its own dormitory and classrooms.

Right now, 65 students are in the course-maintenance program, and Vogts plays a key role in their development. "They are basically fine kids who simply need a second chance," said Vogts. "We start them out on small projects like raking bunkers and mowing the grass. Then we proceed to more specialized training as spray technicians and equipment mechanics."

COURSE IS CUTTING-EDGE

The construction of the course provided an unexpected learning opportunity. "We had some weather difficulties," said Scot Sherman, senior associate designer at Weed Golf Course Design. "For the first

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Some of the first students at Glen Mills, with superintendent John Vogts (far right)

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Piersol's Perspectives

The Superintendent's Right-Hand Man

By JOHN R. PIERSOL

Ask golf course superintendents whom they consider to be their "right-hand man" and most will say "my mechanic." The importance of the turf equipment technician has increased tremendously over the last few years, but the supply of these specialists, unfortunately, is very low.

With a huge national job market and very respectable salaries (\$25,000 to \$40,000 to start with \$50,000 to \$70,000 potential), why is there a shortage of technicians?

It's a good question, and the answer basically is that most people have never heard of the career as a golf course equipment technician. This lack of awareness makes recruiting students very difficult, which in turn makes it hard to fill existing programs and prevents new programs from springing into existence.

At Lake City Community College, we have had a one-year mechanics program — Turf Equipment Management (TEM) — since 1973. The first few years we graduated only four or five technicians a year, but we have steadily grown and now graduate 22 to 25 students every year. We'd like to double that number, but we can't get

enough students in the front door, even though our graduates receive more than 100 job offers annually.

We have a nationally respected TEM program, a modern 15,000-square-foot building just for this specialized training, a dedicated team of three full-time faculty, and a huge, lucrative job market. But we still have trouble recruiting more than 30 students. It's a shame.

RAISING AWARENESS LEVELS

I believe superintendents hold the key to the turf equipment technician career awareness problem.

Superintendents need to organize volunteers through their state chapters who are willing to go into one high school once a year to inform young people about this exciting career. If done year after year, the career awareness level will rise, which will lead to high school students asking the next logical question: where does one go to school for this training.

An increase in student demand will result in higher enrollment at schools with existing programs, and should bring about new programs as students call local technical schools and community colleges to ask about equipment programs. The way to get a new

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Ziesmer named superintendent at Minisceongo

POMONA, N.Y. — Jason Ziesmer has been named superintendent at Minisceongo Golf Club, a private, non-equity club located here and owned by Empire Golf. Ziesmer is a graduate of Michigan State and has served as assistant superintendent at Minisceongo since 1998.

"Jason has done an outstanding job as an assistant, and under his leadership we expect Minisceongo to become the finest conditioned course in our region," said general manager John Napier.

Following his graduation from Michigan State with a degree in turfgrass management, Ziesmer spent time at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor on the horticultural grounds crew, as well as on the grounds crew for the school's acclaimed golf course. From there, he joined the Patterson Club, in Fairfield, Conn., before going to Minisceongo.

Minisceongo is carved out of 160 acres of forest, wetlands and red maple swamps. Surrounded by views of the Ramapo Mountains, golfers see two restored 30-foot-high fieldstone cisterns on holes 4 and 17, left over from the property's days as farmland. Players will also notice an 18th Century cemetery during their round, as well as hit their tee shots on the short 12th hole over an abandoned quarry.

Empire Golf is a subsidiary of Bergstol Enterprises. Courses in its management portfolio include Pine Barrens Golf Club, in Jackson, N.J., and New Jersey National Golf Club, in Basking Ridge.

Pine bark beetles devastating South

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They estimated the loss at about \$113 million in timber.

Here at the Temple Terrace Golf & Country Club, near Tampa, more than 60 trees have been killed by so-called "ips" beetles, causing \$25,000 in damage. The ips are second only to the SPBs in their devastation.

"Once a tree is infested, there's no saving it," said Doug Hughes, superintendent at the course. "The critical thing is to remove the tree as quickly as possible to keep the

infestation from spreading. That's where the cost is adding up."

Hughes is busy trying to save the other 100 or more pines left on his golf course while systematically removing the 60 dead trees at Temple Terrace. "We've been spraying the insecticide Lindane around the base of the pines and trying to cover at least 10 feet up the trunk," said Hughes. "But there's little we can do about the drought and water restrictions. At the moment, I'm only allowed to water my fairways once a week."

The South Carolina Forestry Commission (SCFC) reports over a million dead or dying pines from the SPB and ips, with estimated summer losses exceeding \$24 million. The epidemic is described as the second worst on record in South Carolina, with Union County having identified almost 1,000 individual infestations.

According to SCFC entomologist Andy Boone, cool weather will temporarily slow the spread of the beetles for the winter, but the epidemic is expected to last at least through next summer. The SCFC said 13 counties now face serious losses from the insect.

WIDENING INFESTATION

According to Ron Billings, Ph.D., of the Texas Forest Service, beetle activity continues at record levels in eastern Tennessee, western North Carolina, southern Kentucky and – for the first time in 25 years – in southwestern Virginia. In a single year (1998-99), Tennessee experienced a 1,400-percent increase in the number of SPB infestations.

Suburban sprawl is contributing to the damage. Ed Barnard, Ph.D., forest pathologist for the Florida Division of Forestry, explains that "turfgrass and pines are not ideally compatible. Most any urban development in a pine tree surrounding is likely to weaken the trees over time, through root damage or drawing down nearby water levels. Pine bark beetles don't attack healthy pines, but they will destroy a stressed pine tree, and rapidly." The summer drought in central Florida has left thousands of trees victimized by the ips.

Initial symptoms of infestation will usually be pitch tubes in the bark crevices where the adult beetles bore in to the trunk of a pine. The best way to identify a pine bark beetle infestation is to remove sections of bark from pines with fading, yellow foliage and search for winding, "engraved" tunnels or galleries. ■

Piersol's column

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turf equipment program started is to create student demand. School administrators will start programs that they know they can fill and that result in placements in a lucrative job market.

Many superintendents have never thought about recruiting in the high schools, yet that is where you'll find the raw material to be attracted into the golf industry. Why not recruit high school kids who have not yet made a career choice and who have no idea of the various outstanding careers in the field of golf?

'A CALL TO ARMS'

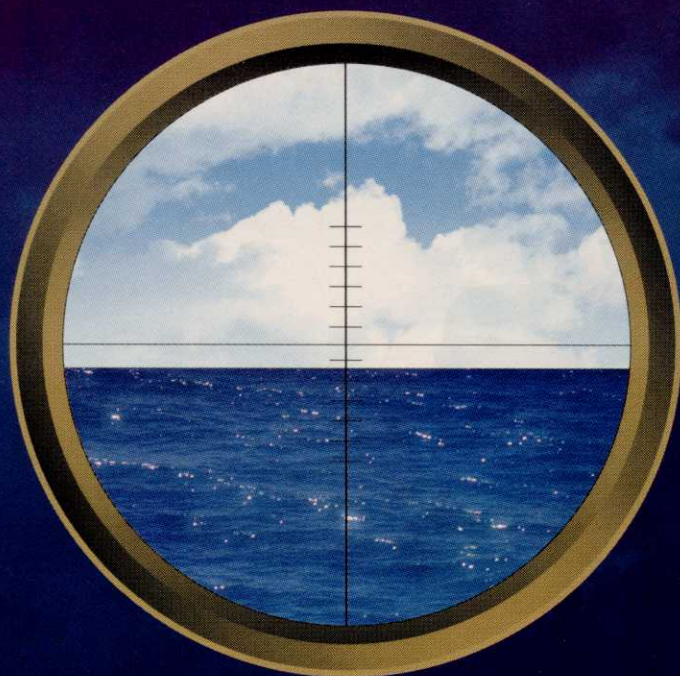
A high school recruiting effort will give the superintendent the chance to talk about the positive aspects of the industry, allow his company (golf course) to become better known, and could lead to the recruiting of part-time help or full-time employees. High schools are usually thrilled to have industry representatives talk to the students, and building a good relationship with a local high school can pay nice dividends.

The golf course superintendent already has a busy schedule, but getting into one local high school once a year is a realistic service project. I strongly believe this effort should be considered a "national call to arms" for superintendents. After all, they are the ones screaming for skilled equipment technicians.

If superintendents will help to create student demand, existing technician programs are ready to expand and new programs will emerge. Education wants to meet the need for properly trained golf course equipment technicians. Won't you help us help you? ■

John R. Piersol, M.S., chairs the Division of Golf/Landscape/Forestry at Lake City Community College, Lake City, Fla., where he has taught since 1974.

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