**Superintendents tapping foreign labor force**

By Joel Joyner

LAKE OZARK, Mo. — With the golf season fast approaching and labor markets still tight, superintendents everywhere are scrambling to find maintenance workers. Some are even pulling in help from abroad.

John Anderson, director of golf and grounds here at the Club at Porto Cima, will be relying again this year on Practical Employee Solutions (PES), a Dallas company that provides labor out of Jamaica. Last year, 12 of his maintenance staffers came from the Caribbean island nation. This year he's bumping the number to 16.

“They were very eager to learn and very easily trained,” he said. “I'm really looking forward to this year because I'm supposed to have most of them back.”

Housing, transportation and schedules were all considered before the migrant help arrived. “Local transportation was all done by bus,” Anderson said. “We leased some apartment units, and they paid their own rent. We knew how many were arriving from the start, and it was very well organized.”

Initial start-up of the program may be challenging. “I know it's a pretty lengthy process sponsoring them on a work permit deal,” he said. “But some were processed a lot quicker this season, especially the ones returning.”

JAMAICANS' STRONG WORK ETHIC

The Club at Porto Cima is one of three courses in the ClubCorp to unveil ‘Bear’s Best’ concept this fall

By Jay Finegan

LAS VEGAS, Nev. — The first of what could be many Bear’s Best courses is slated to debut here Nov. 1, marking ClubCorp’s entry into the world of “branded” golf.

The Bear’s Best concept is a joint venture between ClubCorp, of Dallas, Texas, and Golden Bear International, of North Palm Beach, Fla., a company controlled by Jack Nicklaus and his family. The idea is elegant in its simplicity. Nicklaus selects some of his favorite holes from the nearly 200 courses he has designed, and 18 of them are combined into a single layout.

Bear’s Best Las Vegas, under construction 20 minutes from the famous casino “strip,” will present holes primarily from Nicklaus designs in the Is In Full Swing. See Story Page 13.

Bentgrass dead spot detected in 14 states

By Joel Joyner

LINCROFT, N.J. — It’s difficult to identify. It attacks young turf. Recovery takes weeks. Little is known about how maintenance practices affect its development. Superintendents dread this turfgrass disease known as bentgrass dead spot, first identified in 1998.

Currently, bentgrass dead spot (BDS) has been discovered in 14 states from Illinois and Texas to New Jersey and the Carolinas. “Once it’s there on the turf, it kills it and nothing comes back,” said Jeremy Schaefer, assistant superintendent here at the Charleston Springs Country Club.
Four Seasons Group, clustered here around Lake Ozark. All told, they brought in 52 Jamaicans last year. Only two won’t be invited back. “Overall, we were de-
rector of human resources.
“We're looking to get 74 this
year.”
According to Adams, the Ja-
maicans worked like they were on
fire. “People were skeptical at first. They kept telling me that Jamai-
cans have a high crime rate, that they’d bring in drugs and have long Rastafarian hair,” she said. “But it wasn’t like that at all. They worked extremely hard.
“They’d get up at four a.m., take the bus to one of our courses, work until 3:30, then change and come back to work as waiters or housekeepers until
nine at night,” she said. “I actu-
ally had to tell managers that they
couldn’t allow them to work past
nine. It would just be too strenu-
os. Americans wouldn’t put up
with a schedule like that. The
Jamaicans are here to work their
six months, make as much money
as they can and take it home.”
They were covered under their
own insurance service, Adams
added. “They were required to
send a portion of their money
back to Jamaica, four percent
got to the Jamaican govern-
ment, and the rest had to be
deposited into a savings account
of some sort.”
Amigos Labor Solutions, also
of Dallas, provides a similar ser-
vice for golf courses. It brings
in Mexican labor under H-2B
visas, charging an all-inclusive
flat fee per worker.
INCENTIVES AND BENEFITS
Jeff Holliday, the new super-
intendent at the Salisbury Coun-
try Club in Midlothian, Va.,
knows how to hire and retain
quality employees from his pre-
vious position at the Country
Club of Virginia (CCV), in Rich-
mond. “We struggled with labor shortfalls a lot,” he said.
Benefits and a pay scale helped
to ease the situation. “We found
at CCV that if we increased in-
centives and benefits, employ-
ees tended to stick around,” said
Holliday. “We started a struc-
tured pay scale system where the quicker they learned, the
more money they made.”
Small details like providing
uniforms, buying employees the
occasional lunch and giving gift certificates make a big differ-
ence, too. “We also had a gas
eroucher program,” he said. “If
they came to work on time for a
two-week period and showed up
on their scheduled work days,
they’d get a $15 gas voucher.”
LATINOS IN NORTHWEST
Latino labor has been filling
the labor demand in the North-
west. “It’s occurring all over the
Southwest with very good re-
sults, and now it has arrived here
on a regular basis,” said Larry
Gilhuly, director of the USGA’s
Green Section, Northwest re-

region. “Their work ethic has been
amazing from what I’ve heard.
As a generalization, some of
them tend to get upset if they
only get to work 40 hours a
week.”
Turf management training pro-
grams sponsored by the Future
Farmers of America (FFA) have
been developed at high
school level in Washington state,
according to Gilhuly. “The FFA
supports it, but the teachers have
really taken off with it,” he said.
“The main focus is on kids who
won’t be going to college, who
may want to be irrigation or spray
technicians or who simply want
to work on a golf course.”
There are roughly 80 high
schools in the state currently
teaching turfgrass maintenance.
“It’s really starting to gain some
steam up here,” said the direc-
tor. “It provides a steady source
of help that’s highly motivated
and very interested.”
“Most people think that it’s
some sort of superintendent train-
ing ground, but it’s not,” Gilhuly
said. “It’s a golf course workers
training ground.”
One proponent of the program
is Jeff Gullikson, superintendent
of the Spokane Golf Club in east-
ern Washington. “Because the
kids are in this FFA program,
they’re allowed to operate ma-

chinery, like mowers, that oth-
erwise they wouldn’t be able to
do due to labor and industry laws
that restrict minors using ma-

chinery at a workplace,” he said.
“With parental permission, they’re exempted from those
regulations.”

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