

# MAINTENANCE



## BRIEFS

### IGM PROMOTES GANO, WELLS

CHAMPIONSGATE, Fla. — International Golf Maintenance (IGM) has promoted both Steve Gano and Jim Wells, CGCS, from regional managers to vice presidents of operation. Wells began working as a sales representative with Meadowbrook Golf's supply subsidiary, Golf Ventures, in 1990. He joined IGM in 1995 as a regional manager. Gano joined IGM in 1999 as a golf course superintendent at an IGM-maintained property. Prior to assuming his role as vice president of operations, Gano spent the last two years as the Southeast U.S. regional manager for IGM.

### BLUE HERON PINES GC TO HOST USGA PUBLIC LINKS TOURNEY

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Blue Heron Pines Golf Club and the United States Golf Association will host the 2003 U.S. Amateur Public Links Championship July 14 to 19, 2003. It has been 20 years since this event has taken place in the Tri-state area, and net proceeds will be donated to the South Jersey Junior Golf Foundation, a non-profit organization based at Blue Heron Pines Golf Club. Steven Sanchez is the course's superintendent.

### GRIGG BROTHERS MAKES SEVERAL PERSONNEL MOVES

ALBION, Idaho — In response to strong sales growth in 2002, organic amino acid and fertilizer manufacturer Grigg Brothers has reorganized its staff. Gary Grigg, CGCS, MG, who recently retired after 34 years as a superintendent, is the firm's new vice president and corporate agronomist. Grigg, who is a past president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, will be responsible for product education and training. The company also added Vince Van Meter as national sales manager, Roman Grigg as Northwest regional manager, and Todd Scott as Midwest regional manager.

## Dobie uses underground 'eyes' to solve drainage issues

By ANDREW OVERBECK

SHARON CENTER, Ohio — Faced with poorly-drained greens, superintendent Frank Dobie here at The Sharon Club decided to go underground in search of the culprit.

Instead of digging up his problem greens and redoing the drainage, which is quite a time-consuming and costly project, Dobie used high-tech plumbing equipment to locate blocked and clogged drains.

"We had a drainage problem in one of our greens and we noticed that a local plumber had a flyer that showed a snake with a TV camera mounted on the end," Dobie said. "So we rented the equipment to try it out on drain tiles, but a plumber had to come in and operate it. After taking seven hours to check one green and paying the plumber \$100 an hour I quickly figured out that we could buy one of these and save a

lot of money."

The club purchased a Rigid See Snake that came with a 200-foot snake, pushrod, monitor and radio transmitter for \$8,000. It takes two workers to run the equipment with one watching the monitor and the other manipulating the snake. Once a problem spot is located, the radio transmitter records the depth and location of the end of the snake, allowing workers to pinpoint the blocked area.

"This way we aren't guessing and digging in the wrong spot," said Dobie. "It is right on the money, within three inches. It has helped us fix crushed drain tiles and clear



A worker feeds the See Snake into a drain to scan for any blockages or crushed tiles.

tree roots from drain lines."

Dobie estimated the cost of equipment has paid for itself, and then some.

"This is one of the most valuable tools we have ever had, and in my estimation every course should own one," he said. "The money saved in

time and labor is worth the cost of the equipment alone.

"In terms of headaches, it is probably worth 10 times that," Dobie continued. "If you lost a poorly-drained green during the playing season, you lose rounds,

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## Returning supers battle tough job market, changes

By ANDREW OVERBECK

As the golf course construction boom in Asia has waned over the last couple of years, American superintendents have returned home to a very competitive job market. Out of the employment loop after time overseas, some have spent nearly a year looking for a superintendent position.

"My wife and I miss the cultural experience, but as for a career move I could not have timed it better," said James Sprankle, superintendent at Ibis Golf and Country Club in West Palm Beach, Fla., who spent eight years in Asia, mainly in the Philippines. "Projects [in Asia] are still not starting and most clubs are going with local superintendents now.

"Being out of the U.S. market for eight years made it difficult to obtain a good job. I searched for about a year," he added. "Luckily, I had strong ties with

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## White puts enzymes to the test at Olde Mill

By ANDREW OVERBECK

PORTAGE, Mich. — After years of using a chemical-first approach to golf course maintenance, superintendent Paul White decided to take matters into his own hands and test alternative products and practices.

"I got to the point spraying fungicides when I realized that they were great at killing disease but the grass was not getting any healthier," said White, who is superintendent at Olde Mill Golf Club here.

White discovered an alternative to a chemical-only approach by accident. While working at Sauganash National in Three Rivers, he came across two drums of products from Consulting

Agronomists, a natural product formulator based in Chicago.

"I called up their agronomist Doug Arenberg and he explained to me what it was and we decided to give it a try," said White.

The product, Vital Reactions, is a proprietary formulation of enzymes combined with organic liquid fertilizer and micronutrients.

White saw success during his



White credits Vital Reactions for increased root growth

time at Sauganash so he decided to adopt the program full time at Olde Mill. But first, he set up a test program.

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## Audubon Int'l to hold first industry summit

HARTWELL, Ga. — Kicking off a "Fifty in Five" initiative to enroll 50 percent of U.S. golf courses in its environmental programs within the next five years, Audubon International is planning its first-ever industry summit on Feb. 12 at Catechee Golf Club here.

Catechee superintendent Buck Workman and course designer Mike Young will open the session, speaking on the intricacies of designing and maintaining an Audubon Signature property, while Signature Program director Nancy

Richardson will present an overview of the Audubon Signature Program. Then Audubon president Ron Dodson and director of programs and administration Kevin Fletcher will emcee an agenda geared toward the "Fifty in Five" initiative.

"At the end of the day," Fletcher said, "we want people to walk away with something that they feel they are a part of — an advisory council. We also expect to produce a document which captures the results of the discussion."



## Superintendents return from Asia

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Nicklaus Design, which helped me here at Ibis, which was designed by Nicklaus.”

John Farley also worked in the Philippines for six years and returned to the U.S. early last year after he tired of conditions at Fairways and Bluewater Resort and Golf Club on the island of Boracay.

“I flew back last February for an interview and I didn’t wind up getting the job,” said Farley, who is now superintendent at the ClubCorp-managed Teal Bend Golf Club in Sacramento, Calif. “I spent seven months getting back in the loop. It is a tough road because the turf schools are cranking students out and there are a lot of good up-and-coming young assistants out there. But you can’t keep a good super down for too long.”

Steve Agin, superintendent at Ruby Hill Golf Club in Pleasanton, Calif., spent nine years in Asia and said getting used to how the golf industry has changed was the toughest part.

“My culture shock was seeing how much the industry has grown into a business,” he said. “With the advent of management companies it is a different ball game. Add to that a flood of newly-minted superintendents and the fact that it was the beginning of a recession, and it wasn’t a great time to come back and look for a job.”

Once employed, these three had to adjust their management approaches.

“It took a few months to transition back into U.S. work mode,” said Sprankle. “Hiring and keeping an adequate staff was and still is my biggest obstacle. In Asia, having an adequate workforce was not a problem. Training was more intense, but reliability was not an issue. And in Asia you could have a staff of 50 per course; here we have 16 per course.”

Farley said the skills gained by working overseas have helped make him a better manager.

“It was beneficial to work with different cultures,” he said. “It taught me the basic tenet that you have to treat workers with re-

spect and treat them fairly. If they respond, they are on board.”

While all three said most equipment was available in Asia, access to chemicals and irrigation technology is much better in the U.S.

“The chemicals are more reliable,” said Agin. “Over there you wouldn’t know what you were



John Farley (center) with some of his former staff members in the Philippines.

getting. Here it is more cut and dry. I can call a supplier and get product tomorrow. Over there it could be months.”

Farley, who was facing a severe water shortage at Fairways and Bluewater in Boracay, is thrilled with the high-tech irrigation system he has at Teal Bend.

“I have a weather system that programs the evapotranspiration and precipitation rates into the

irrigation system,” he said. “It is not fool-proof, but for the most part it does a good job. The technology is fantastic.”

While returning to the States took a lot of effort and adjustment, none regret the time they spent in Asia and all think it made them better superintendents.

“I would not trade my overseas experiences for anything,” said Sprankle. ■



James Sprankle

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