

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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COUNTERPOINT

Audubon Int'l thinking big

By ANDREW OVERBECK

HARTWELL, Ga. — On the heels of announcing its "Fifty in Five" initiative, Audubon International revealed yet another ambitious plan to expand its programs during its first-ever industry summit here at Catechee Golf Club Feb. 12. The initiative, titled the Sustainable Communities Campaign, will build on the group's environmental certification of golf courses.

The new plan will dramatically increase Audubon International's profile and will require more participation from the golf industry if it is to be successful.

"We have become known as 'that golf environmental group,'" said Audubon president Ron Dodson. "We want to think really big and promote the principles of sustainability."

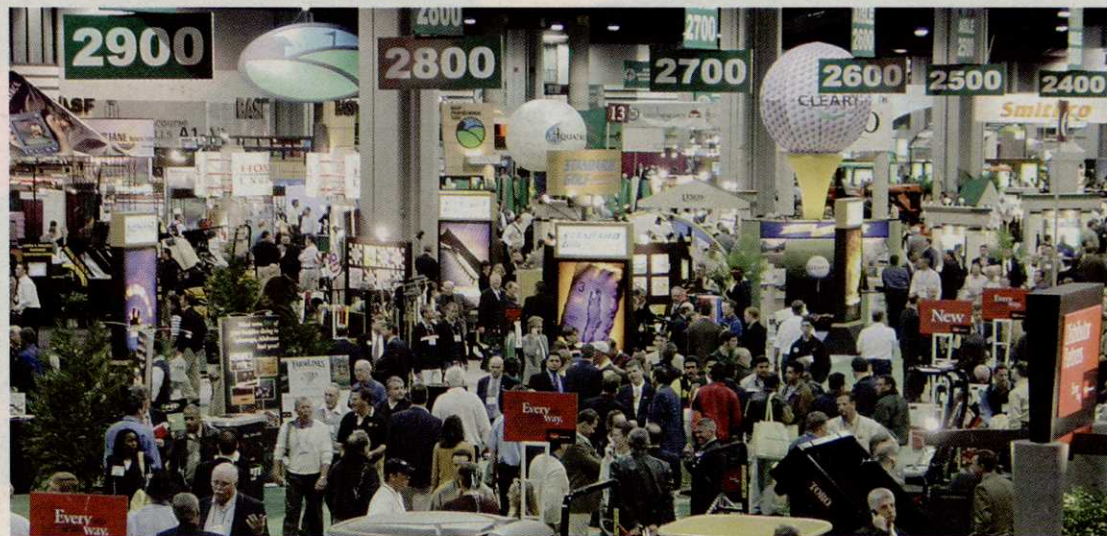
The goals of the sustainability-focused initiative will be to provide adequate supplies of clean water, to maintain and increase biological diversity and to create livable and equitable communities.

Audubon has divided the country into 18 level-one watersheds and will be launching programs in New York, North Carolina,

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GCSAA: Bring on the buying team

Combined show to shorten chain between superintendent and ultimate decision-maker



By merging their shows, the GCSAA and NGCOA hope to attract a larger percentage of qualified buyers beginning in 2005.

By DEREK RICE

ATLANTA — Recognizing the importance of the buying team in purchasing decisions, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) and the National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) have joined forces to put on the first Golf Industry Show, scheduled for Feb. 11-13, 2005 in Orlando, Fla.

The merger comes at a critical time for the GCSAA show, which has seen a decline in overall attendance. This year, 18,164

people attended the show, approximately 2,500 less than last year in Orlando (20,613), 2,700 less than in Dallas (20,927) and 3,500 less than 2000 in New Orleans (21,686). The 1999 show in Orlando set the high-water mark at 22,623.

GCSAA CEO Steve Mona said the number of qualified buyers (6,045) essentially equaled last year's mark in Orlando. Education seminar attendance reached 6,295, down from the 6,921 chairs filled in Orlando.

One of the main drivers behind

the merger, which the two organizations have talked about for three or four years, was the need to deliver more of those qualified buyers to the show floor, said

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VGM Club signs Yamaha

By DEREK RICE

WATERLOO, Iowa — Golf buying alliance VGM Club has signed an agreement with Yamaha Golf Car to give its members access to discounts on Yamaha cars.

D. Jay Ellis, president of VGM Club, said the agreement came about mostly because of the efficiencies Yamaha has built into its new manufacturing facility in Newnan, Ga.

"We're excited about our relationship with Yamaha and the warranty schedule they use on their golf cars. They're doing some exciting things with their cars, and their plant is phenomenal," Ellis said.

The agreement is non-exclusive, Ellis said, meaning VGM could conceivably

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Debate over Roundup Ready bent rages on

By ANDREW OVERBECK

ATLANTA — Scotts and Monsanto are moving ahead with the development of Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass despite several recent challenges.

Bill Rose, president of HybriGene, Turf-Seed and Tee-2-Green, announced at the GCSAA Conference and Show in Atlanta that his researchers had officially produced a male-sterile bentgrass plant. Rose contends that this method reduces the risk of gene flow and contamination of tra-

ditional bentgrass varieties during the production process and that using any other method



Bill Rose said that pollen from the Roundup Ready production field could contaminate bentgrass grown nearby. The above photo shows pollen from a Tee-2-Green field.

also took a hit in mid-January when the New York Times reported that certain weeds in row crops were becoming resistant to the widely-used herbicide.

Also in January, the International Center for Technology Assessment (ICTA) filed a lawsuit against the United States Department of Agriculture to force them to include genetic grasses on its list of noxious weeds. If successful, the group could block the approval of any biotech

would result in gene escape. Roundup Ready technology

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Roundup Ready bentgrass forges ahead

Continued from page 1

turfgrass.

None of these issues, however, seem to phase officials from Scotts and Monsanto.

The companies are moving forward with plans to produce Roundup Ready turfgrass seed at their 11,000-acre control area in Oregon this summer. Dr. Bob Harriman, vice president of biotechnology for Scotts, said the possibility of gene escape is narrow because of its extensive stewardship plan.

"What we are doing is good sound stewardship," said Harriman. "We have gotten permission from the Oregon Department of Agriculture to have a dedicated biotech area and we have notifications in place with USDA's Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS) that it will go to flower and seed. We are bringing it through this process to demonstrate the process will work and with low risk."

According to Rose, the risk is still too great because pollen from the

control area could spread and contaminate other fields.

"If they don't mow that production field this summer it will contaminate the whole production area," he said. "It is unavoidable."

However, Harriman not only doesn't see an advantage to male-sterile varieties, he also said the possibility of gene escape due to pollen drift is nearly impossible.

"Gene escape in male-sterile varieties is still possible because you still have fertility, gene flow and sexuality in half the system. It doesn't make it an ounce safer," he said. "[If pollen contamination] was the case, then you would have to assume that every variety of Penn A4 and Penncross that has been produced is not worth anything. If people are still selling certified seed, I don't see how you have your cake and eat it too."

When it comes to certain weeds becoming resistant to Roundup, Monsanto officials said the problem was limited, especially as it

relates to use on golf courses.

"What you have seen is a pocket of isolated resistance to one or two difficult-to-control, agricultural weeds," said Monsanto spokesman Brian Hurley. "The golf landscape is quite different. The weeds on courses are not as difficult to control and the practice of weed control is different. Golf courses kill weeds when they are young and easier to control."

According to Harriman, the lawsuit filed by ICTA is also unlikely to cause any problems.

"The merit of their lawsuit is that bentgrass is a noxious weed," he said. "But it is not a noxious weed, it provides plenty of benefits and it is not on any weed labels for corn or soybeans or any other row crop."

Going forward, Harriman said Scotts and Monsanto will resubmit their application for approval to APHIS this spring. Rose and HybriGene are pushing ahead as well and plan to apply for an APHIS permit to grow male-sterile glyphosate tolerant plants in field trials. ■

Intern competition

Continued from page 6

their internship(s) is the first true stepping-stone toward their future marketability as an assistant. There have also been many horror stories exchanged through the years concerning internships at various clubs. Interns want internships that offer a strong educational opportunity. Clubs that have the reputation among students as offering the "Weedeater Intern Program," whereby interns run a weed trimmer all day and don't learn anything, are avoided by students.

As the recruitment process continues to be difficult, clubs have had to up the benefits. Hourly wages for interns have increased drastically from \$8 to \$9 an hour to \$10 to \$12 an hour. Along with the wage increase, clubs have started providing housing and other perks, such as food allowances/meals, performance bonuses, scholarships, uniforms, golf shop discounts and travel/moving assistance to lure interns.

The old style of advertising has also been shown the door. A single-page job announcement on plain paper doesn't draw much interest these days. This is obvious when looking at the placement boards of major turf universities. Videotapes, CD-ROMs and colored brochures that describe intern programs have rapidly replaced the basic one-page announcement sheet.

Some clubs don't even send advertising anymore, they make personal recruiting visits to the universities to promote their program and conduct interviews. This year Dr. Nick Christians of Iowa State University said nearly a dozen superintendents have made recruiting trips.

It appears recruiting process will only become more difficult and superintendents will have to develop and promote a top-notch internship program to lure students. It will also require more thought in the recruitment process. The days of sending a one-page announcement that would guarantee the number of interns you needed are long gone. ■



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