

# NEWS OF THE INDUSTRY

## Burning controversy rages in grass seed industry

A crisis may soon fall on golf courses throughout the nation because of some pending legislation in Oregon. An arbitrary phase-out of open field burning in that state's turfgrass seed industry could cause a general deterioration of all grasses.

Since inferior seeds will probably be produced without the open-burning process, new diseases and some old ones may resurface. The open-burning process has helped to enhance regrowth and ridded the ground of stubble.

The controversy over the process has raged for months between those in the Oregon industry and state governor Robert Straub, whose critics are convinced has bent over to the environmentalists in his state. The ban is based on the pressure of the ecology groups.

Of course, Oregon is probably one of the biggest states in the grass seed business, but industry people see a decision in that state sure to effect the business in the neighboring states of Idaho and Washington.

## Poe speaks on recertification

With the month fast approaching when the PGA will see how effective its recertification program is, national president Henry Poe once again hoisted the storm warnings to those members lacking points. The association will probably show little sympathy to those missing the passing grade.

Recently quoted, Poe spoke about the program as something conceived to get PGA members more motivated in their business and better educated in their competitive field. The end result, in Poe's mind, would be more income and security, especially in view of the many young people starting up in the business now.

The compulsory program gives

the PGA professional three years to earn the nine points that will qualify him as an active member. Unfortunately, many pros throughout the country have failed to get into the program and face inactive status when their qualification period ends.

Even with the apathetic attitude that many pros have shown, section officials at the PGA annual business meeting last year in New Orleans balked at talk of more time for those showing lack of motivation to shoot at recertification. Poe himself is not for dropping members. Unless, they change their minds, section officials are ready to clean the association of those not involved in the program.

## Unemployment abuse: clubs ripped off?

Last winter, Ray Bolo decided there probably wouldn't be too much for his assistant Brent Stuckey to do in the pro shop at Western Golf & Country Club, near Detroit, so Stuckey headed for a season of sun in Florida and a chance to work on his game.

Now this isn't unusual in itself, many assistants from the north and for that matter many head pros probably head south when the snow falls, but while there, Stuckey was featured in a story on CBS-TV's *60 Minutes* recently.

The story dealt with unemployment compensation abuses and Stuckey's relative lack of desire to find other or any employment. Although, the law states that an individual on unemployment should attempt to find a job in his trained area, it's common knowledge in the industry that a golf pro looking for work in Florida in the winter has about as much chance of finding a

position as the aluminum shaft coming back.

Since the federal government has so much say in unemployment compensation funds for various states, an interstate benefit claim is available to residents of states, visiting other states. Granted, Stuckey's week claim of approximately \$80 is not much to live on, but it beats poverty.

Commenting to GOLFDOM, Bolo defended his assistant and was not critical of Stuckey's trip down south. Law provides for an employer, such as Bolo, to pay additional funds into the unemployment pool that his employees, such as Stuckey, draw on when they stop work. So Bolo, a veteran of 16 years in the golf business, has put his money where his mouth is.

Not happy about the situation and the way it may have given golf professionals a bad public image is Michigan PGA section treasurer

Jim Applegate. Speaking from his shop at Washtenaw Country Club in Ypsilanti, Applegate told GOLFDOM the Stuckey case was not unique in the section and for that matter the nation. How widespread the practice is among assistants is something further research would have to reveal.

Applegate mentioned that the assistants association in the Michigan section had discussed the practice of unemployment compensation before and the topic of trips to Florida in the winter had been brought up with no one in the organization talking the practice down.

At a larger level, national PGA secretary Don Padgett commented to GOLFDOM that the Stuckey case was not unique to golf professionals, as *60 Minutes* showed. "Our system of government allows this kind of thing to happen. I can't say whether this was right or wrong,

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but the law is written, so it seems legal. The PGA, though, would never encourage anyone to violate the law," Padgett said from his office in Callaway Gardens, Ga.

Whether or not it makes any difference to Stuckey, because he is back in Detroit now, but the Michigan state government through its

Employment Security Commission has cut off the young assistant's unemployment compensation if he plans to file in the future.

Norm Isotalo, a spokesperson for the MESC told GOLFDOM Stuckey was in violation of the law since he did not attempt to find other employment while down in Florida on an active basis.

The real story, though, is not with Stuckey. It could be with the employees at all northern clubs that

may stop work in the winter when the clubs close down and go on unemployment until the season starts again in the spring.

Seasonal employees such as those at clubs in the north probably won't go to Florida for the winter, but still, many in the industry probably don't attempt to find other work in the cold downtime.

As a result, the employers (the clubs) pay a larger share of their funds into these unemployment pools and profitability is indeed decreased. Bartenders, waiters, waitresses, kitchen help, maintenance crews, assistant golf professionals and other employees are all in the seasonal category and probably could get involved in the unemployment compensation systems of their particular states.

Of course, the abuses of unemployment compensation go well beyond the golf industry. As the MESC's Isotalo says, "Even though we require people to state their last full-time occupation on our forms, no one has even thought to research them to see where most of the unemployed are coming from."

Chances are, the revelations of *60 Minutes* and other investigative reporting might start the states looking and in the golf business, employers might begin to question the integrity of their employees and whether the unemployment funds are unfair to seasonal employers.

### Harley-Davidson moves car facility to Pennsylvania

AMF Harley-Davidson will establish golf car assembly operations at its assembly plant in York, Pa., it was recently announced by Ray A. Tritten, corporate vice president.

The York plant is the primary assembly facility for AMF Harley-Davidson. It has automated assembly lines for motorcycles. The golf car operations are being placed in currently unused space at the plant.

"The opening of a golf car assembly facility at York will enable us to better meet growing competition in golf cars, and also will put us nearer to our prime market in the Southern portion of the country," Tritten said.

AMF Harley-Davidson has been assembling its golf cars in a leased

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