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Augusta's Green Thumb

The Masters is for April 4-10 at Augusta National Golf Club. Phil "Lefty" Mickelson will defend his title, which was his first Major victory. But enough about Mickelson and a little about Brad Owen, the courses superintendent, who bleeds Augusta green.

Education: Turfgrass management degree from Penn State University in 1986.
Years at Augusta: 18.
Previous position: Assistant superintendent of Augusta National.
Future position: Here's betting it's Augusta for several more years.

Golf Rounds Played

The percentages below represent the difference in number of rounds played in December 2004 compared to the number of rounds played in December 2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>DEC.</th>
<th>Y.T.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New England (ME, VT, NH, MA, RI, CT)</td>
<td>-16.7%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Atlantic (NY, PA, NJ)</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East North Central (MI, OH, IN, IL, WI)</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>-0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West North Central (ND, MN, SD, NE, KS, IA, MO)</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>-1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Atlantic (VA, DE, MD, NC, SC, GA)</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida (FL)</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>-0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East South Central (KY, TN, AL, MS)</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West South Central (OK, AR, LA)</td>
<td>-2.5%</td>
<td>-5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>-3.5%</td>
<td>-4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain (MT, ID, WY, NV, UT, CO, AZ, NM)</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>-0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific (WA, OR, AK, HI)</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>-0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>-4.0%</td>
<td>-1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL UNITED STATES</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>-0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Hoffman takes over at Toro
Michael J. Hoffman officially took over as CEO for The Toro Co. on March 15, succeeding Kendrick B. Melrose, who will assume the role of executive chairman for Toro's board of directors. Hoffman, 49, is a 27-year veteran with the company. He was elected president and chief operating officer in 1994 and has been responsible for all the company's businesses and operations. Melrose joined Toro in 1970 as director of marketing for the consumer products division. He was named CEO in 1983 and chairman of the board in 1987.

LESCO's new fleet
You could say LESCO is keepin' on truckin' — and in a big way. At the Golf Industry Show in February, the Cleveland-based company unveiled its new Store-on-Wheels vehicle, a 20-foot-long truck that will carry about 180 products at all times. The company said it will replace all of its current vehicles this spring and summer and expand its fleet from 72 at the start of 2005 to 110 by the end of the year.

Michael DiMino, LESCO's president and CEO, said the new truck "strengthens" LESCO's commitment to its customers. "The golf course market is at the core of LESCO's business, just as it has been since LESCO's founding in 1962," he added.

The company's original Store-on-Wheels concept was born out of a focus meeting with superintendents. The concept was introduced in Florida in 1976.

ITODA establishes training institute
The Independent Turf and Ornamental Distributors Association (ITODA) has established the ITODA Training Institute to support...
Switcheroo
BASF’S MILLER SAYS SUPERINTENDENTS SHOULD CHANGE OUT NOZZLES FOR PARTICULAR PESTICIDES

This is the season for ... spraying pesticides. With that in mind, we turn to Kyle Miller, senior technical specialist for BASF Turf & Ornamental, to garner a few tips for proper spraying.

Miller says many sprayers these days are fitted with nozzles that deliver a medium/coarse spray. "You can use these nozzles for different products. [They have] a coarser spray so if the wind kicks up the spray will stay uniform without a lot of drift."

But Miller stresses that superintendents should consider switching nozzles for each pesticide they’re spraying, whether it’s an herbicide, fungicide or insecticide. For instance, a nozzle that emits a coarse spray is not effective for a fungicide program.

"It may not be as important if you’re spraying a soil insecticide to have real fine droplets hitting the soil," Miller says. "You can probably get away with a coarser spray. But in the case of a contact fungicide, you want to maximize that product on the leaf. So you want to have a nozzle that can do that for you. If we have a real coarse spray, then you’re probably not going to do a very good job of getting it on the foliage because there are a lot of big particles that will roll off the leaf and fall down into the turf canopy. So they won’t be effective."

Miller points out that nozzles are inexpensive. "You can buy a whole set for $100," he adds.

-Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

What we’ve heard from many members. "Overall golf spending is rising a bit as the overall economy continues to improve," he said.

Private club rounds were flat for the year while public courses had slight increases. "Premium" public courses had the best showing with nearly a 2-percent gain, followed by "value" public with about a 1-percent increase.

The report is based on information reported by a panel of nearly 2,600 golf facilities across the United States. Response rates to monthly surveys vary from 60 percent to 70 percent.

Including the 2004 openings, the total number of U.S. golf facilities stands at 16,057, thus breaking the 16,000 mark for the first time. Adjusting for 9-hole and 18-hole-plus facilities, there were 14,988 18-hole equivalents at year’s end.

We're excited about the news. No we’re ecstatic, exuberant, elated, no...
In establishing the training institute, ITODA is assuming a new role as the primary educational resource for independent distributors, with the support of other groups in the industry, ITODA President Chris Petersen said.

Singleton honored by ASGCA
The American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) will present its Donald Ross Award to golf course irrigation pioneer John Singleton at its annual meeting April 18 in Pebble Beach, Calif. Singleton will be the 30th recipient of the award, which is given annually to a person who has made significant contributions to the game of golf and golf course architecture.

Digging for Clams ...Err... golf Balls
For the past four winters, Josh Tobey, a 78-year-old member of the Elks Club of State College (Pa.), gets his exercise in a unique way on the frozen golf course ponds. Tobey grew up in the New England area and was exposed to clam digging early in his teens. That practice has come in handy for his winter activity. He can be found almost daily, chopping holes through the ice-digging for golf balls with his homemade “clam digger.” This past winter he found nearly 3,000 golf balls.

On good days Tobey will usually fill a 5-gallon bucket with balls, about 300 of them, that he has dug out of the muddy pond bottoms. Tobey says its great exercise. The only negative is cleaning each of the
balls before storing them. He tried washing them in his washing machine once at home, but his wife quickly put a stop to that practice.

What does Tobey do with thousands of golf balls? He has given many to local high school golf teams, sold them to raise money for his church and library and given them to the course pro for range balls.

(Editor's note: David Williams, certified superintendent of the Elks Club of State College, sent us this information about Tobey and took the photographs of him in action.)

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— Carlos Federico, superintendent at The Pines Golf Club of Marana in Tucson, Ariz., quoted by KOLD News 13 on the abundance of rain throughout the southwest in February.
Off The Fringe

Movie Site Turns California Golf Course ‘Sideways’

By Thomas Skernivitz, Managing Editor

A sked to pick his favorite flick of 2004, David Rosenstrauch gives two thumbs up to the only movie that really “hit home.”

Certainly, then, the certified superintendent at River Course at the Alisal has to be heralding “Sideways.” After all, the movie literally hit home— in this case Solvang, Calif., in the heart of Santa Barbara wine country. Two scenes were filmed at River Course, including one gut-buster that occurs on one of Rosenstrach’s fairways. The lead characters, played by Paul Giamatti and Thomas Hayden Church, having just had a group chip into them, return the favor and fire a few balls (and expletives) right back at ‘em.

“The scene on the golf course was pretty cool,” Rosenstrauch says. “Those were some of the members from our private course that they used (as extras).”

Nevertheless, it’s “Finding Neverland” over “Sideways” when Rosenstrauch is pressed to name his No. 1 movie. So much for any home-course advantage, which, in this case, included some terrific on-location food spreads and a set of free tickets to the premier.

“Personally, I thought ‘Finding Neverland’ was one of the best movies I’ve seen in the last 15 or 20 years,” he says of the Johnny Depp film that details the origination of the fairy tale character Peter Pan. “I loved ‘Neverland.’ It hit home. The end got me right between my heart. When that little kid is looking at (Depp’s character) with tears in his eyes, it struck me. Loved that movie. It was fantastic.”

Not that “Sideways” was bad. “I’d give it a B,” Rosenstrauch, 52, says. “I thought it was pretty funny.”

Things weren’t so amusing at the time of the filming last May. The two golf scenes, which lasted less than five minutes combined on film, closed the course for the four days it took to shoot.

“Man, I could never be an actor. I’d be going out of my brain,” Rosenstrauch says.

The good news is that tourism in the valley is booming. Not bad for a movie that Rosenstrauch says was considered “B-grade from the get-go.”

“The River Course is just packed. A 5-hour round, 6-hour round is not uncommon now,” Rosenstrauch says. “It’s going to be a good year.”

Spoken like a true wine-country superintendent.

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George P. Toma

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“Pennington is on a roll with grass seed products so good they are used in many of the most important sporting venues in the world.”

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Help, I’ve fallen behind and I can’t catch up. An 84-year-old Florida woman almost had cardiac arrest when she saw her $419 water bill and couldn’t understand why. A trouble-shooter from the local utility company found her automatic irrigation system wasn’t properly programmed and was running amok, driving up her water bill. Other members of the “Greatest Generation” such as my parents, War Babies my age and a ton of baby boomers are also falling further behind in this high-tech world. But it doesn’t take a computer geek to turn off the water when it’s raining.

Water management districts don’t have the money, personnel or access to ride herd on the public’s irrigation controllers. People who can’t program VCRs or cell phones evidently can’t handle 12-station clocks on garage walls either. This is where most of the public water waste occurs. As the millions of acres of residential, commercial and municipal turfgrass goes mismanaged or unmanaged, the water crisis continues to make headlines.

But this crisis is self-inflicted. Regional areas run out of cheap accessible water because they allow growth without providing alternative solutions to offset the increasing demand on existing watersheds. We may be running low on “cheap” water, but we are not running out of water. Until coastal states develop more desalination plants and all communities recycle effluent for irrigation, the media shouldn’t demonize or trivialize the more visible water users such as golf. According to a recent Golf Economic Impact study, there are 4 million acres of lawn turf and 140,000 acres of irrigated golf turf in Florida. The public sector uses 30 percent of the water; golf uses 3.5 percent.

Agriculture (the biggest user of water) and golf (one of the smallest) still get hammered in the press, even though both manage and recycle water better than John Q. Public. Our management skills are overlooked and we are made the scapegoats because people can’t figure out a day-of-the-week push-pin dial, a 0-to-60-minute station dial and the off/auto switch. A roving irrigation tech on the city payroll who shuts down systems during rainy weather could save tons of water and money and set a good example.

As the agriculture and green industries move forward with new technology, the homeowner sector is falling behind. The irrigation designers, manufacturers and installers are missing a huge market share by not bringing residential equipment and design into the 21st century. A system also needs periodic maintenance to be most efficient, but first things first.

So much for the end-users; our politicians aren’t immune to falling short either. After years of cutting budgets to land grant universities that support agriculture and green industries, urbanized legislatures have literally and figuratively abandoned their roots. In trying to remake states into high-tech economies, they have turned their backs on the agribusiness industries that kept many states solvent during the recent economic slowdown.

Farms, groves, ranches, nurseries and golf courses are going high-tech to be economically efficient, but they aren’t getting much public help or recognition. Poorly managed growth overloads and depletes our natural resources. Investment in alternative water sources and conservation measures lags behind the growth curve. It is urban sprawl and ignorant people that are wasting water, not those who work the land.

Our water woes will continue until individual homeowners and municipalities take seriously their responsibility for practical water use and conservation instead of trying to solve the problem by blaming turfgrass and penalizing small niche users like golf.

Certified superintendent Joel Jackson is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.