

State of the Art in France

by Steven Cook, Supt.
Golf de Joyenval

In February of 1990, I took a big step towards reaching one of my longstanding goals of experiencing another culture and way of life, by leaving Medinah Country Club for Paris, France. Saying good-bye to family and friends, I set out to conquer Europe and "grow-in" a 36 hole Robert Trent Jones golf course. The easy part was coordinating my move with the respective governments and then future employer: Golf European Consultants. It was a little more difficult living in a hotel for two months, adjusting to the maddening effect of playing "bumper cars" on the French autoroutes, and finally, realizing that anything breakable brought from the States was just that; broken!

The golf course: Golf de Joyenval, is situated approximately 30 kilometers west of Paris, in a small wooded valley of about 300 acres. Just adjacent is the "Foret de Marly", which is interposed between Versailles and the golf course. The entire area was reported to have been travelled by Marie Antoinette, who would come to her summer home, now located behind the 11th green. An old chateau was razed to make room for the future clubhouse, and some five hundred yards from the 12th tee is an underground bunker which supposedly housed ammunition and soldiers during the First World War. History, spanning more than three hundred years, dominates the site as far as the eye can see!

The intimate proximity to other countries has given us a curious collection of nationalities on our crew, including: Spanish, Portuguese, Algerian, Turkish, Moroccan, Moritanian, French, and of course American. This has obviously created some language barriers. My assistant is fluent in English, and we have a bilingual secretary to handle the mountains of forms and paperwork required by the French Administration. For example, each employee must have a signed contract (even if he is hired for only one month), and is permitted by law to work a maximum of forty-four hours per week, thirty-nine being standard. In addition, five weeks of paid vacation are mandatory per year, this also by law.

As for our cultural program, the selection of chemicals and fertilizers is somewhat restricted because the overall demand for quality turf products is not as great as it is in the States yet. As choices are limited and unfamiliar, Daconil has therefore formed the basis of my chemical program. Scott's has recently made available several of their "greens grade fertilizer", which has helped fill some needs the other manufacturers have yet to supply. We have tested several mixes for topdressing and have chosen one of 100% sand from the Loire Valley in central France. For bunkers, we are currently experimenting with six different types of sand with various levels of particle size and compactability. These have been brought to the golf course and added to two bunkers for trial in terms of drainage, playability, aesthetics and maintenance. This test will take place over a period of six months before a decision is taken.

Virtually every piece of Jacobsen, Toro, and Ransome equipment is available. John Deere has also recently entered the golf course market, having previously established itself strongly in the European agricultural field. The cost for equipment can be anywhere from 25-75% higher than in the States. It is more
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(France cont'd.)

times than not the small items (soil probes, shovels, etc.) that elude discovery.

The rewards of living and working in a foreign country by far outweigh the problems and hardships one faces in adjusting to a new environment. I have learned that life does exist outside of the United States: about how non-Americans view Americans, and how America as a country dominates the World's events, which affects nearly every facet of European life, for better or worse.

Golf in France, as well as the entire European Community, is growing at an accelerated pace. Permits are becoming harder to obtain as golf courses are coming under greater scrutiny for water consumption and an increased environmental awareness. Along with this "golf boom" has come the desire for an increased quality of maintenance. More and more, investors and developers are looking to the United States for training and expertise in this area. The opportunities for American superintendents in Europe is greater today than ever before. The challenges are there, and the personal and professional satisfaction is worth the sacrifice. Perhaps only one thing is missing: BEAR Football!

Bear On Turf

Matt Suhey, former fullback for the Chicago Bears, will offer the KEYNOTE ADDRESS on Tuesday, December 4 at the North Central Turfgrass Exposition (NCTE).



The NCTE held this year in Springfield, Illinois offers turf managers current information on issues and practices of turf care. In addition to the educational sessions, NCTE holds a trade show featuring suppliers of turf-related products and services.

As for Matt Suhey's interest in Illinois turfgrass, he is an avid golfer. But Suhey is better known for his role as the Bears starting fullback since 1981. He held this position until his retirement at the conclusion of the '89 season. Suhey finished third on club in rushing during the '88 season and he was named best blocking back on club.

Suhey joined the Bears after an impressive collegiate record at Penn State. Suhey was the fourth leading rusher in Penn State history with 2,818 yards. He was inducted into the National Football Foundation College Hall of Fame in 1985.

Suhey currently resides in Highland Park, Illinois. He has a B.S. degree in Marketing which he puts to good use buying and selling options. Suhey also donates time to several Chicago area charities.

For more information on attending NCTE, call the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation at 312/644-0828.

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