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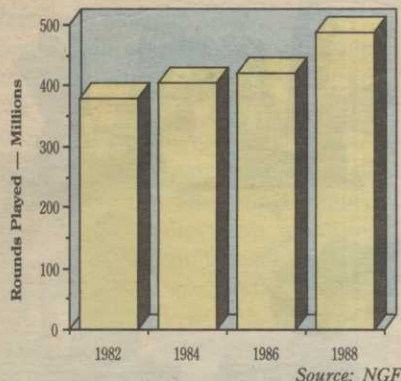
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Seed industry wins time

Search heats up for long-term solution to controlling disease

BY MARK LESLIE

The Oregon seed industry has won a reprieve from frightening legislation to ban field-burning, and researchers have recharged efforts to find long-term answers to the issue.

"It's status quo for 1989," said Dr. William C. Young, Extension agronomist at Oregon State University.

The Oregon House voted 34-26 against a bill that would reduce the number of seed-producing acreage that could be burned. Field-burning is the basic means the state's

800 seed growers use to purge their fields of weeds and disease and prepare the land for the next crop.

The case is crucial to the nation's golf courses because Oregon's 70 seed companies provide all U.S.-produced ryegrass, bentgrass, Chewings and creeping red fescues seed, half the U.S.-grown tall fescue seed, and about one-fourth its bluegrass seed.

Growers have burned their fields for decades, and in 1971 the legislature enacted a bill that would phase out the burning. But

the lawmakers in 1979 stopped the phaseout at 250,000 acres. A renewed move to ban the burning altogether was galvanized last year when one farmer was burning a field and the wind changed direction, blowing smoke onto a major highway and causing a seven-death, 37-car pileup.

"Intense" is how Dave Nelson, executive director of the Oregon Seed Council, described feelings surrounding the debate in the state House and Senate.

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Hyundai set to make its move

BY MARK LESLIE

Hyundai Precision and Ind. Co., Ltd. will make its long-awaited entry into the American golfing arena when it exhibits its new golf car at the PGA's West Coast Golf Show in August.

Kwang-Heum Um, sales manager for Hyundai Precision in the United States, said the four-wheel-drive gas-or-electric-powered golf car will be displayed at the Long Beach, Calif., Convention Center on Aug. 19-21 and he hopes to have it on the marketplace nationwide next February.

"We hope to find good dealers and distributors for our product at the West Coast show. We will show our product to them then," Um said, adding that Hyundai is not negotiating with any dealers now.

He said Hyundai also will start developing

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The 6th hole on the Valleys Course, designed by Pete Dye, is the signature hole for Blackwolf Run Golf Course in Kohler, Wis.

For more on Blackwolf Run and other new courses see pages 12 and 13.



Sod suddenly making sense

BY MARK LESLIE

Sodding a golf course, an idea that once seemed a staggering expense, is worthwhile today to some people.

While Arizona State University has the luxury of allowing one year for its new Pete Dye-designed Karsten Golf Course to grow in from seed, many developers want—even need—to get players on the course much sooner to start paying back on their investment.

Developers selling property around a course want to tell customers they can play golf right away, not wait the three to six months it normally takes for grass seed to grow in. And the sooner the

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Sod

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developer sells the homes or condominiums, the sooner he gets return on his investment. He makes no money watching the grass grow.

There are other benefits as well—benefits that may counter the much higher cost of sodding a course.

"I contend," said McCumber Golf Vice President Michael Beebe, "that if you have to spend a minimum of three to four months, sometimes six months, for grow-in from seed ... you'll almost break even or even save a little by sodding instead. You'll save with fertilization, chemicals, repairs during grow-in."

Beebe said, "We're doing slopes, bunker faces, tee slopes—places we're concerned

about losing to erosion.

"Basically," said golf course architect Jeff Brauer of Golfscapes in Arlington, Texas, "when you seed a course you have to figure that you will have to repair the soil if you have a washout. Plus you must figure the cost of refertilizing and resprigging and the additional water that it takes to get that re-established because you use a lot more water at the beginning (of grow-in)."

Speaking about "a first-class resort that does the upscale mounding, et cetera," Brauer added, "It would be my guess that you would recoup most of the cost. From the grassing date to opening day, your grow-in budget would go up almost as much as the difference in cost between sod and seed."

Brauer said it would cost \$750,000 to sod the typical 18-hole golf course, and the minimum a developer would want to spend on a modern golf course is \$300,000 in sod. The difference, he said, would be three times as much for sod as seed.

Asked why developers aren't sodding courses, Brauer said, "because the upfront costs seem so staggering."

A washout or not

Keith Foster, who is in charge of the Western United States for Arthur Hills and Associates of Toledo, Ohio, said that when considering sod for a new course the region it is in is critical.

"If you're looking in the West you certainly don't get many rains," Foster said. "And if you were to go ahead and seed and sprig a course in May or June you have two or three months of decent weather before the monsoons hit out West. But if you were seeding and sprigging in August your chances of erosion, significant erosion, is great—you lose it, it's a washout."

"I would almost recommend sodding all renovations because obviously people are trying to get back and play quickly," said architect Tom Fazio of Jupiter, Fla.

Fazio, who is seeing 110 acres of his Shadow Creek course outside Las Vegas being sodded at a cost of \$1.2 million to \$1.4 million, said the sodding is "not as expensive as it sounds ... in this particular case because

of the amount of dollars it takes to grow it in the desert—the fertilizer, water, et cetera...

"With sod you're buying maturity," Fazio said. "Long-term, the sod is not an expensive operation. Plus the play factor. It's what I refer to as the 1980s and '90s concept of golf: You build maturity into the golf course—putting in big trees and putting in sod."

"We started in October (1988) and we're going to ready to play in October," he said.

Fazio said he designed two courses last year and the year before—Halbrook Farms Country Club in Leawood, Kansas, and The Farm in Dalton, Ga.—where the fairways were sodded with zoysia sod. That sod was more expensive, costing \$750,000 to sod about 35 acres of fairways.

In Las Vegas, he said, sodding most of the tee-to-green areas cost between \$10,000 and \$12,000 an acre.

"That's not necessarily just to get on the course quicker," Fazio said. "It's to get it grown in because of all the steep slopes and contours and we want to prevent erosion and we want it to be smoother and to have it more mature even when we open. It's not a question of opening a month or two earlier; it's a question of having it right, instead of having to wait a year or two to have it mature and grown in."

At Halbrook Farms CC the sodding was done to beat a timetable. It worked, according to Mel Lavery, director of real estate for Hallmark Cards, which developed the residential golf course community the country club was tied to.

"The residential side was moving ahead so we wanted the course open the sooner the better," Lavery said.

Asked if the extra cost was worth it, Lavery said, "It's hard to say. It's like saying, 'Does your advertising pay?' We don't know, because we did it. But we still feel today that it was the right decision."

"We got to the point (in 1987) here in the Midwest where we were not having a good summer weatherwise," he said. "We thought if we were going to meet our schedule of opening in 1988 sodding offered a tremendous opportunity to get a jump on the grass."

"We wanted it to be playable most of 1988, and it opened June 25... It is highly possible we couldn't have opened until this year if we hadn't sodded."

Lavery said the private course is surrounded by homes in the \$325,000 to \$1 million-plus range.

Officials at Tanglewood Park in Clemens, N.C., decided to beat the clock and re-sod all their greens when they renovated them in preparation for a Senior Tour tournament in October.

"They totally redid all the greens. It made more sense to sod them then to seed them and try to make them playable by October," said Jeff Cole, marketing director of Foster Turf which supplied the bentgrass sod for the renovation.

"It was an exciting project for us," Cole said, adding that the company had until then worked mainly in the West. The sod was sent in 18 refrigerated trucks on the three-day trip and the plans went "flawlessly," he said.

Cole offered one more reason behind the sodding decisions:

"Construction is always behind time for whatever reason, and it's hard to seed warm-weather seed in the cool season or cool-season seed when it's warm, so many people are ending up sodding it."

Major change

Sod being laid on golf courses is one of the major changes he has seen in 25 years in the business, Fazio said.

"In the early '60s and maybe almost the entire '60s we almost used no sod, even for minor areas, because it was too expensive," he said. "Then, in the '70s, we started using some sod around the edges of the bunkers... We used different sod than Bermuda so that runners would not go into the sand; it was kind of a maintenance factor."

"In the '60s we would do some sodding after we had some erosion, but you didn't start off sodding. You'd take the chance that you could grow it in with nature."

"Then in the '70s the industry started building steeper slopes and steeper contours and the only way to have them grow in and not erode was to sod them."

"And then you got into the '80s and we started talking about sodding the banks and slopes of greens and around bunkers; and then we started talking about different grasses and using zoysiagrass in ... the transition zones of the country where it is hot in the summer and cold in the winter and you need a cold-tolerant and a hot-tolerant grass."

"And we started talking about using zoysia grass and sodding fairways. Jack Lupton did that in Chatanooga at the Honors Club and that opened the door for other people to say they could do it and justify it."

"So zoysia was no longer used just for doing plugs. Then you put different grass in bare spots and fill it in and eventually the zoysia would cover out the ryegrass or bluegrass or whatever filler grass was put in. And then people started to realize that that was less quality conditions, that if you went out and sodded, you would not only have good quality turf quicker but you could play the golf course quicker and it wouldn't cost you as much to grow in turf."

McCumber Golf's Beebe said, "In the past we'd sod 50,000 to 75,000 square feet (of a course). Now we're seeing more courses sod 300,000 square feet or even more in some places."

He added, "Now that the whole standard of the industry is being raised, we'll see more remodeling of courses" to keep up with new courses being built around the corner.

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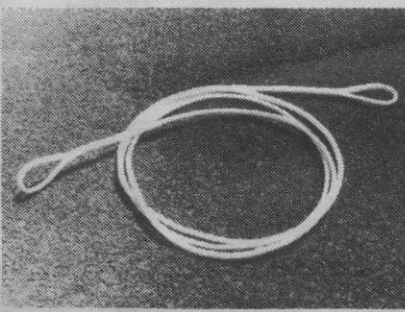
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