

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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Photo by Pat O'Connor, Colorado DOW

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GCSAA to conduct exclusive research

Withdraws funding slated for USGA

By MARK LESLIE

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America has withdrawn financial support from United States Golf Association research program to launch research projects of its own.

The move was met with awe by some in the industry, but drew support from the USGA itself.

Jim Snow, national director of the USGA Green Section, said: "The GCSAA couldn't do its research without withdrawing funding from our program. They

didn't pull out leaving us in the lurch... It wasn't a total surprise to me. They've expressed interest in doing some of these things for some time."



Saying that "in the end it won't affect what we do," Snow added: "In reality, more work will get done. I'm anxious to see the results of their work. We need all

the information we can get."

USGA President Stuart Bloch said that although he did not like losing the funding, "I think it will work out

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Environmental liability at issue on finance front

By PETER BLAIS

Fleet Financial Group Inc. recently became the first major bank in the country to require nearly all major commercial real estate lenders to obtain environmental liability insurance before getting a loan, a move likely to be followed by other financial institutions that could add thousands of dollars to the cost of a golf course development.

The Providence, R.I.-based firm instituted the new policy for any loan of \$1 million or more to protect the bank from having to clean up pollution on foreclosed properties.

The bank estimates a standard, \$2 million policy will cost \$10,000 to \$15,000 with a \$10,000 deductible

for three years of coverage. After the initial period, the policy must be renewed annually as long as the loan is in effect.

Lenders have required such insurance on occasional golf projects in the

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Ransomes America working to sort out consumer confusion



'Our goal is to have a corporate brand identity by the 1993 GCSAA Show in Anaheim.'
— Irv Aal, president
Ransomes America

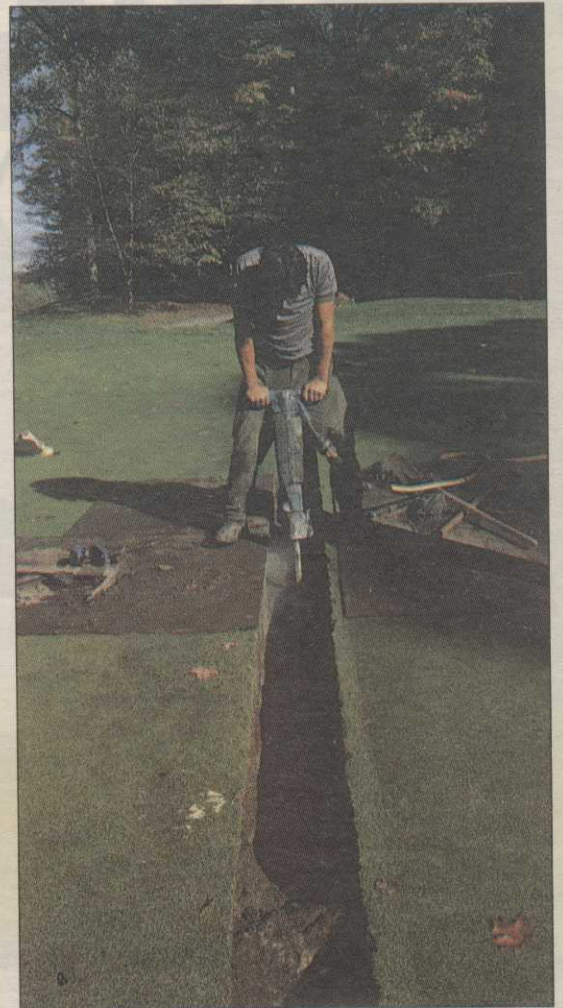
By HAL PHILLIPS

MINNEAPOLIS—Different names, different colors, different sets of distributors, different directions.

Cushman Inc., Steiner Turf Equipment and Brouwer Turf Equipment have all come under the Ransomes America Corp. umbrella since 1988. Not surprisingly, the last four years have brought a measure of consumer confusion in terms of name recognition and distribution logistics.

Yet when members of the golf course industry meet in Anaheim this winter, Ransomes hopes to

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THE HEAVY-HANDED APPROACH?

A maintenance crewman at Burning Tree Country Club in Greenwich, Conn., takes a jackhammer to the 15th green. Why? Turn to page 54 for answers in this month's edition of *On the Green*.

Course owners explore the intricacies of group buying

By HAL PHILLIPS

The National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) is implementing a cost-saving measure that management companies have employed for some time: Group purchasing.

Buying in bulk can save thousands of dollars in a single fiscal year, provided the management firm or association has enough member clubs to make the volume purchase worth executing.

However, the single biggest obstacle to group purchasing may be good ol'

Continued on page 41

GCSAA withdraws USGA funding to begin its own research projects

Continued from page 1

fine. We will continue down our road and share our information and I'm sure they will share theirs."

The GCSAA has annually contributed around \$35,000 to \$50,000 to the USGA research program since its inception nine years ago. The USGA is in the midst of a three-year \$3.2 million commitment and expects to keep up the \$1 million-a-year pace, Bloch said.

For GCSAA's part, Development Director Pat Jones said: "Our commitment to the USGA remains as strong as ever. Our job has always

been as a delivery mechanism. That hasn't changed a bit."

He downplayed the loss of money to the USGA, saying, "The USGA always looked at our financial support as sort of a bonus. When we gave, it was nice, but it was more of a bonus commitment."

Charles Passios of the Hyannisport Club in Marstons Mills, Mass., the GCSAA superintendent representative on the USGA Turfgrass Research Committee, said: "If anything, the research we do will complement the research that's ongoing. There 's other

things to look at, and that's what we intend to do."

Jones, who will administer the research program, said the organization will fund one major project and a variety of lesser ones.

"The board of directors is considering a number of projects. The amount of money we fund will depend on proposals from researchers," he said, explaining that he will request proposals from universities.

"One thing we really need to do is get all the information in one place, be patient, and seek to fill gaps (in research)," Jones said.

Snow said the major project Jones alluded to will be to "check people who have been applying pesticides — their health, blood work, that sort of thing — to see if there could be a problem. That's good because, one way

or the other, we need to know. Either they're not going to find much of anything, in which case we can say, 'Here are the people who are most exposed to these products for a long period of time and we can't find anything.' Or, they're going to find something and we will know we should be concerned.

"Superintendents and their employees will want to know if it's a threat, and what can be done about it."

Snow said he thought GCSAA will also monitor ground and surface water on golf courses, investigating "real-life situations.

"We want to get a better handle because that sort of evidence pulls weight with people in an audience — even though researchers working at universities is better science."

Bloch defined the USGA research as broad-based and said GCSAA's investigation of "specialized problems is understandable... Sometimes you have to put priorities for your organization first."

Snow welcomed the GCSAA research, saying what the USGA can do "is still only a fraction of what can be done."

He pointed out that the USGA could fund only 20 of the 100-plus projects proposed to it by universities nationwide.

For Jones, this culminates early work of his one-year-old department, but it is still only the first step toward important new research.

And Snow said: "I think our program has stimulated interest in research throughout the country. A lot of regional and state golf groups are funding research in their own states.

Jones said he does not believe GCSAA's withdrawal of funds will prompt similar local action.

"I think chapters will continue to divide their research moneys between local, regional and national efforts," he said. "But nationwide, university agricultural programs are losing funding. Local turfgrass societies and superintendents' associations are feeling more pressure to fund research."

USGA 'will make up' for funding loss

The United States Golf Association is not concerned about the loss of money the Golf Course Superintendents Association has provided annually to research projects, according to USGA Green Section National Director Jim Snow.

"Now that royalties are coming in on grasses (developed through the program), there won't be a shortfall at all this year," Snow said. "We will bring in more than the \$35,000 to \$50,000 the GCSAA donates. It depends on the seed yields, but the royalties could come to \$80,000 to \$100,000."

The bulk of the USGA research funding comes from revenues from television rights to the U.S. Open, he said. No companies contribute.

"We're committed to \$3.2 million (from 1991-93), so we regret that they're not going to continue to be part of the team," said USGA President Stuart Bloch. "But the GCSAA will require all the spare cash it can find" to conduct its own research.

Terming the \$1 million-a-year expense "a big item," Bloch said, "We would welcome support — from the right sources."

Pat Jones, GCSAA director of development who, along with the board of directors, will oversee the association's research program, said his first year of work in his new position "all leads to this, but this is only the beginning."

"Until now my job has principally stabilizing fund-raising, setting up the Chet Mendenhall Fund, and organizing so we can begin to do these kinds of things," Jones said.

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