

BRIEFS



SOD INTERNSHIPS AVAILABLE

ROLLING MEADOWS, Ill. — Students seeking “experience through employment” within the turfgrass sod production industry again may use resources of the American Sod Producers Association. ASPA has created a program whereby students can expand their education by putting it to practical use. Internship applications may be obtained by contacting ASPA at 1855-A Hicks Road, Rolling Meadows, Ill. 60008. Phone 708-705-9898.

RUTGERS ALUMNI HONOR HURLEY

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. — Dr. Richard Hurley, vice president and director of research for Lofts Seed, recently received the Outstanding Achievement Award from the Rutgers Turfgrass Alumni Association. Hurley credits his professional golfer Bruce Crampton for early inspiration to a career in the turfgrass industry. Said Hurley, “While attending college in Florida, I was fortunate enough to caddy for Crampton, who fed my interest in golf and the courses where the game is played.” Hurley is president of the New Jersey Turfgrass Association.



Richard Hurley

STUDY OF DEATHS UNDERTAKEN

An independent scientific study of deaths of superintendents is being underwritten by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. The study is designed to provide basic evidence about any links between long-term pesticide exposure and certain cancers and illnesses identified as pesticide-related. Researchers will first thoroughly review scientific literature dealing with human exposure to pesticides used on golf courses. A team of epidemiologists will then perform a statistical mortality study of GCSAA members who have died since 1970. The GCSAA hopes to choose researchers by late January.

ECOLOGY, MANAGEMENT TOPICS

BLACKSBURG, Va. — First of two sessions in turfgrass ecology and management is due Jan. 4-8, at Virginia Tech’s Donaldson Brown Center for Continuing Education. The course is designed to provide basic information to new turfgrass managers, and to provide experienced turf managers opportunity to update expertise. Thirteen faculty members from turfgrass-related disciplines will provide 36 lecture and laboratory contact hours of instruction. David R. Chalmers, extension agronomist—turf, Virginia Tech, will direct the program. A second course is due here Jan. 25-29.

No longer voodoo science, tailor-made composts coming

By MARK LESLIE

Having conquered the nursery industry, scientists researching the disease-suppressive capabilities of compost anticipate barrier-breaking improvements in the golf and landscape industries in the near future.

“This is no longer voodoo, but real science,” said Dr. Harry A.J. Hoitink, professor of plant pathology in the environmental graduate studies program at Ohio State University.

Hoitink, who has been researching solid-waste compost and its disease-suppressive capabilities since 1972, predicts that “tailor-made composts are coming.”

Specifically, use of yard-trimming composts in top dressing and in root-zone mixes in golf course construction will bring wide-ranging improvements in turfgrass maintenance, he said.

“The net effect I project in the next decade,” Hoitink said, “will probably see a gradual phasing out of fungicides used to control root disease.”

“We may see decreased insect problems, also, although much of that remains to be documented. Since stress aggravates insect problems, and compost alleviates stress in plants, it will help in this area as well.”

A prize student of Hoitink’s from 1978-82, Cornell University Associate Professor of Plant Pathology Eric Nelson agrees that composts will “dramatically reduce” fungicide use.

‘I project in the next decade we will probably see a gradual phasing out of fungicides used to control root disease.’

— Dr. Harry A.J. Hoitink
Ohio State University

“In some of our monitoring studies on golf courses in the Rochester [N.Y.] area, over a three-year period of strictly using compost on fairways, they reduced Pythium fungicide applications by 89 percent,” Nelson said. “We’re still pulling together data on fungicide use at other courses. I predict you’ll find similar reductions elsewhere...”

“Presumably, we would be able to reduce insecticide use as well, particularly if these composts possess insecticidal properties.”

To that end, Cornell Professors of Entomology Mike Villani and Roxanne Broadway are searching for insecticidal compounds in composts and have been able to isolate proteins with insecticidal activity.

“We established 10 to 15 years ago that there is not a soil-borne disease in plants that we cannot control with compost,” Hoitink said. “If we look at undisturbed natural ecosystems, such as hard-

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Tough challenges threaten golf

By MARK LESLIE

On the one hand, golf is too slow, too expensive, too elaborate and too hard. On the other hand, the outlook for its future is promising, according to a panel of North American experts.

Speaking at the 44th Canadian Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in December, panelists agreed the industry must be cohesive and superintendents far-sighted in addressing environmental and other issues vital to the game and their jobs.

“The future looks bright. But we must warn ourselves not to become complacent,” said Jim Snow, national director of the U.S. Golf Association Green Section. “We can’t expect golf to grow by hundreds of courses per year into the future without

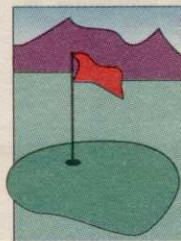
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Tour of Duty

HAROLD VAUBEL
LaCosta Country Club
Carlsbad, Calif.

Infiniti Tournament of Champions
Jan. 7-10, NBC

Harold Vaubel, 40, has been head superintendent at LaCosta for three years. He came to Carlsbad from the TPC at Starr Pass in Arizona, where he helped build the course and served as head super. A native of Peoria, Ill., Vaubel is a graduate of the University of Arizona in Tucson.



Things to look for: “From an agronomical standpoint, to get ready for the Tournament of Champions, we’ve been rebuilding all our greens to USGA specifications. After this year, we’ll only have four left [to renovate]. The ones

that haven’t been rebuilt are all TV holes: 11, 14, 15 and 18.”

Made-for-TV preparations: “Basically, most of what we do is a tremendous amount of landscaping. We try to put a bunch of flowering plants and poinsettias behind the tee boxes. I feel this highlights the player a lot better. It makes him stand out better on television.

“We also triplex our fairways specially for the tournament. The rest of the year we use a five-gang, but I think the triplex makes the fairways look more dramatic.”

Editor’s note: “Tour of Duty” will be a regular feature this year in Golf Course News. It is designed to celebrate the PGA Tour’s unsung, underpublicized hero: The superintendent.

GERALD YOZA
Waialae Country Club
Honolulu, Haw.

United Airlines Hawaiian Open
Jan. 14-17, Turner

Gerald Yoza, 40, has spent all of his 16-year turf career at Waialae, “Starting out in the traps, just like everyone else,” he recalls. He was named head superintendent two years ago. A native of Oahu, he is also a graduate of the University of Hawaii.

Things to look for: “We’ve been through a renovation with Desmond Muirhead [and Ed Connors of Golfforms] since last year’s tournament. We’ve added some mounding and quite a few strategic traps. Desmond is an excellent guy to work with. He’s got a great eye... A lot has



happened since last year. We’ve had a flash flood, a hurricane, a wind storm and a renovation — all in the last 12-13 months. It’s been an unusual year. Busy.”

Made-for-TV preparations: “Because this is a Bermuda course, we change the mowing height in the rough. If we kept a tournament rough all year around, we’d catch it from the membership... We add one more cutting height for the tournament, an intermediate cut at 1-1/2 inches. We keep the fairways at 7/16ths all year.”

TIGHE SHIELDS
TPC of Scottsdale
Scottsdale, Ariz.

Phoenix Open
Jan. 28-31, CBS

Tighe Shields, 42, has been head superintendent at the 36-hole TPC of Scottsdale since 1989. A native of Indiana, he grew up in Arizona and matriculated to Arizona State University in Tempe. Before coming to the TPC, he was head super at Arizona Country Club in downtown Phoenix from 1975-88.

Things to look for: “Being in the belt we’re in, we oversee in October and early November to get the golf course reestablished very quickly. We have to be tournament-ready in early January, which is our coldest period of the year. We have to be in the condition you might normally expect in March or April, which is tough for us.”

Made-for-TV preparations: “We generally have TV only on the back nine, so we oversee them first and apply an extremely concentrated fertilizer program... We also spray the fairways — four times, wall-to-wall — with liquid applications of iron to get the deepest, darkest green we can. Part of our look is to have extremely dark green playing areas while keeping the bunker outlines a golden yellow. We do this by letting the bunker outlines go dormant, and we spray them with Diquat. We think this better distinguishes the bunker areas on TV — and the players say they like it.”



Golf's future

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addressing certain pitfalls.

"Golf needs to be faster, less expensive, less elaborate and more fun."

Snow found support from fellow panelists, long-time Canadian Open chairman Dick Grimm, Canada Golf Superintendents Association President Paul White, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America President William Roberts, and Canadian PGA pro Lindon Garron.

Roberts, of Lochmoor Club in Grosse Point Woods, Mich., banked his optimism on such demographics as increased leisure time, a growing population of senior citizens with more time on their hands, golf's exposure on television, and the fact that the game provides an excellent opportunity for business and social interaction as well as competition at various levels.

Yet, he cautioned that superintendents and managers who learn to deal with this changing populace will do best.

Grimm, a former president and governor of the Royal Canadian Golf Association since 1969, said:

- Two top priorities in the game are slow play and the types of grass being developed to "make your [superintendents'] jobs easier and keep costs down."

- The two major challenges are affordability and accessibility.

- "The single most important factor to our future is attracting new players, particularly juniors, to the game. There's no lack of information for kids, but getting them on the golf course is tough... If we lose those kids, we're not going to get them back. They'll have found something else to do. We must make sure the right kind of courses, at the right time, price and place, are there for them to enjoy."

He told the superintendents: "I think you will be pros when you do your job the way it should be done and not the way the very well-meaning six- to 10-handicappers on the green committees believe."

Golf fees, Grimm said, "threaten to strangle the golden goose. These [pricing] trends must level off soon."

White, of Mississauga (Ontario) Golf and Country Club, predicted "a tremendous future in the golf profession, pointing to such specifics as its addition to the Olympic venue, continued spending by Toronto area golf courses on reconstruction, and a new golf dome being built in Mississauga.

"The golfer is an individual who enjoys the game so much that a recession will not stop his golfing," White said. "Golf courses have survived wars and recessions, always meeting the needs of superintendents."

The GCSAA's Roberts said he feels massive changes in the industry mean more and better-paying jobs. Saying that three-quarters of the labor force will need job retraining by the turn of the century, he said, "Superintendents continue to increase their education through association" and other activities.

"Sometimes the effort to keep current can seem overwhelming," Roberts said. "We have to make sure ... assistant superintendents, equipment mechanics, horticulturalists, arborists, and other staff members also benefit from continuing education in their areas of expertise.

"Advances in information technology will affect not only how we continue our education but also how we do our daily work. We deal with large volumes of information — weather data, pest monitoring and control records, equipment purchases and maintenance records, inventories, capital and maintenance

'The industry will see coalitions forged between business associations and others...'

— William Roberts

'Golf courses have survived wars and recessions, always meeting the needs of superintendents.'

— Paul White



budgets, payroll and personnel records, material safety data sheets, hazard communication training records, and so on.

Roberts added: "Most superintendents who use computers today — and that is a minority, frankly — are using them for irrigation management or for word processing. We certainly expect this to change over the next decade... More superintendents will feel the need to embrace the computer age, simply to cope with the sheer volume of information we have to deal with on a day-to-day basis.

"We, as superintendents, have prime accountability for the environmental challenges that face us," Roberts said. "Golf's role in the future in the environmental arena will include developing an increased regulatory awareness. It has a responsibility to help communicate environmental impacts to players and anybody else involved in the game. It needs to insist that superintendents get current with regulations and ... achieve compliance, particularly through education... And golf needs to support superintendents' requests for research funding."

He predicted that the industry will see coalitions forged between business associations and others, and "this will offer great opportunities for state and local chapters."

Garron, an Atlantic PGA member and a member of the PGA Canadian National Education Committee, alluded to such an interaction, saying: "We can make or break each other. You have to keep the course in

shape. We have to deal with the golfers.

"The future of golf in general depends on the relationship of club pros and

superintendents. Hopefully, we'll get together and see that we're all heading in the right direction."

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