

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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ORNAMENTALS COME OF AGE

Giant reed grass (above) is one of the many ornamental species used for both style and substance. See page 11.

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NGF study compares maintenance budgets

By MARK LESLIE

JUPITER, Fla. — Golf course superintendents, often asked to "perform magic with the same old things," may find artillery for their budget struggles in a new National Golf Foundation report, according to its project manager.

"A lot of superintendents get hammered pretty heavily because they are in charge of the biggest expense on a golf course," said Jerry Hinckley, who coordinated the report, *Understanding and Comparing Maintenance Budgets*. "Member committees and various people are constantly demanding more, yet aren't always willing to pay for it. They want [the conditions] they see on TV, and their expectations are very high."

Dividing the country into four regions and showing acreages and budgets at actual courses, the report demonstrates the relationship between expenditure and the number of acres maintained.

Most golf courses, Hinckley said, are "investing fairly heavily in improvements and new equipment every year. If you decide not to put any money back into the facility, above and beyond the basic maintenance, you're actually slipping back."

A panel of eight highly qualified golf course agronomists surveyed a

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Lake Michigan and skyscrapers frame the Family Dye's par-3 and practice-range project in Chicago.

Dyes take their act downtown

By MARK LESLIE

CHICAGO — People stuck in congested, downtown Chicago with a mere 90 minutes on their hands will soon have a chance to play nine famous par-3s from the Family Dye.

The Vintage Group, formed by ex-Dye Equities president Charles Tourtellotte, is in the midst of developing a one-of-a-kind golf facility on a tiny bit of property that used to be the Illinois Central Railroad yards. Come next spring, golfers can walk through the underground pedway that connects all of the office

buildings and hotels in the area, take the elevator to the clubhouse and tee off at the Illinois Golf Center — a mere long drive or two from Chicago River and Lake Michigan.

Tourtellotte hired the Denver-based Perry Dye to design a nine-hole par-3 course because "Perry has a reputation for being able to work with small sites."

Tourtellotte has leased the 30-acre plot for 15 years from Metropolitan Structures and the Whitman Corp., the partnership that owns and manages Illinois Center,

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More pump manufacturers join forces

By HAL PHILLIPS

DALLAS — Following a distinct industry trend, Pumping Systems Inc. (PSI) and Flowtronex International have merged, promising immediate benefits to customers.

The merger follows two other marriages: Commercial Pump Service Inc. and Watertronics; and Syncroflo Inc. and Western Pumping Systems. Only Carroll Childers Co. of Houston stands "alone" among pump manufacturers in the golf industry.

Flowtronex, PSI merge; Childers the lone holdout

Carroll Childers, who formed PSI in the early 1970s before leaving to create his current company, said the merger "comes as no surprise as there have been numerous such mergers and also closings of pump station manufacturers in recent years due largely to overpopulation in the industry and to downturn in

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The Paiute Indian Reservation will be home to a 72-hole, Landmark-developed golf and gambling resort.

Ex-Landmark employees re-emerge

By PETER BLAIS

LAS VEGAS, Nevada — A proposed 72-hole golf resort on the Paiute Indian Reservation is among several major projects being developed by newly formed Landmark Golf Co.

Several former Landmark Land Co. executives teamed up earlier this summer to form Landmark Golf. The limited liability corporation offers design, golf operation and real estate development expertise. The firm already has offices in Palm Desert, Calif., and Scottsdale, Ariz.

In addition to the Las Vegas venture, the firm has

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Study compares maintenance budgets nationwide

Continued from page 1

number of facilities known for high-quality maintenance programs in each region. The NGF foresees the publication as a help to golf course owners, developers, prospective buyers and club members.

For instance, it states:

- In the Southeast, water management districts are requiring new and existing golf courses to begin using reclaimed water within the next five years; and because equipment inven-

tories have swelled, many courses have hired a second mechanic.

- In the Midwest and Northeast, private new course development is shifting from the residential community/golf course type of development, to the strictly membership-owned golf course and country club. The economy, and lack of usable land, have caused developers to scale back to "core" golf course operations.

- Surface drainage of fairways and roughs is now a major

consideration for new course construction in the Northwest. Surface runoff, in combination with internal drains to lakes and water features, is used for irrigation. Because this was not done on many older courses, the result has been "soggy, often unplayable courses during rainy periods, with a resulting loss in revenue."

- It is not uncommon for courses in the Southwest to spend more than \$1 million for an irrigation system and pumping

station, with a drainage infrastructure in excess of \$200,000 per 18 holes.

"If used properly," Hinckley said, "the report provides operators with a benchmark for taking a course to the next level of conditioning."

He added that the book "emphasizes that your maintenance budget may be the biggest expense at a golf course. In fact, most healthy golf operations tend to have the maintenance budget as their most expensive line item—even above debt service.

"It also shows how complicated

maintenance is and how important it is to have good quality people."

Because of different terrain, weather conditions, grasses and membership demands, there is "no magic cost" for a well-maintained course, Hinckley said. "But if you are building a good golf course and you spend lots of money to get an expensive designer, it's all meaningless unless you spend the money necessary to maintain it."

The agronomists who conducted the survey provide an overview of each region, along with budget and labor trends, environmental factors concerning maintenance, water use, turfgrass use, pest and disease problems, machinery uses and professional training.

"The maintenance costs at a well-conditioned facility on the coast may be dramatically different from a facility away from the coast. This guide will help explain the variation and shape future cost projections," said Steve Batten of Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., who coordinated the panel of agronomists.

Among the panel's findings:

- In the Southeast, the installation of subsurface drainage systems has become standard practice.

- In the Midwest and Northeast, more and more public facilities are opting for bentgrass instead of bluegrass and ryegrass on their fairways and tees.

- In the Northwest, operators are frequently top dressing fairways to create better surface runoff and improve turfgrass and playing conditions.

- In the Southwest, most facilities being built have continuous cart paths for better traffic control and to save wear and tear on the course.

With the thought that superintendents might use it, the report's price was cut to \$20 for NGF members and \$35 for non-members, Hinckley said.

The NGF, located at 1150 South U.S. Highway One here, expects to release another publication in early October, "Golf Operations and Statistical Report."

"That could become the statistical book that this one is not," he said, adding that the daily-fee course report will be available first, followed shortly thereafter by the report on private courses.

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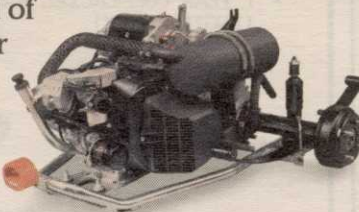
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*As reported by the Center for Golf Course Management, a subsidiary of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

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Tourney benefits Delaware bay

BETHANY BEACH, Del. — Salt Pond Golf Club sponsored a Birdie for the Bays '93 golf tournament on Sept. 27 to benefit Delaware's inland bays.

Proceeds from the \$50 per person event will be split between the Delaware Inland Bays Estuary Program and the Chesapeake Bay Studies Program at the Gunston School in Centreville, Md.