

BRIEFS



CLEMSON REPORT DUE

The initial findings of Clemson University's ecosystem study of the Ocean Course at Kiawah Island are due out in January. First undertaken in 1990, the 3-year study is analyzing the relationship between golf course maintenance practices and the environment at the Pete Dye-designed layout, site of the 1992 Ryder Cup. Dr. Ron Kendall, director of Clemson's Institute of Wildlife and Environmental Toxicology, is overseeing the project.



CHEMICAL BOOKS RELEASED

Thomson Publications of Fresno, Calif. has published two new books of interest to turf managers: "The User's Reference Guide to Pesticides" and "The Spanish-English, English-Spanish Illustrated Agricultural Dictionary." "The User's Guide" lists by generic name all products registered in the United States, followed by the different formulations with their tank-mix, adjuvant and compatibility recommendations. It is priced at \$27.95. The paper-bound dictionary is designed to assist turf managers dealing with the influx of Hispanic crew members. It retails for \$27.95. For more information, call Thomson at 209-435-2163.

CLAYTON NAMED EDUCATION MANAGER

LAWRENCE, Kan. — Rebecca Powell Clayton has been promoted to education manager for conference and certification by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. Clayton had been GCSAA's education coordinator for special projects since 1990. Prior to joining GCSAA, Clayton had held several positions at Hall-Kimbrell Environmental Services, Inc., in Lawrence. She holds a bachelor's degree in environmental studies from the University of Kansas, and serves on the Recycling and Resource Conservation Advisory Board for the city of Lawrence.



MINNESOTA WATER TALKS SLATED

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Legislative Water Commission, in cooperation with the Environmental Quality Board, are co-sponsoring meetings to discuss the state's ground-water protection efforts. They will be held Jan. 5 in Rochester in Riverland Technical College's Room C-105; Jan. 6 in Marshall in the Department of Transportation (DOT) building's Conference Room; Jan. 19 in Duluth in the DOT Conference Room; and Jan. 20 in Detroit Lakes at City Hall's City-County Chamber.

By MARK LESLIE

**P**olitics. Age. Agronomic decisions made by committee. Lack of communication and management skills. These are all job-killers, especially for golf course superintendents — some of whom daily face the fear of being fired.

"I had no chance to defend myself. They had a secret meeting and voted to dump me," said Bruce Rickert, who was fired last fall after six years at a Philadelphia course, and several months of struggling to keep dying greens alive.

"When I got fired, at 51, at least five others in New Jersey were fired that spring, and for the same reasons: age and greens committee chairmen," said Jim Gilligan, now superintendent at Richmond County Country Club on Staten Island.

For Ted Horton, vice president of resource management for Pebble Beach



Tragedy or blessing, losing a job can have many causes, effects

Co., when he was fired as general manager of the prestigious Westchester Country Club in New York a couple of years ago, it was at a time when, politically, "change had to be done for the sake of change. It didn't matter who was there."

In most cases, however, problems reportedly are exacerbated by lack of communications between the superinten-

dent and his boss or club membership.

Superintendents live in perilous times, Horton said. "I think that's true with any profession. The technical aspects of our profession are generally pretty solid and it's the 'people' aspects that generally trap us... A superintendent has to remember that 90 percent of his job is communication — both upward and downward.

"Oftentimes, a superintendent is not equipped to handle that. He's attracted to be a superintendent to be out-of-doors. As a result, his interpersonal skills are not that well-honed and that's what gets him into trouble."

Then there is the case of the "Marlboro man mentality," as Gilligan called it.

"Superintendents are tough to deal with in a lot of cases. Salesmen can tell you stories about guys who are unapproachable. So, if they're unapproachable to ven-

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Shining the light on grow-in secrets

By TERRY BUCHEN

Many "secrets" for a successful grow-in, implementing newly planted turf, are just the opposite of routine maintenance where fertilization, pesticide usage, topdressing applications, and mowing heights are concerned. A few cases in point:

1. Use high rates of phosphorus for excellent root and top growth and keep the potassium levels also high for sustained disease prevention. Utilize a safe, homogeneous fertilizer granular product that you are personally familiar with.
2. Use "THE SANDWICH" method whereby the turf on putting greens is

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Prairie Isle Golf Club after fine shaping but before grow-in.

President Sweda promises OTF return to basic intent

By MARK LESLIE

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Saying that many members have lost sight of the purpose of the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation (OTF), new President Don Sweda intends to re-establish the organization's original purpose.

"All the members are involved with turf, whether it is lawn care, golf courses, cemeteries or sports fields," said Sweda, a certified golf course superintendent from Columbia Hills Country Club in Columbia

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Station. "OTF exists to join all the associations to help and support Ohio State, and we want to regain the university's support and understanding. We have many new, exciting projects."

A former president of the Northern Ohio Golf Course Superintendents Association who has served six years on the OTF board,

Sweda said that too often superintendents and lawn-care people don't attend OTF functions, thinking the foundation is not in their bailiwick. He hopes his administration can begin a drive that will bulge membership rolls from 1,300 to 2,000

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Don Sweda



AIRING IT OUT WITH SUPER FOCUS' AL BROMANN

Al Bromann is the owner, superintendent and pilot for Pinewood Country Club, where he tries to keep both feet on the ground agronomically while taking to the air for his customers. See how he keeps all his jobs in focus on page 34.

Glover retires at NMS

LAS CRUCES, N.M. — Charles Glover, agronomist with New Mexico State University's Cooperative Extension Service, has retired after 15 years of service.

Glover joined Extension in 1978 after working eight years as a plant breeder for Taylor-Evans Seed Co. in Tulia, Texas.

Since 1990, he has been administrative officer for the New Mexico Crop Improvement Association.

Glover's Extension educational program covered soil fertility, alfalfa, irrigated pastures, cotton and other crops important to New Mexico. He also helped solved problems channeled through county agents' offices.

He is now working full-time for the New Mexico Crop Improvement Association and the 1517 Cotton Association, primarily with seed certification and foundation seed programs. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees from NMSU.

## Fired!

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dors, how are they to regular members? This all goes back to my theory of being an isolationist and trying to be the Marlboro man.

"This frontiersman attitude is prevalent. If you did a psychological profile of the superintendent, you'd find something along those lines. Even among their peers sometimes it's very difficult for them to ask for help."

### BOSSSES, BOSSSES

Another major problem at private facilities is greens chairmen—

specifically in their turnover and personalities.

"It's amazing: After three years a superintendent becomes incompetent?" said Rickert, whose personality clashes with a greens chairman led to his dismissal.

"In 22 years I had 12 greens chairmen," said Gilligan. "In a corporation you wouldn't have that many bosses. But in clubs, [in most cases] you do. When it's a revolving door, people just don't have the time to understand what's going on... Also, trying to deal with them one-to-one is difficult because you're not dealing as equals. It has a lot of social implications, and it's not done in a

businesslike manner. You hear supers time and again say, 'This guy owns his own business. But if he ran it like he runs this club his business would fail.'"

### RESPONSIBILITY TOO YOUNG

Gilligan and Horton agree that most people become superintendents at too young an age.

"We don't have enough experience in dealing with crews and staff, especially... When we become superintendents, all of a sudden we have a half dozen to two dozen employees, and our training [to handle this job] is not adequate," Gilligan said.

"In turf schools, personnel training is almost negligible. You have to learn on your own. Half your budget is your labor and we're not good labor management people, generally."

"It's a matter of learning to listen carefully and communicating your problems with others," Horton said. "Quite often, you're a superintendent by [age] 23, 24 or 25. There's no ladder. There's only one or two steps. You start as a crew member, or assistant superintendent and you're there very quickly."

### AGRONOMY BY COMMITTEE

Pressure to maintain green —

and fast — putting surfaces regardless of the circumstances brings fear to the hearts of many of his colleagues, according to Rickert.

"If the greens were fast, they weren't fast enough—ever," for his members, Rickert said. "That pressure is tremendous."

He added that the members' mandate to keep the turf green had caused him to use "too much pesticide and too much fertilizer."

Working on an old course with small, severely sloped, push-up greens, Rickert met his match in 1993. His greens committee ordered that he not aerate the course. He said that magnified existing agronomic problems. Shortly after, Rickert found himself without a job.

"Superintendents are being forced to do what they know is not sound agronomics," he said. "They do it and then they're dumped. You can't say, 'No' because they'll find someone else."

The answer, said Terry Buchen, superintendent at Double Eagle Club in Galena, Ohio, is to leave.

"The superintendent reports to the greens committee, but the committee must rely on the superintendent to tell it what needs to be done. If it doesn't, my advice is, 'Walk.'"

"If somebody tells me a way to grow grass that I don't think is correct, I'll go to work for somebody else. I think a lot of guys feel that way."

Buchen suggested that superintendents put all such incidences "in writing, in a report."

### POOR CONSTRUCTION A CULPRIT

Poor construction of courses reportedly has also led to firings of superintendents, according to Dee Greninger of Whitmoor Country Club in St. Charles, Mo.

Horton agreed. "I can think of one case recently. A good superintendent was sitting on solid clay greens. A hot and humid year came along and he lost his job—not for his inability to communicate but because of his supervisor's inability to listen and understand."

### AN 'AGE'-OLD PROBLEM

Gilligan, who had been at his old club 22 years when he was fired, claimed management often looks at the bottom line of its expenses when deciding to fire a superintendent.

"In my case, they hired a superintendent half my age," he said. "I don't know what they paid him. But that happens in all cases where a super is fired. They hire a younger person and you assume they're paying him less. Those things are hard to prove."

### BRIGHT SIDE

Horton, who landed on his feet at Pebble Beach Co. and has received two recent promotions, is optimistic for his comrades who lose their jobs.

"Often I look and see a person is probably going to end up with a better job. They may go through a couple of years of trauma. But they will be better off in the end."



## From Tee To Green — The New G-600

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