

Tour of Duty

MARK KUHNS
Oakmont Country Club
 Oakmont, Pa.
U.S. Open
 June 16-19, ESPN/ABC

Mark Kuhns is a Keystone Stater, through and through. A native of Ligonier, Pa., he matriculated to Penn State, where he earned his turf management degree in 1977. He stepped right into the head superintendent's position at Ligonier Country Club, then moved to nearby Laurel Valley where Kuhns worked under its longtime super, Art Zarnecki. Growing up, Kuhns had been a range boy at Laurel Valley and darn near idolized Zarnecki, he said. Zarnecki passed away shortly after Kuhns' arrival and the former range boy assumed the reins. He would stay at Laurel Valley for 12 years before accepting the job at Oakmont. This is his fourth year there and his third USGA Open Championship, having hosted the Senior Open at Laurel Valley and the Women's Open at Oakmont. "I just enjoy growing turf," said Kuhns. "I was the only kid in my neighborhood who liked mowing the lawn."

THINGS TO LOOK FOR: "I like to keep things dry and lean here, and the members like that, too," said Kuhns. "It's healthier for turf."

Keen observers of the 1983 U.S. Open,

played at Oakmont and won by Larry Nelson, will notice a new tee on 17. Kuhns also explained that tees have been lengthened on 11 and 15, so players will encounter a course 50 to 60 yards longer this time around.

"On TV, I always watch the ball roll on the green," said Kuhns. "I love the close camera shots. During the Open this year, I think people will notice the guys standing over putts, puckering a little bit. The severity of some of the slopes here is amazing. Our greens will be between 11 and 11.6. Our normal speeds are 11 and we approach 12 for some [club] tournaments."

MADE-FOR-TV PREPARATIONS: "Not much," Kuhns explained. "Everything we've done has been mainly to restore our course to its original architectural layout. It was built as a very penal course."

"Basically, we'll increase mowing a little bit to increase the density. Fairways at 7/16. Tees and collars at 3/8 of an inch. Rough will be very dense. It's been well fertilized. Everything's looking good."

"We had a little ice damage on two or three greens, but they've come around pretty well."



Mark Kuhns

JOE ALONZI
Westchester Country Club
 Rye, N.Y.
Buick Classic
 June 6-9, USA/CBS

Joe Alonzi, 45, arrived at Westchester Country Club in 1992, but he's always lived and worked around Metropolitan New York area. Born and raised in Westchester County, Alonzi graduated from Rutgers' two-year turf management program. He then accepted an assistant's position at Burning Tree in Greenwich, Conn. He became head superintendent at Huntington Crescent Club on Long Island, before moving to Fenway Golf Club in Scarsdale, N.Y. He arrived at Westchester CC eight weeks before the '92 Buick Classic.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR: Alonzi is amused by the players' aversion to up-and-back mowing patterns on the fairways.

"There's a rumor going around that they don't like it," he said. "I guess they feel the ball goes further, depending on where it lands — I mean, we're talking inches. But we're going to keep doing it. I think the players are getting a little carried away."

"Before the tournament, we do change to solid rollers on the fairway mowers to get dark colors in the striping."

Winter kill was a problem for most Mid-Atlantic courses, and Westchester was no exception.

"We had some — very little," Alonzi explained. "If the camera picks it up, you'll see it on number 9. We've done a lot of sodding in any place we've had winter kill. And we resod the bunker faces each year, regardless."

MADE-FOR-TV PREPARATIONS: Prior to full-blown tourney preparation, Alonzi and his staff watch a tape of the previous year's Buick Classic, looking for little things to improve.

"Last year," Alonzi said, "we had gallery ropes going through an unmaintained

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MARK STODDARD
TPC at Avenel
 Avenel, Md.
The Kemper Open
 June 2-5, USA/CBS

This year's Kemper Open will be a true trial by fire for Mark Stoddard, who arrived at the Tournament Players Club at Avenel in late March. With two months under his belt and the course recovering from its worst winter in 20 years, Stoddard is working overtime to prepare for his first PGA Tour event and his first televised tournament.

"I'm having fun already," he said with a trace of sarcasm and trepidation. Stoddard, 37, hails from Charleston, S.C., and earned his four-year degree in turf management from nearby Clemson University. Upon graduation, he went straight to Pinehurst where he served as an assistant superintendent. When Avenel beckoned this past winter, he was head superintendent at Swan Point Yacht & Country Club in Issue, Md. "The boonies," said Stoddard. From the boonies to the bigtime in one fell swoop.



Mark Stoddard

THINGS TO LOOK FOR: Stoddard explained that Avenel sports an interesting mix of turf: zoysia fairways, Penncross greens, bent/zoysia tees and fescue roughs. This year's harsh Eastern winter had a particularly bad effect on Mid-Atlantic courses, and Avenel was not spared. The zoysia fairways were particularly hard hit.

"Basically, all the shaded and low-lying areas have been slow to come back," Stoddard explained. "The high and dry spots did fine. The zoysia just didn't look ready on [holes] 10 and 12, so we overseeded with perennial ryegrass."

"We also paid close attention to the

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TOCA gives scholarships

RALEIGH, N.C. — The Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association has awarded three scholarships totaling \$2,500 to college students at its recent meeting here. Winning \$1,000 scholarships were Sally Moore of Michigan State University and Nicole McCarren of Ohio State University. Christopher Hart-wiger of North Carolina State University was given the newly established \$500 TOCA Essay Scholarship.

Lab tests off on pH

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protocols are being followed by everyone — so testing is uniform. In addition to soil characteristics, the USGA also kept track of how long labs took to process samples, and how much they charged. Though he noted that some labs are quite large and handle all sorts of business, while others are smaller and deal only with golf courses, the charge for identical testing procedures varied from \$200 to \$650.

“So, once we get back all the results and go back to the labs with them,” said Snow, “maybe we can stimulate a little competition.”

Tour of Duty

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Alonzi

natural grass area. The gallery wore a path through the grass and it looked awful. So we moved the ropes this year. We also sodded an area where members had worn a path coming off the 13th tee.

“Any traffic areas we can’t help, we’ll dye. And we’ll lay down fresh wood chips in the flower beds a week before the tournament.”

Stoddard

bunkers. We capped them with an inch or two of new sand, cleaned up the edges and gave them proper lips.”

MADE-FOR-TV PREPARATIONS: Despite his inexperience playing to the cameras, Stoddards insisted he and his crew made no extraordinary preparations.

“Nothing special,” he said. “We’ve just tried to pay attention to detail: trim work, grooming. Little things like that.”

No special striping?
“No special striping.”

Great expectations for Kansas’ new research funding method

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of raising large sums of money.”

“It’s an easy way for all golfers to participate in making the game better by doing their part to support research,” he added.

There are a number of avenues to raise these moneys, he said, adding: “We’ve talked about soliciting donations club-by-club; or the Arizona method [assessing golfers 10 cents per round for research]; simple voluntary donations at clubs; or tacking on a fee at tournament activities.”

Early indications of Kansas’ success

will come soon.

The last of three mailings alerting clubs and superintendents of the fund-raising program went out with the GIN Handicap billing in early May. “I believe by mid-June we will have a feel for the participation,” Stuntz said.

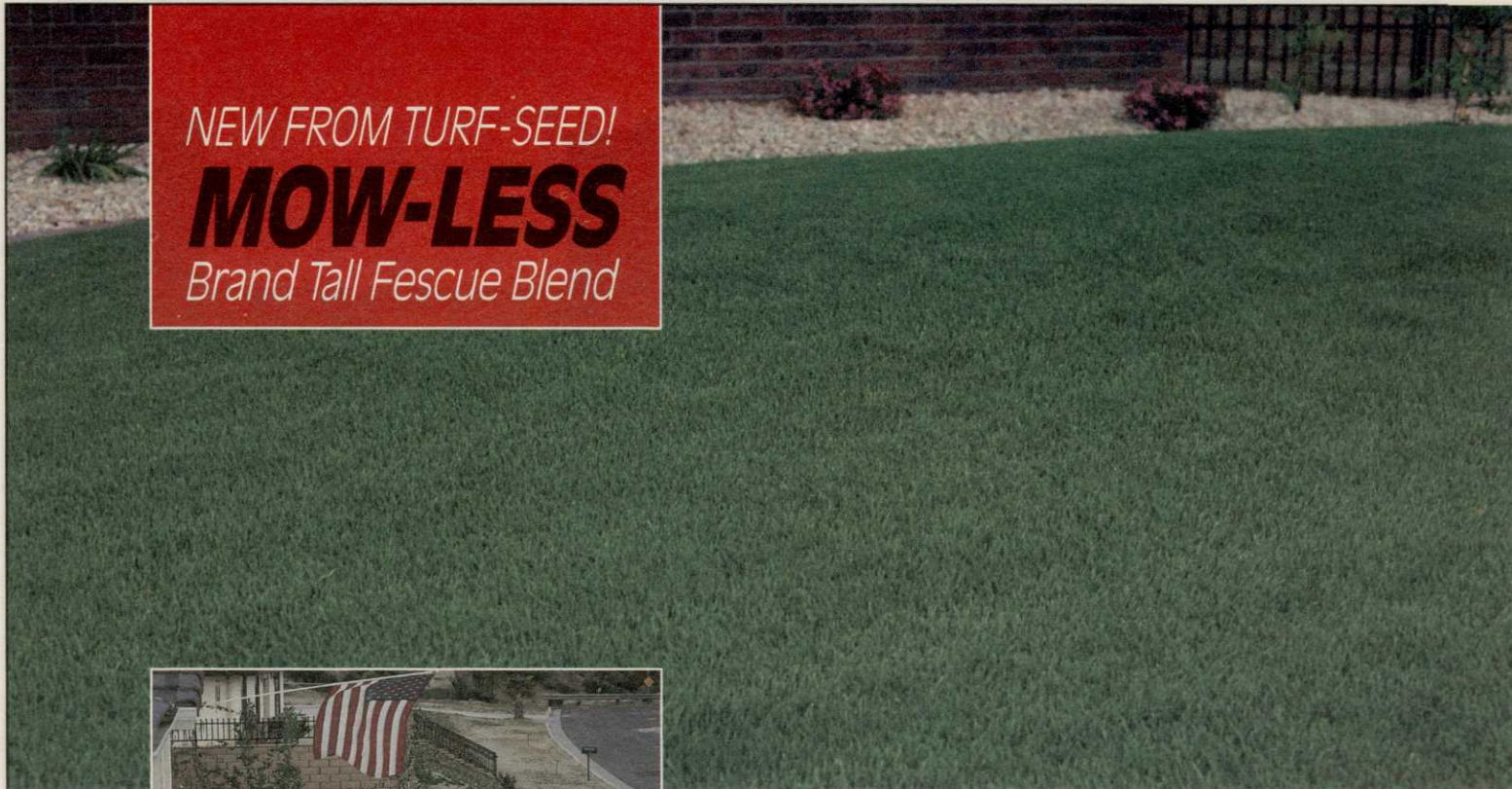
“If we can develop a high percentage of response, perhaps the KGA the following year, would be willing to make it [\$2] mandatory... The whole idea behind this is that the cost gets passed on to the golfer—the guy who gets the benefit from the research.

“If you tell them exactly where the money is going, I believe a lot of people would support it.”

•••

The major obstacles to the Kansas process, Stuntz found, were:

- There is no access to individual GIN users. (“And that’s the same in every state”).
- And, when the bill goes out, “who’s going to be aware of it and who’s going to make the decision? Maybe the wrong person is getting the mailing. We have no way of knowing. So the superintendents’ support is crucial.”



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