GOLF COURSE NEWS

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The Dyes — Pete (from left), P.B., Alice and Perry — will keynote Day I.

INSIDE

Dutch Treatment

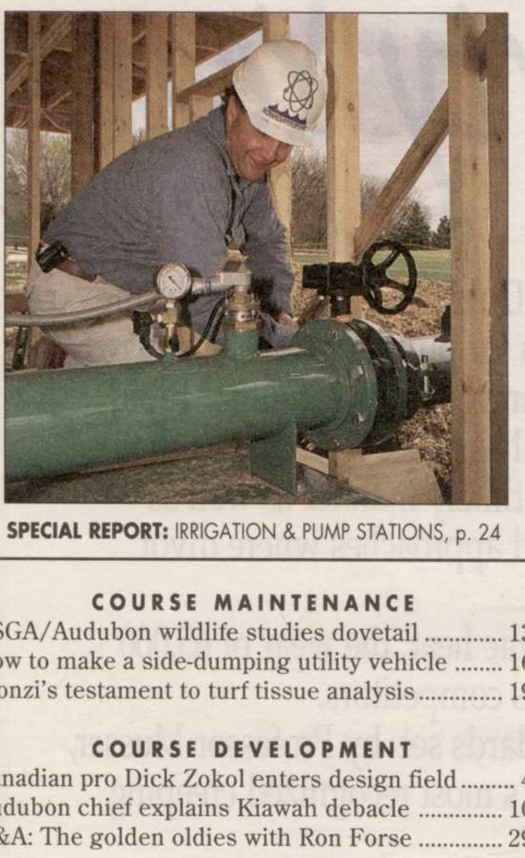
After thousands of trees fell victim to its long-standing blight, Dutch elm disease may have a cure 13

Night Creatures

Under the cover of darkness, researchers have discovered how to cut down black cutworms 15

National Standard

The EPA has issued new guidelines calling for reduced small-engine emissions come 1997 39



SPECIAL REPORT: IRRIGATION & PUMP STATIONS, p. 24

COURSE MAINTENANCE

USGA/Audubon wildlife studies dovetail 13
How to make a side-dumping utility vehicle 16
Alonzi's testament to turf tissue analysis 19

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Canadian pro Dick Zokol enters design field 4
Audubon chief explains Kiawah debacle 10
Q&A: The golden oldies with Ron Forse 29

COURSE MANAGEMENT

Brassie, Stanchina stage buy-back 33
UMass may add management program.................. 34
Verdict: Injured golfer can sue course 36

SUPPLIER BUSINESS

NGF secures second firm for buying program 39
Ransomes patents E-Plex features 40
What's new in the marketplace? 42

Dedman, Family Dye to keynote Expo

GOLF COURSE EXPO

ORANGE COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER
ORLANDO, FLORIDA
NOVEMBER 9-10, 1995

A NATIONAL EXHIBITION AND CONFERENCE FOR OWNERS, SUPERINTENDENTS, MANAGERS, AND DEVELOPERS OF PUBLIC-ACCESS GOLF FACILITIES

Nation's only public-access conference and show returns to Orlando, Nov. 9-10

By HAL PHILLIPS

ORLANDO, Fla. — Ground-breaking design and innovative management practices will set the tone when The Family Dye and Robert Dedman headline this year's edition of Golf Course Expo, scheduled for Nov. 9 and 10 here at the Orange County Convention Center.

While Pete and Alice Dye have played a major role in rewriting the book on modern golf course architecture, Dedman — founder and chairman of Club Corporation International — has been no less a pioneer in the world of course management.

The Dyes — Pete, Alice and sons Perry and P.B. — will share the dais at 9 a.m. on Nov. 9, keynoting Day I of the second annual Golf Course Expo, the only national trade show and conference targeting superintendents, managers and developers of public-access facilities. Dedman will keynote Day II, also at 9 a.m.

"We're thrilled to have them aboard," said Charles von Brecht, publisher of *Golf Course News*, which sponsors Golf Course Expo. "Robert Dedman has simply changed the way golf courses are operated, and the Dyes are one of the most famous families in the game, each of them meeting the very different, specific needs of public-access golf."

ClubCorp. Chairman Robert Dedman will keynote Day II.

Dedman, who founded Franklin Federal Bancorp

Continued on page 46

New strains stand out at fescue trials

By MARK LESLIE

BELTSVILLE, Md. — Oh, how the mighty have fallen in the ever more popular world of fine fescues. With the release of the first-year findings in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's new National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP), only two of the previous four-year trial's top 10 fine fescues are in this top 10 and only three are even in the top 30 after the first year of this study.

And this with 35 fewer varieties being tested.

Turfgrass breeders have made major strides, improving color, heat- and drought-tolerance and resistance to foliar diseases, particularly

Continued on page 20

SOMEWHERE IKE IS SMILING

Workers pour a new root-zone mix for the famed Eisenhower Green, located in America's most visible front yard. To celebrate the USGA centennial, President Clinton wanted the "First Putting Surface" refurbished and architect Robert Trent Jones II obliged. See page 3 for story.

Cities turn to non-profit management groups

By PETER BLAIS

Seattle recently turned over operation of its three public courses to a newly formed, non-profit corporation, a move being considered in a growing number of U.S. cities.

"Its gaining favor throughout the country because it works," said Lynnie Cooke, executive director of the Baltimore Municipal Golf Corp., which is frequently cited as a model operation by non-profit advocates.

Since assuming control in 1985, BMGC has made $4.5 million in improvements to the city's five golf facilities and is planning a sixth course, all at no expense to taxpayers. Annual rounds increased from 195,000 in 1984 to 358,000 in 1990. Green fees, reportedly the lowest among major municipal layouts in the Mid-Atlantic, have remained at $10.50 since 1987. Two of its courses, Pine Ridge and Mt. Pleasant, are generally considered among the top 10 public layouts in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware ad Virginia.

In light of Baltimore's success, Indianapolis is set to hand over the reins to three of its public courses to a non-profit organization, Cooke said. Newark, N.J., officials visited Cooke in early July and are seriously considering establishing a

Continued on page 37

Non-profits

Continued from page 1

non-profit entity to run their three Essex County layouts.

"I get calls from all over the country asking how we did it here," the Baltimore executive said. With cities having problems running their own facilities, and many 10-to-15-year management contracts with private firms set to expire, this is an alternative many cities are exploring, he added.

Fed up with the deteriorating condition of its facilities — Jefferson Park, Jackson Park and West Seattle — the Seattle golf community demanded the city do something, recalled Chris Redo, chief executive officer of Municipal Golf of Seattle, the non-profit group that took over the municipal courses July 1. Redo was also part of an 11-member, volunteer advisory board the city established last September to explore alternatives.

The board settled on four options, Redo explained. They were:

• Retain the concessionaire who had allowed the courses to deteriorate. "That wasn't acceptable," Redo said.

• Hire a national, for-profit management company, e.g. American Golf Corp. or ClubCorp. "They do a good job. But we didn't want the money generated by our courses leaving the community," Redo said.

• Establish a public development authority (PDA), which would seek private investors to put up money for renovations and operations in return for a hefty return on their investment. Seattle had a bad experience with a PDA that renovated Pike Place Market, a popular farmer's market. "They raised the rents so high that people were forced out of business," Redo said. The advisory board feared a PDA could dramatically increase green fees to recover its investment rather than keep fees affordable.

• Establish a non-profit organization that would keep fees affordable while reinvesting profits toward the $20 million in capital improvements that had been suggested in the city's master plan but were largely ignored by the previous operator.

The advisory board chose the non-profit route this past winter. Redo resigned from the board and was eventually named CEO of Municipal Golf of Seattle, which received a 10 1/2-year contract beginning July 1.

Redo is confident the company can turn the Seattle situation around. But one major roadblock exists, he admitted. The City Council required that unionized city employees continue to maintain the facilities. The city did assign a liaison to act as a conduit between the maintenance staff and the firm, and also agreed to place only employees who had expressed a genuine interest in course maintenance at the facilities. But city politicians would not give Municipal Golf the authority to replace city workers with the company's own employees.

"The city charter forbids anyone but municipal employees from working on city-owned facilities," Redo explained. "We basically have to buy our services from the city. Those unionized labor costs are much higher than a privately-owned, daily-fee operation would have to pay for the same services. It will be quite a challenge to keep our green fees low and our costs in line."

Baltimore Municipal Golf Corp. doesn't labor under such restrictions, Redo pointed out. When it was first established, then-Mayor William Donald Schaefer and the City Council withstood considerable public and media pressure and freed BMGC to hire whoever it wished.

BMGC offered to retain the entire maintenance staff, although at reduced pay and benefits, Cooke explained. Of the 120 full-time employees, only three chose to stay. The full-time maintenance staff now stands at 64. But part-time employees have grown to 275. There were no part-timers when the city operated the facilities 10 years ago.

"Having to use city employees is going to be a nightmare for Seattle," Cooke said. "Maintenance costs make up at least 60 percent of a course budget. That means Seattle's non-profit company is controlling a minority of its own operational budget. If they fail, it will be because of that, not because the advisory board or the company didn't do their jobs."

Apprised of Seattle's city charter requiring the use of municipal employees on all Seattle golf course facilities, Cooke responded:

"Charters are made by people and can be changed by people. Congress has amended the U.S. Constitution, so a city ought to be able to amend its own charter.

"We've been successful because we were able to eliminate politics from business decisions. Indianapolis Mayor Stephen Goldsmith asked me what was the single most important thing he could do in order to make this work in his city. Politicians must want to see a non-profit firm succeed and then be willing to get out of the way."

Cost doesn't stop golfers from playing

Golfers are less likely to be deterred by the game's cost than people who participate in other kinds of outdoor activities, according to the 1994 Roper Survey for the Recreation Roundtable, *Outdoor Recreation in America*.

The report also noted that of all outdoor activities surveyed, golf ranked highest in the percentage of participants who began the sport after age 18. Fewer than half surveyed reported relatives introduced them to the game.