

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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Supers combat stress, burnout

Poor delegation skills a cause

By J. BARRY MOTHE

SAN FRANCISCO — A failure to delegate work and soaring expectations are the leading causes of stress among golf course superintendents, according to a psychologist who has worked closely with the subject for several years.

"Golf course superintendents tend to be perfectionists and think, 'If I don't do it, it won't be right,'" said Dr. Bree Hayes, who has led stress management seminars for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA). Hayes will lead another such seminar during the GCSAA Show and

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Survey says: Architects don't agree on very much

By MARK LESLIE

The diversity of golf course architects is matched only by their opinions on such topics as the availability of financing, designing courses with less irrigated acreage, and whether "minimalism" has returned to design.

In an exclusive *Golf Course News* survey of the country's 200-odd architects, respondents shared some up-close insights into a world that spans irrigation technology, corporate finance and turfgrass research.

The most disparate answers came from the questions on minimalism, whether money spent to build courses is declining, and whether clients are finding it easier to get fi-

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GOLDEN GATES BECKON SUPERINTENDENTS

Comprehensive GCSAA Show section with schedules, tourney preview, awards and things to do in S.F. See p. 19

195 Show Me!



The San Francisco skyline seen through the suspension cables on the Golden Gate Bridge, while a cable car (top left) travels down Grant Street through Chinatown.

1994 Openings	9	18	Totals	
Daily Fee	91	89	180	New Facilities
Municipal	9	22	31	
Private	3	18	21	
Daily Fee	94	9	103	Expansions
Municipal	18	3	21	
Private	22	3	25	
Grand Total	237	144	381	

NGF REPORTS RECORD YEAR

Preliminary figures from the National Golf Foundation show that 1994 was another big year for golf course openings — another record-setter, in fact. For more facts and figures, see page 3.

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CLUTE NAMED BUILDER OF THE YEAR

Paul Clute and Associates, which built Tom Fazio's award-winning Old Overton Club in Vestavia Hills, Ala., has been named the Golf Course News Builder of the Year. For this story and others, including GCN's Best Maintained Course on the PGA Tour, as voted by the players, see page 71.

New Congress might result in mixed golf bag

By PETER BLAIS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The swing to a more conservative, Republican-controlled Congress is good news for the golf industry but could lead the Clinton Administration to employ regulatory agencies to institute more liberal policies, according to industry representatives.

"The new Congress will impact golf clubs for the better," said Elizabeth Kirby-Hart, vice president of legal and government relations for the National Club Association. "The laws and regulations we'll be looking at should be far less onerous than before."

Added Kathy Driggs of the Club Managers Asso-

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As distribution shrinks, firms go factory-direct

By HAL PHILLIPS

An increasing number of industry firms are marketing their products directly to golf courses, as the spectrum of distribution lines continues to narrow. Industry observers agree that, as the golf market continues to mature, more and more companies will abandon traditional lines of distribution for the factory-direct approach.

The service-oriented, two-step nature of golf purchasing will never disappear: "You don't just get a Toro Greensmower

in a crate," said Chuck Champion, general sales manager of Overland Park, Kan.-based Kalo, Inc., a manufacturer of wetting agents. "You will always need that relationship with the distributor."

However, manufacturers of chemical and fertilizer products, which don't necessarily require that level of service, are beginning to take the factory-direct route which emphasizes price above all else.

"Magnesium is magnesium is magne-

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Factory direct

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sium," said Joe Frazier, executive vice president and general manager of Modern Distributing in Springfield, Mo. "The chemical side is a commodity-driven business. There, we see more and more factory-direct, and we'll continue to see it."

In addition to embarking on a factory-direct campaign with Kalo, Champion and his family used to own a distributorship in Kansas. Frazier has witnessed the consolidation of distribution first hand, as Modern has acquired seven competitors over the past five years.

Though they come at the issue from two different perspectives, Champion and Frazier agree that, as the golf market matures and consolidates, distribution lines will continue to become more exclusive — forcing firms to take their products directly to golf course purchasing agents: superintendents and managers.

"Now that I'm also in the ag market, I can see golf is about 10 years behind," said Champion. "It's commodity driven. It's still a service-oriented process, so you'll always need some two-step distribution. But if you're opening a carton of wetting agent, you don't need that level of service. Those types of products will become increasingly direct marketing-oriented."

"In the ag business today, that's the way it is. A lot of larger companies are saying, 'Forget the distributor, we'll do it ourselves.' Pretty soon, everything will be available to the superintendent by catalogue."

Manufacturers are looking for new ways to deliver their products cheaper. If they can eliminate the distributor, they can pass the savings on to their customers.

While this phenomenon is gaining prominence in the chemical sector, it's well beyond that stage in other markets, such as accessories.

"It has to do with profitability," said Mike Neal of Fore Par in Huntington Beach, Calif. "I see it all the time: Superintendent says, 'I can get it from this guy for \$20 less.' Well, there's the distributor salesman right over there — that's where the \$20 is!"

"Personally, I sort of lament it having gone in that direction. But we're seeing more and more of it, aren't we?"

Frazier explained that some firms are forced to go factory direct because of the distributor's profitability, or lack thereof. Many of those distributors purchased during the recent consolidation were too price-conscious, Frazier said, and it cost them.

"In today's market, distributors who sell on price alone won't survive because their margins will continue to erode and that lower margin won't support the overhead," he said. "If they add value, they get a higher price. And that 2 or 3 percent makes it possible to cover overhead and make a profit."

"More and more distributors can't add that value, can't cover the overhead and can't make a

profit. That's why so many have gone out of business, which explains why more companies are forced to go factory direct — because there are fewer and fewer distributors."

•••

More than 20 U.S. firms made automobiles early in this century. Now there are three... That should tell you something about what's happening in the golf course industry, where companies strive to beat their direct competition, corner a segment of the market, then expand into other markets in search of market efficiencies.

"You have to be big to survive in this business," said Frazier. "Five years ago we did \$8 million

in sales. We did \$38 million in 1994 and will do \$45 this year. But I'm telling you: If we didn't do \$34 or \$35 we wouldn't be breaking even."

"We're aware there's been a lot of consolidation," said Dave Heegard, vice president of the ProTurf Division at O.M. Scott. "Some of the bigger ag distributors, like the Terras, have purchased a lot of the smaller independents. There are fewer distributors out there. No doubt about it."

Heegard can afford to view the situation with a measure of dispassion because Scott has been marketing directly to superintendents since it first en-

tered the golf market 28 years ago. Scott employs 62 sales representatives and 11 managers who call on golf courses across the United States, said Heegard, while a separate group of manufacturers reps visit all the courses in Canada. Yet even Heegard will admit, "One of the weaknesses of the direct marketing approach is getting the product close to the customer."

Frazier noted that UPS and Federal Express make the job of factory-direct sales far easier. "They make it appear you have localized service when you don't," he said. "If you can keep it up, you can create that perception of local presence, and per-

ception is everything."

Lesco has solved that problem by loading its product line on a fleet of tractor trailers and hauling it across the country, stopping at golf courses along the way. And when you see distributors falling by the wayside, it's clear Lesco has served as a catalyst.

"You look at a company like Lesco and they've definitely had an impact on the smaller distributors," said Champion.

"Lesco is the classic example," said Fore Par's Neal. "But they're not low-balling anyone... They've got their own trucks, which is one approach. The point is: Wherever you can be, to project your personality, you're better off."

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