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Top dressing breakthrough: Crumb rubber

By MARK LESLIE

WILMINGTON, Ohio — After five years of extensive study, Michigan State University (MSU) researchers are recommending crumb rubber, or finely chopped automobile tires, as a top dressing for high-traffic areas on golf courses and athletic fields.

"As much as we incorporated it into the soil profile, we never saw the panacea that people wanted. But we did find great results when top dressing it onto established turf," Dr. John "Trey" Rogers III of MSU said of crumb rubber.

"When we incorporated it, the rub-

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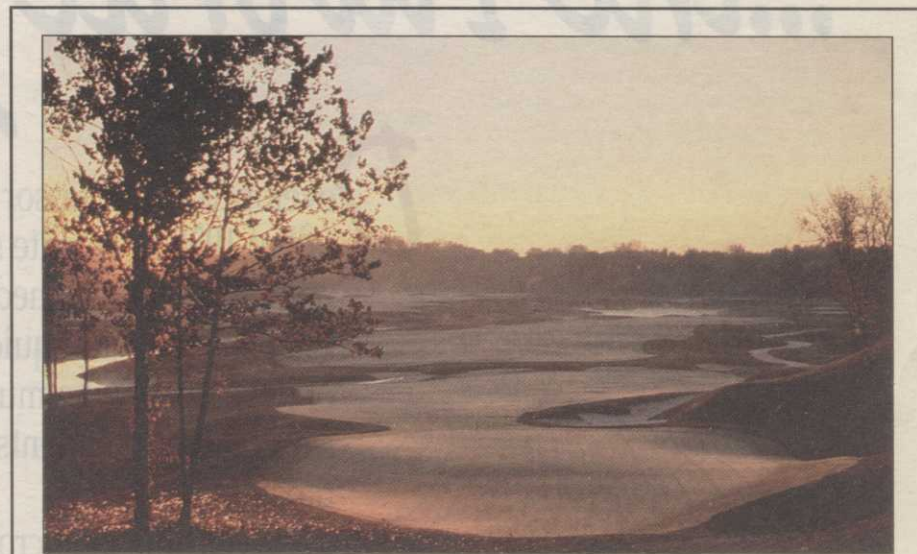
Claims drain funding for UST clean-up

By PETER BLAIS

Nebraska recently delayed the clean-up of some 6,000 contaminated underground storage tank (UST) sites because its state-controlled cleanup fund is almost out of money. This spring, cash-strapped New Mexico diverted half the \$14 million in its UST clean-up and indemnification fund to other uses. Michigan declared its fund insolvent in April and went out of business for good June 29, forcing tank owners there to seek private insurance to meet the federal mandate of \$1 million in liability coverage per incident.

State UST funds in Florida and Illinois could soon run out of money, according to Dennis Rounds,

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NOT A CORNSTALK IN SIGHT

Cooks Creek, a collaborative effort between Dr. Michael Hurdzan and touring pro John Cook, used to be a cornfield. Now it's Ashville, Ohio's newest attraction. For story, see page 27.

Taxing setback in Florida court

By HAL PHILLIPS

NAPLES, Fla. — A precedent-setting battle is brewing here in South Florida where 12 Collier County golf clubs have challenged their property assessments in court.

For the moment, golf industry fortunes are flagging. Judge Ted Brousseau has upheld the municipal appraisal of Quail Creek Country Club in Naples, which argued the assessment was more than \$3 million too high.

However, the remaining 11 clubs have yet to have

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Peter Whurr, Ransomes America

Ever-shrinking dollar posing problems for manufacturers

By HAL PHILLIPS

America's ongoing currency woes are beginning to affect golf course industry firms, some of which have discarded product lines dependent on overseas manufacturing agreements. Others continue to monitor the situation closely, recognizing the possibility that plunging dollar values may render those agreements unfeasible in the long-term.

"Anybody importing from Japan any commodity is impacted by the currency situation," said John Brozek, director of industrial Product Sales at Daihatsu, which will cease production of its Hijet utility vehicle in December.

Like Daihatsu, Mitsubishi manufacturers its Mighty Mit utility vehicle in Japan, but that will soon end, confirmed Bob Hertel, industrial vehicle man-

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Golf Vehicle Report
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HONORING OLD & NEW

The world of public-access golf marks two momentous occasions in July. New York City's Van Cortlandt Park Golf Course (above), the nation's oldest public-access course, celebrates its centenary this month. For the story on its week-long commemoration, see page 35. Meanwhile, the nation's 15,000th facility has opened for play: Poolsbrook Golf Course, a family-run daily-fee in Kirkville, N.Y. See story page 46.

Storage tanks

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co-chairman of a task force charged with monitoring petroleum clean-up efforts for the Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials.

With claims on the rise, all 46 states with government-controlled UST funds must be concerned with the possibility of claims outstripping revenues, Rounds added.

"The long-term projections can be pretty scary," he said.

Should golf course operators be concerned if the state funds they believed would insure them against spill problems are in financial trouble?

"Definitely," said Sammy Ng, branch chief in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's UST Division. "First, tank owners must be in compliance with federal financial requirements. If they can't get the needed \$1 million coverage through the state, then they must get private insurance. And that could be much more expensive.

"Second, if a state fund becomes insolvent that doesn't release the course owner from financial liability for clean-up or third-party compensation. The golf course would still be liable, even if the state fund folded."

A 1988 federal law required all tanks be closed, replaced or upgraded to meet leak-prevention guidelines within 10 years. Private insurers said they were willing to insure structurally sound tanks or those that would eventually meet the new federal standards. But insurers shied away from existing problems.

"Insurance companies don't insure burning buildings," Rounds noted.

With many privately un-insurable older tanks already leaking fuel into the ground, a mechanism to finance clean-up and compensation to third parties was needed. State funds were established to fill the void.

Those state programs have typically been financed by a few-cents-per-gallon surcharge on fuel sales and/or an annual per-tank charge to tank owners. While some programs were adequately financed, others soon realized that the cost of claims was outstripping revenues, leav-

ing those funds in a financial bind.

To avoid financial problems, EPA has encouraged states to require their funds to have larger cash reserves, higher deductibles and the authority to raise levies if revenues begin to fall behind claims, Ng said.

Pennsylvania has managed to avoid the financial pitfalls experienced elsewhere. In fact, the state's mandatory program is running a healthy surplus, according to George Chapman, claims manager with the state UST Identification Fund. The key to Pennsylvania's success is that it closely scrutinizes all claims and performed detailed actuarial studies regarding projected funding and costs before implementation, Chapman said.

"We control remediation costs by requiring that tank owners make serious efforts to have their tanks in compliance with state and federal laws," Chapman said.

To help control the number of claims it accepts and how much is paid, EPA encourages states to adopt risk-based corrective action processes. This method calls for a ranking so that those spills posing the greatest threat are cleaned first. Additionally, only the areas needing cleaning within the spill area are actually cleaned, thereby avoiding unnecessary costs.

Still several state programs are in trouble and could disappear in the near future unless their financial picture brightens. Additionally, many of the healthy

funds will likely be phased out as existing problems are taken care of. That means private insurance will be used more frequently in the future to cover tank owners, Ng said.

"That would be a good trend," Ng said. "Why should a state provide coverage if affordable, private insurance is available."

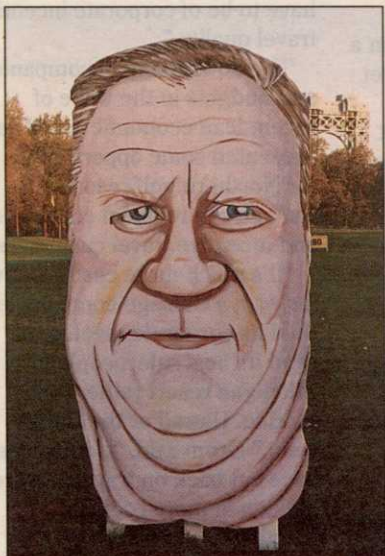
But tank owners frequently complain private insurance is too expensive. Not so, said David Brixen, an environmental scientist with the Delaware Division of Air and Water Management's UST Branch.

Delaware began enforcing financial responsibility requirements in December 1993 but soon suspended any enforcement actions when it realized many tank owners were failing to comply. The department established a special advisory committee to determine whether private insurance was indeed available and affordable, or if a state fund should be established.

The committee decided that private insurance was both easy to find and fairly inexpensive, making a state-operated program unnecessary.

"The average cost for a three-tank site [which includes most courses] is \$500 to \$600 a year. That's less than the 2 to 3 cents-per-gallon surcharge often used to finance state funds," Brixen said.

Beginning July 1, all Delaware tank owners/operators not in compliance will be subject to penalties ranging up to \$2,500 per day, Brixen said.



N.Y. Yankees owner George Steinbrenner was among four celebrities whose caricature was used as a target during a recent New York City fundraiser.

Celebrities target of NYC charity effort

RANDALLS ISLAND, N.Y. — Four New York City personalities became the target of flying golf balls this spring when Randalls Island Golf and Family Entertainment Center unveiled 8-foot targets bearing the caricatures of David Letterman, Madonna, George Steinbrenner and Donald Trump.

The caricatures were part of a day-long fundraiser May 7 in which the public was invited to "Aim for the Stars" with a portion of fees benefiting local junior golf programs.

"The caricatures represent four of the city's most beloved and controversial residents, and we thought it would be a big hit to give local residents the chance to get out some good-humored aggression while raising funds for a worthy cause," said General Manager Rob Halabov.

American Golf Corp. operates the Randalls Island facility.

Selecting a super

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includes salary, insurance, club privileges, vehicle and/or housing allowance.

- Identify candidates. If the job is advertised nationally, expect many applicants. Hazeltine advertised nationally in 1982 and received 250 resumes. Just searching locally, however, doesn't attract enough quality applicants. Mackenzie recommended concentrating on the state GCSAA chapter, regional USGA agronomist and state golf association for names of "qualified" applicants.

- Tell potential candidates what is expected in terms of application materials — resumes, salary expectations, educational background, etc. Have candidates write a 500-word essay on why their experience matches the club's needs.

- Whittle down the entire pool of applicants to 10-15 candidates. Check references and conduct phone interviews with these individuals. A conference call with all members of the selection committee present works well at this stage. Following the phone interview, have each committee member rate the candidates on a scale of 1 to 10.

- Narrow this group down to three to five finalists. If possible, have a selection com-

mittee member visit each finalist's club for a tour and inspection. Invite each finalist for a personal interview at the club's expense. Prior to the interview, allow each finalist to visit with club staff to get a feel for the operation and prepare for the interview.

- Finalists should meet with one to three selection committee members at a time rather than the full committee all at once. Candidates should speak 80 percent of the time and the interviewers no more than 20 percent. During the interview, selection committee members should avoid first impressions and what-if questions; compare the candidates to the job description rather than to each other; use open-ended rather than yes/no questions; and provide the candidate a chance to ask questions.

- Once the committee reaches a consensus, make an offer to the top candidate. Don't tell the other candidates until the first choice officially accepts the position since no one wants to know they were actually the second or third choice.

"The most important thing is not to drop everything once a superintendent is hired," Mackenzie said. "The job description should become part of the performance review so that the superintendent knows what he needs to improve on and what he is doing well."

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