

# Traffic control: Take your course to the next level, Otis urges

By MARK LESLIE

FALMOUTH, Maine — Calling course traffic “an incredibly important part of golf course management” that needs more attention, the U.S. Golf Association’s (USGA) Dave Otis told superintendents here: “If you do it well, you can elevate your course to the next level. If you do it poorly, you can take it down a notch.”

Otis, regional director of the USGA Green Section’s Northeast Region, pointed to golf cars,

spikes and the increased use of the Stimpmeter as the major culprits in turfgrass compaction and damage.

“The root of most traffic problems is the golf cart,” he told a meeting of the Maine Golf Course Superintendents Association. “In Scotland, golf courses do beautifully, even in heavy traffic situations, because there are no carts.”

But in America most courses depend on revenue from golf cars. And because golfers pay so

little attention to cart paths, signs and obstacles meant to reduce turf damage, compaction from carts is crucial in the battle to maintain quality playing conditions, he said.

Speaking of the other key obstacles, Otis said the Stimpmeter is “a good tool when used right, an awful tool when used wrong” and added, “As bad as the Stimpmeter is, golf spikes are worse!”

While the challenges to superintendents are difficult, Otis

offered a number of solutions to handle traffic problems and improve turfgrass quality.

“Ultimately there are just two ways of dealing with traffic: Concentrate it on an impervious surface like a cart path, or scatter it out over as wide an area as possible,” he said. “If you concentrate it on turf, you’re dead.”

Other Otis comments:

- Start with a plan. Many times, especially on old courses built before golf cars were popular, cart path systems just evolve.

An in-depth study of traffic flow should be done before installing a path.

Consult a golf course architect because there are a lot of tricks to the trade, and seek a second opinion from someone “who can throw darts at your plan.”

- Use a stable material for the path. Or, at least a form or wood alongside the path.

- “Cart paths grow unless you put a stop to it,” so install barriers, or curbs with the turf flush to the top of the curb to avoid bad grass-trimming problems.

- Create multiple entry and exit areas from the paths, at least 30 to 40 yards for exit points.

- Build paths that are at least eight feet wide, preferably 12 feet. Otherwise, carts and equipment pass each other and travel outside the path onto turf.

- Never start or stop a path on a hill.

- “Golfers will not follow cart signs. If you think you’re going to educate them to be more observant you are doomed to disappointment,” he said. A traffic plan must include other aspects. But do use signs that are “tasteful and can be moved.”

- Post a notice with the club’s cart rules on a plastic menu holder in the front of the cart.

- Implement an “infinitely movable” signage and barrier system. Use a simple barrier to funnel traffic — and change it daily.

- Where golfers respect painted white lines, “amazing results” occur. By changing the lines, the wear moves around.

- Plant signs at the top of steep sand bunkers warning golfers not to walk up embankments.

- Trim back trees and, where possible, sever their roots that are growing toward a path because “trees cause a triple whammy: shade, roots and physical obstruction that funnels traffic, and sever roots going toward a path.”

In 85 to 90 percent of his course visits last year superintendents complained about spikes, Otis said, adding: “Every study shows metal spikes are the worst thing for putting surfaces. They also cost millions of dollars in damages to clubhouses, golf carts, walkways, thresholds, rugs, mats, furniture and benches...”

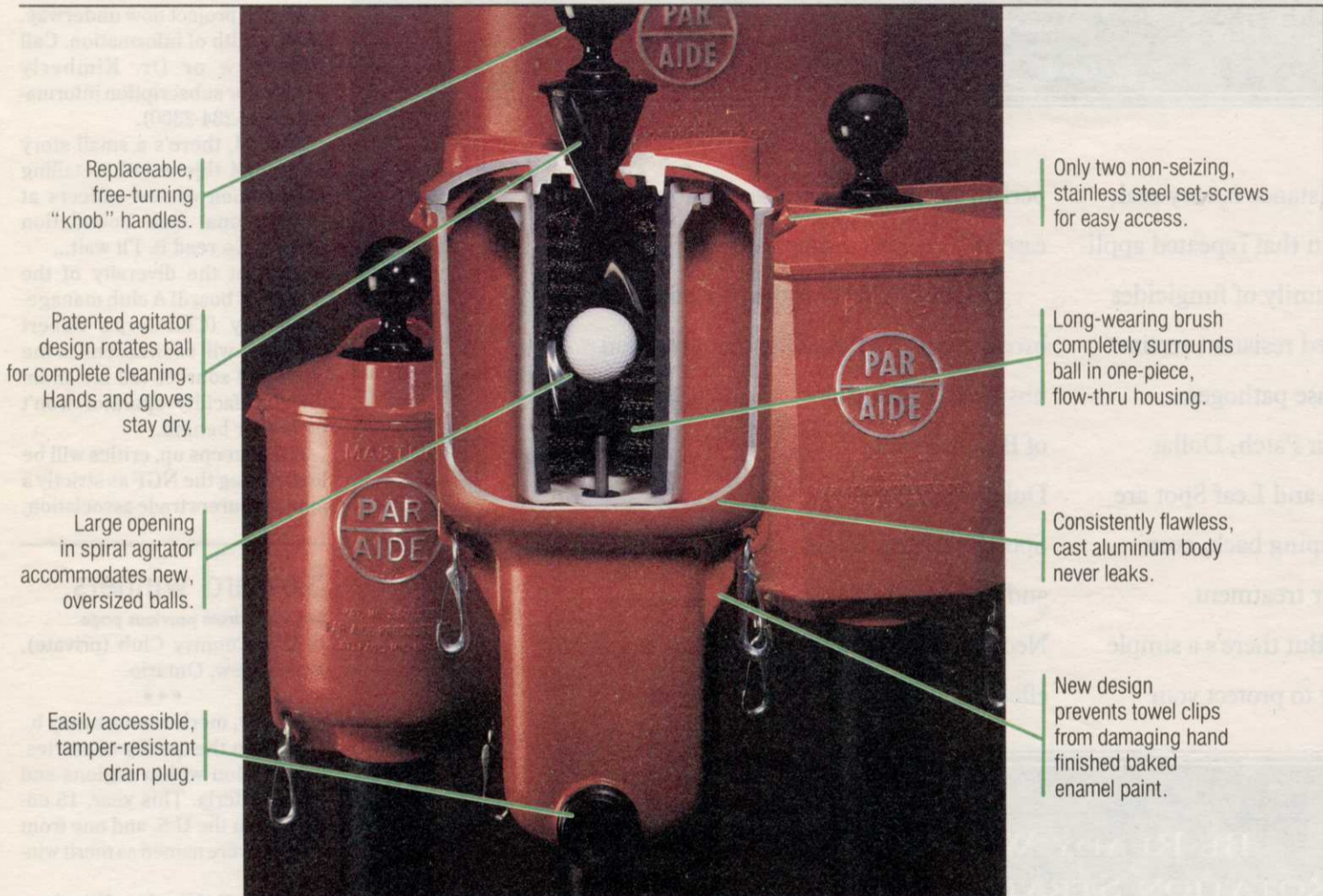
Among several options for golfers, he suggested polyurethane spikes, or shoe wear with suction- or ripple-type treads. “You’ll see phenomenal improvement in your turf,” he said.

What about ropes? Ropes are “a target to hit” and “an opportunity to look bad, Otis said, adding that golfers often simply move them out of the way.

One of the most difficult areas

Continued on next page

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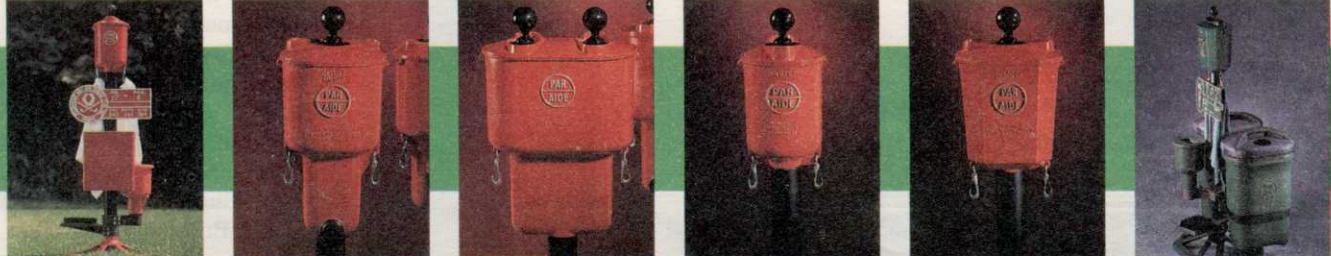
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CIRCLE # 122



## Rackliffe Conn.'s Super of the Year

LEBANON, Conn. — Steve Rackliffe of Willimantic Country Club here has been named Superintendent of the Year by the Connecticut Association of Golf Course Superintendents (CAGCS).



Steve Rackliffe

Saying the CAGCS was proud to present its highest honor to Rackliffe, new President Peter R. Pierson said, "Steve truly lives up to the CAGCS motto: Devoted to sharing knowledge and experience for better turf."

Since Rackliffe joined Willimantic CC in 1982, it has become one of the area's top courses.

Rackliffe was the association president in 1992 and has served on its board of directors. He holds a bachelor's degree in plant and soil sciences and a master's degree from the University of Massachusetts.

Pierson, of Pequabuck Golf Course in Cromwell, meanwhile, was elected to succeed Past President John Streeter of Woodbridge (Conn.) Country Club. He joined a new executive board of directors along with Vice President Phil Neaton of Black Hall Club in Old Lyme, Secretary John Napieracz of Stanley Golf Course in New Britain, and Treasurer Heather Garvin of Canton (Conn.) Golf Course.

Directors are Scott Gennings of Wallingford (Conn.) Country Club, Jud Smith of Orange Hills Country Club of Orange, Brian Skelly of Old Lyme (Conn.) Country Club.

Also, Anthony Grosso of Pautipaug Country Club of Baltic, John Motycka of Skungamaug River Golf Course of Coventry, Jeff Rogers of Baker's Nursery and Greg Stent of Wampanoag Country Club in Bloomfield, who is also public relations director.

## Handling traffic

Continued from previous page

to keep turf alive, Otis said, are those where a cart path stops. He downplayed the helpfulness of plastic "grass cells," saying: "I've never seen grass cells work. Grass dies. Someone catches a spike on it [plastic cells], and you're in trouble."

He said Dr. Trey Rogers of Michigan State University has found that using a mulched tire product as a soil amendment reduces traffic damage, as do Netlawn fibers

"It might be worth a try, experimenting in a few selective areas," he said.

## Heritage Park's Liberti heads NYTA

The New York State Turfgrass Association has elected a new president — John Liburdi Jr., head grounds manager at Heritage Park in Loudonville. Liburdi, who succeeded Michael Maffei of Back O'Beyond in Brewster, is serving along with new Vice President Stephen Smith of P.I.E. Supply Co. in Thompsonville, and Secretary-Treasurer Anthony

Peca Jr. of Batavia Turf Farms in Batavia.

Three candidates were elected to the board of directors. They are Karl Olson of National Golf Links in Southampton, Fran Berdine of O.M. Scotts Co. in Pine Bush and Bob Scott of DowElanco, Springfield, N.J.

Other members serving as directors are John Fik, Steve Griffen, James Hornung, John Rizza and Joseph Hahn.

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