

BRIEFS



**LIBERTY ELM PROGRAM INSTITUTED**

**HARRISVILLE, N.H.** — The Elm Research Institute here has established a new program, The Liberty Tree Memorial, to restore elm trees across the country. ERI will work with community officials and others to coordinate mass plantings of the disease-resistant Liberty elms. More information is available from ERI Executive Director J.P. Hansel at telephone 603-827-3048.

**DELHI STUDENTS' TRAINING ENHANCED**

**DELHI, N.Y.** — Golf education majors at the State University College of Technology at Delhi will soon be putting one of the industry's newest innovations to the test. Students will learn to operate the Ransomes E-Plex all-electric greens mower



as part of their academic training, thanks to Ransomes America Corp. and its distributor, the S.V. Moffett Co. of West Henrietta, N.Y. The mower, valued at more than \$15,000, is an example of Delhi's commitment to offer students experience using state-of-the-art equipment, according to Dominic Morales, program director.

**TPI SETS SUMMER CONVENTION**

**OMAHA, Neb.** — The Turfgrass Producers International (TPI) Summer Convention and Field Days, featuring educational sessions, demonstrations and special tours, will be held here July 27-29. Todd Valley Farms in nearby Mead will host the opening night banquet and demonstration day activities, while Red Lion Hotel here will house the educational sessions. The tour will include the University of Nebraska test facility in Mead and Valmont Irrigation manufacturing plant in Valley. More information is available from TPI, 1855-A Hicks Road, Rolling Meadows, Ill. 60008; telephone 708-705-9898.

**UMASS SETS IPM WORKSHOPS**

**AMHERST, Mass.** — The University of Massachusetts Coop. Extension has scheduled a series of landscape and nursery Integrated Pest Management workshops, featuring hands-on demonstrations of IPM tools and techniques as well as a close look at some common cultural problems and troublesome insect, mite and disease problems. More information is available from the Extension here concerning the workshops, set for May 31 and Sept. 6 in Waltham, June 7 and Sept. 13 in Sandwich, June 14 here, July 12 in Stockbridge and Sept. 14 in South Deerfield.

# McNabb world's 9th Master Greenkeeper

## Palmetto super one of four Americans in elite group

**LONDON** — You can count the world's Master Greenkeepers on two hands, and Richard McNabb is now one of them.

McNabb, superintendent at Palmetto Golf Club in Aiken, S.C., became one of nine Master Greenkeepers, receiving his certificate at the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA) annual awards banquet at the British Turfgrass Management Expo here.

McNabb is one of four Americans to earn the prized distinction, joining William Montague of Oakwood Club in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, Robert Maibusch of Hinsdale Golf Club in Clarendon Hills, Ill., and Terry Buchen of Double Eagle Club in Galena, Ohio.

Saying merely that he is "proud of the accomplishment," McNabb added that he first became interested in the Master Greenkeeper (MG) certification in 1993 while working on a greens renovation at St. Margarets Golf Club in Dublin, Ireland.

To achieve MG status, a superintendent must meet standards in education and experience and pass a written essay



Richard McNabb

test as well as a course examination by BIGGA.

McNabb, who earned his certified golf course superintendent (CGCS) status from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America in 1981, has worked at Palmetto since 1994.

He is working on a bunker renovation and regrassing of the greens, tees and fairways on the course, which was built in 1892 and then remodeled by Alister Mackenzie in the 1930s.

A native of Long Island, he graduated from the University of Massachusetts' Stockbridge School in 1973. He was assistant superintendent at Middle Bay Country Club in Oceanside, N.Y., in 1973-74 and returned there as head superintendent for 10 years in 1975 after a one-year stint in charge of maintenance at Lido Golf Club in Lido Beach, N.Y.

In 1985 McNabb went to work at Lake Hickory Country Club in Hickory, N.C. He joined turf consultant James Lynch of Long Island in 1992, working on projects in Chile and then Ireland.

**MACKENZIE'S PALMETTO UNDERGOING 'CONNORISM'**

**AIKEN, S.C.** — Golfforms President Ed Connor has plied his laser-technology trade and greens renovation prowess on famed golf courses from Pebble Beach and the Riviera Country Club on the West Coast to Firestone South in the Midwest and Pinehurst #2 and Seminole Golf Club on the East Coast. In May he expects to begin and complete his newest project — Palmetto Golf Club here.

Connor, headquartered in Ormond Beach, Fla., has specialized in using laser technology to grid-map golf courses designed by classic architects. At Palmetto, built in 1892 and redesigned in the 1930s by Alister Mackenzie, he will laser-level the tees and sprig the fairways, tees and greens with 419 Bermudagrass. He will also restore the trademark Mackenzie bunkers. Connor has also completed the process of preserving the greens contours on computer.

Meanwhile, Connor will start a resurfacing project at Loxahatchee Club in Jupiter, Fla., on May 15. Crews will strip off the bentgrass and replace it with Bermudagrass.

**STIMPMETER IMPACT WIDE-RANGING**



Terry Buchen illustrates Stimpmeter use at Double Eagle Club in Galena, Ohio.

## The lost cause: Telling green's 'trueness'

By TERRY BUCHEN

Edward S. Stimpson, the 1935 Massachusetts Amateur champion, designed the Stimpmeter some 40 years ago but it was brought to its present form through the hard work of Frank Thomas, technical director of the U.S. Golf Association and the staff at the USGA Green Section in the late 1970s.

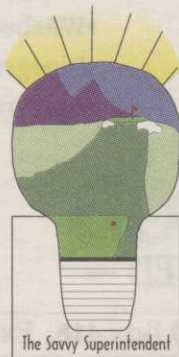
The Stimpmeter has been a valuable tool for golf course superintendents to make their green speeds more consistent for the golfing elite. If the total measurements, done in two directions, on all 18 greens is within 8 inches of each other, the greens speed consistency is considered good; within 6 inches is consid-

ered very good; and within 4 inches is considered excellent.

There is another extremely valuable use for the Stimpmeter that has been overlooked since its inception.

The Stimpmeter can also be used to tell "how true" a putting surface is and how good and consistent the roll of the ball is. While the green is being checked for speed, it can also be checked for its "trueness" by being a little more scrupulous in holding and implementing the Stimpmeter operating procedure.

Simply put, while holding the Stimpmeter — just below the



## Modern-time golf driven by equipment

By JIM CONNOLLY

During the 1930s, a device was conceived by a Boston amateur golfer that would impact the game some 45 years later — the "speed stick," known today as the Stimpmeter.

Mr. Stimpson played golf in the Boston area with great regularity and was involved with several golf organizations. He noticed there were differences in putting greens from course to course. Stimpson was surely not the first to recognize this variability, but perhaps he spent more time lamenting the situation, and this led to his invention.

Even though Stimpson was an accomplished golfer, winning the 1935 Massachusetts Amateur Championship, he felt there must be some way to measure, and perhaps control, the condition of putting surfaces.

He said: "There is no standard set for the speed of putting greens. I believe there is a need to establish quantitative limits to certain conditions, still recognizing that growing grass can never be given an absolute measurement."

Perhaps unknowingly, Stimpson's statement is an oxymoron. In one breath he stated the need for a standard, then said it couldn't be done. The Stimpmeter may have been conceived without full knowledge of its ultimate use, or abuse. The concept of placing a numerical figure on ball roll had its genesis in the 1930s, but was not officially adopted by any organization until 1974.

A philosophy was emerging that embraced the idea that uniformity of greens

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# History: Stimpmeter turned the focus from player ability to course condition

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was paramount in the selection of champion golfers. Until then, championship golfers had been selected based upon their ability to adapt to the playing field. The focus on player ability was shifting to course conditioning. The introduction of the Stimpmeter as a catalyst, placing greater focus on the condition of the putting green.

The U.S. Golf Association's (USGA) *Stimpmeter Booklet* promotes it as a tool "which makes it possible to make a standard measurement of — and place a numerical figure on — the speed of a put-

ting green."

Two purposes for the Stimpmeter are:

- It aids in identifying inconsistencies from green-to-green on the same golf course.
- Places a numerical figure on the speed of the putting green.

The Stimpmeter has such a profound effect upon the game today, that it is worth spending more time evaluating the usefulness of this tool. In reviewing its objectives, some interesting facts come to light. The first objective, "uniformity," can be evaluated with a Stimpmeter or a number of other methods. Any test device that rolls a golf ball over the green surface allowing distance to be measured would suffice. Functionally, the Stimpmeter is a good tool for this purpose.

The question then becomes, "Is non-uniformity a major problem on golf courses today and, if so, what is the cause?"

Tests by Cook College at nine golf courses in 1979 showed "remarkable uniformity" among greens at the same golf course. Remember, this was in 1979 when maintenance practices and cutting heights were not as advanced as today. Cutting height exerts the primary influence upon putting speed. Research at Penn State shows the major influence on green speed is mowing height and frequency.

It is reasonable to assume that if all the greens are mowed at the same height, they will be fairly consistent. Inconsistencies would arise from a number of conditions, most of which can be identified and addressed by management. Inconsistencies among putting greens come from poor drainage, shade, turfgrass health, and other identifiable deficiencies.

The second objective, "Placing a numerical figure on ball roll," has been the subject of much clamor and debate when discussing putting green management. The USGA states in the *Stimpmeter In-*

struction Booklet: "It is not the intention of the USGA to standardize green speeds."

Ironically, the standard on speed was set when the USGA released a list of speeds for championship play, and regular membership play.

The chart actually does not say "good" is fast and "bad" is slow, but leading statements to support this philosophy can be found throughout USGA literature. For example, Al Radko stated in an article *How fast are your greens?*: "Fast greens are considered to be a better test of one's skill and in general eliminate some of the many variables on experiences on the putting surface."

In the USGA Championship Manual it states, "Fast greens are desirable because they require a player to have a delicate putting touch."

Many use the Stimpmeter as an indicator of how successfully the superintendent can achieve fast green speeds. Since the Stimpmeter is an "official" tool, its use is deemed functional and acceptable.

The whole issue of speed further places emphasis upon the condition of the playing surface and less attention on the golfer's ability to adapt and overcome.

The quest for the fast and perfect putting surface has paved the way for specialized equipment designed to accomplish these lofty objectives. Maintenance budgets for golf courses that strive to achieve faster putting surfaces have increased accordingly.

The rebirth of turfgrass rollers is a direct result of the need to satisfy today's requirement for fast greens. More than ever, good agronomics are sacrificed for green speed. Lower cutting heights, heavy rollers and intense grooming undoubtedly increase the need for water, fertilizer and pesticides.

This fact does not seem to have shifted the focus off of fast greens, nor slowed the pursuit of fast greens. Surprisingly, very little research has been done on pesticide use and its relationship to cutting heights.

The current standards for a good golf course are much different than those 100 years ago. Some argue that change is necessary and good for the game of golf, while others are more traditional and feel the backbone of the game is being severed.

Tom Watson and Ben Crenshaw are advocates of the "old game." They enjoy the whimsical game of chance that golf used to be. They view an unlucky lie, a funny bounce, and an element of chance as a great part of the game.

There is no question the putting green represents a large part of the game. I believe it is important to place all parts of the game in perspective and closely scrutinize changes that affect it. This great game should be protected from unnecessary change. Governing bodies such as the PGA, USGA, and the Royal and Ancient, should be protecting the game and be careful not to enforce standards for maintenance based upon what is considered a "good" golf course.

"Play the ball where it lies" has lost its meaning.

Perhaps Bobby Jones summed up putting best when he said: "Worrying about rough spots in the green has no effect except to make the stroke indecisive, and I believe that bad putting is due more to the effect the green has upon the player than to the action of the ball."

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