

Labs certified

Continued from page 15

"My feeling," said Brookside Agriculture Division Director Mark Flock, "was that as long as everybody is using the same methods and as long as we have a sample exchange program and get a handle on the variabilities between labs — and if everybody would participate — it would be great. We should keep it so it is not a policing force, but an assistance to the labs."

Thus far, two other labs are nearing accreditation and "a number are actively working towards applying for accreditation," said Roxanne Robinson, vice president of the Gaithersburg, Md.-based AALA. "If they [labs] sat back on their heels to see if the others were going to seek accreditation, now they are scrambling a little bit."

"It isn't an easy thing because so many of these labs have been operating for years not looking at any kind of specific quality-system standards, and suddenly the USGA has said, 'You will now meet AALA requirements...'"

Robinson said the problem with most soil-testing laboratories has not been technical, but rather "internal audits, document control, complaint handling, corrective actions, management reviews — those kinds of quality-systems support that are necessary to shore up the technical aspects."

"To me, the AALA makes you do an excellent job of quality control," said Flock, whose company was the first out of the blocks in attaining accreditation. "But it will be the sample exchange that will show if the tests themselves can be compared between labs as far as precision and accuracy is concerned."

The "sample exchange" he mentioned is being established by Drs. Bob Miller of the University of California-Davis and Janice Kotuby-Amacher of Utah State, who operate a similar program for agriculture labs through their Western States Testing Program (WSTP). According to Snow, a soil sample will be sent quarterly to labs to run tests and send the results to WSTP. WSTP will analyze the results and inform the labs if they are within reasonable standards.

"Some labs are going to participate in this program even though they are not going to be accredited," Snow added.

"The sample exchange will show if the labs can produce similar results," Flock said. "There is a certain amount of variability with every test. But right now we don't know exactly what that variation is for some of these tests. Not until we get the sample exchange between labs, and the same methodology and start discussing these differences will we know what to expect."

"For the reason of liability, we

will recommend accredited labs," Snow said, "and eventually, if you want to be in the business you will have to be accredited. Architects will do the same."

Mentioning a "core group" of six to eight soil-testing laboratories, Flock said: "If they get their accreditation, we get the sample exchange going and iron out any differences within the same procedures, I would think the contractors, engineers and architects will be very pleased. They can have a lot more confidence in the results."

AALA's Robinson said the ini-

tial cost of accreditation is around \$4,000 to \$5,000. Most of that cost is paying the expenses of a visit by an AALA representative — either Dr. Don Waddington, retired from Penn State University, or Dr. Bill Dest of the University of Connecticut.

"Those are the AALA fees," she said. "The time, energy and manpower they have to put into getting the quality system in their laboratory ready for an assessment would have to be considered as well."

The laboratories will have an annual review and be re-accredited every two years.

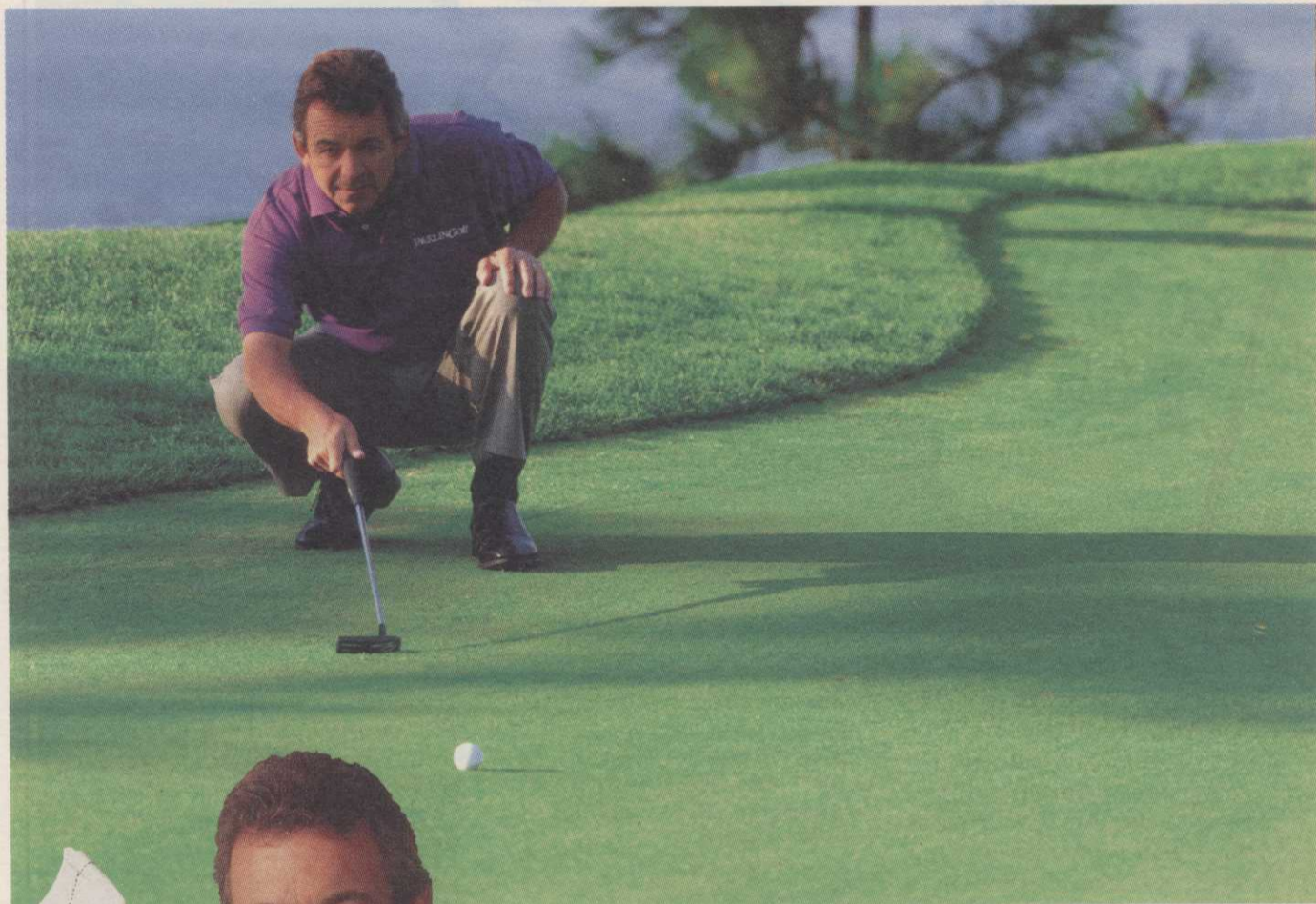
Pa. Turfgrass Council elects Kuhns and Smith to board

KING OF PRUSSIA, Pa. — The Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council (PTC) has re-elected Michael Smith of Gulph Mills Golf Club here and Mark Kuhns of Oakmont Country Club to its board of directors.

The PTC Secretary/Treasurer, Smith is chairman of the 1997 Eastern Pennsylvania Turf Conference and Show Committee and the Research Data Dispersal/Promotion Committee.

Kuhns chairs the PTC Membership and Turfgrass Endowment committees.

Meanwhile, PTC President Sam Snyder has appointed Dr. A.J. Turgeon to the Technical Advisory Committee. A member of the Department of Agronomy teaching turfgrass management at Penn State, Turgeon also serves as director of distance education in the College of Agricultural Sciences.



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Tony Jacklin is the winner of 14 PGA European Tour events (including the 1969 British Open) and 11 other international events (including the 1970 U.S. Open). Tony is also a four-time European Ryder Cup captain, and can be seen on the Senior PGA Tour.