

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

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## Poa triv problems widespread & serious

By MARK LESLIE

*Poa trivialis* infestations of "epidemic proportions" are being reported in bentgrasses and some Kentucky bluegrasses, affecting golf courses across a broad portion of the United States. The question is, has it always been present?

A rough bluegrass, *poa trivialis* is "very aggressive," said Terry Buchen, The Legends Group director of agronomy. "It will take over bentgrass. Even when the seed is blue tag-certified, it's getting

through [inspections]."

"If you talk to the seed companies, the problem doesn't exist. But if you see new golf courses out in the field, it's absolutely a shame how much *poa trivialis* is there," said Stan Zontek, director of the U.S. Golf Association Green Section's Mid-Atlantic Region. "It's a huge problem. There are some supers who are fit to be tied."

"I totally disagree with Stan and his statement on [new golf courses]," said Dr. Rich Hurley, director of re-

search at Lofts Seed and perhaps the nation's foremost expert on *poa trivialis*. "You take me to 120 old courses and I'll find *poa triv* in fairways, greens and tees. I'm not saying it can't come in the seed, but it's all over. Take me anyplace from Georgia north, coast to coast, blindfolded and I'll find it and I'll find it quick."

"It's a hysteria pointed at the seed companies when, if there is a hysteria, it should be: 'This stuff is everywhere.'"

According to Zontek, the situation

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## OB Sports: Turnkey managers

By PETER BLAIS

PORTLAND, Ore. — Bringing resort golf to urban areas is the goal of O.B. Sports, an Oregon-based, full-service management firm that recently began construction of a new golf project on the western outskirts of this city.

"We're focusing on high-end, public golf," said company President Orrin Vincent. "Country clubs and municipal courses have traditionally been the only choices in Western [U.S.] cities. We want to bring that resort golf experience to the city."

The 36-hole Reserve Vineyards and Golf Club, the fifth facility in the O.B. portfolio, is a good example. The Reserve will operate under an unusual format. Alternating each day, one 18-hole course will be dedicated to public/resort play with the other course reserved for private members and their guests.

The courses, which should open in August

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The 7th green at Rush Creek Golf Club, a John Fought design located in Maple Grove, Minn. Fought's design firm is now a division of Aurora, Ore.-based OB Sports.



## PUBLIC GOLF FORUM

A NATIONAL BUSINESS CONFERENCE AND EXPO FOR SUPERINTENDENTS, OWNERS, MANAGERS, AND DEVELOPERS OF PUBLIC-ACCESS GOLF FACILITIES

OCTOBER • 27 • 29 • 1996

### Forum focus: Customer service

By HAL PHILLIPS

CHICAGO — The golfers couldn't be happier. With more than 400 new courses opening their doors each year, there's an increasing variety of playing options. It's another story for the golf course management team, however, as record development numbers mean more competition in an already tight marketplace.

Sophisticated operations that emphasize customer service, manage efficiently, market aggressively and maintain for quality will thrive in this atmosphere, while those content with the *status quo* will fall by the wayside. The application of these sound business principles to public-access course operations will dominate the four-track education conference at The Public Golf Forum, a two-day seminar and trade show sponsored by

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## Participation, rounds back up, says NGF

By HAL PHILLIPS

JUPITER, Fla. — That giant sucking sound you hear is actually a collective sigh of relief. According to the National Golf Foundation's (NGF) annual report on golf participation, rounds played increased 5.5 percent during 1995, pushing the total to 490 million. The report also shows the total number of golfers grew by 3 percent, pegging the current playing population at 25 million.

Following on the heels of last years study which indicated troubling decreases in both rounds and players, the 1996 report comes as welcome news to a golf industry building courses at a record pace. Four hundred and sixty-eight courses, an all-time high, opened for play dur-

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## Public Golf Forum

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*Golf Course News* scheduled for Oct. 27-29, here at the Marriott Lincolnshire Resort. With education programs designed specifically for owners, managers, superintendents and developers of public-access facilities, The Forum will provide attendees the edge they need to survive.

"As the information source for the golf course industry, we have our fingers on the pulse," said *Golf Course News* Publisher Charles von Brecht. "This allows us to pinpoint the areas where owners, managers, superintendents and developers might really need expert business advice

and guidance.

"I believe we've succeeded in assembling a program that addresses these needs."

The Forum will feature four distinct education tracks—Marketing, Management, Maintenance and Development—each featuring expert instruction from proven leaders inside and outside the golf industry.

• The Marketing program is designed to help owners and managers "get the word out" via TV, radio, photography, the print media, the Internet and good ol'-fashioned word of mouth. For example, award-winning photographer Mike Klemme will tell attendees how to best market their courses through pictures;

Vince Alfonso, former president of the National Golf Course Owners Association, will instruct attendees on how to use local TV and radio to their marketing advantage; Rich Katz, vice president of marketing for Billy Casper Golf Management, will show owners how to economically promote their courses via the time-honored "Barter System"; and appraiser Larry Hirsh, president of Golf Property Analysts, will share 10 ways to upscale your operation—thereby allowing higher green fees while increasing course value.

• While most agronomy programs show superintendents how to spend money, the Maintenance track at the Public Golf

Forum concentrates on saving it through innovative turf care and efficient management. Indeed, The Forum is unique in the attention it pays to business issues faced by today's superintendents. Bruce Williams, president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, will share innovative, efficient staffing techniques. Terry Buchen, *GCN's* Savvy Superintendent and contributing editor, will weigh in with his exclusive "10 Ways to Save Money." Earl Shafer, the superintendent at Wilmington (Del.) Country Club, will discuss ways to use OSHA regulations as a cost-saver. Also, Chicago District Golf Association Turfgrass

Advisor Dr. Randy Kane will discuss agronomic problems particular to the region, while U.S. Golf Association Green Section agronomists Bob Brame and Peter Vermeulen will speak on Midwest turf problems and solutions.

• The Development program will employ a two-prong approach: Targeting both the start-up developer and the existing course owner looking to expand—indeed, the latter group accounted for nearly half of last year's 468 course openings. This track will feature architect Bob Lohmann on course renovation; Jeffrey Brauer, immediate past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, on the particulars of expanding facilities from 9 holes to 18, 18 to 27 and 18 to 36; architects Dick Nugent and Keith Foster on reclaiming landfills and quarries for golf development (and how to use them as a marketing advantage). Discussions of demographics, financing alternatives and environmental permitting strategies will also be included in this track.

• The Forum's Management program is the strongest ever. Operations wizard Gregg Gagliardi returns this year with separate sessions on increasing profit margins on the driving range and in the restaurant. Walt Lankau, owner of Stow Acres (Mass.) Country Club—host to the 1995 USGA Publinx Championship—will share his experiences implementing and fine-tuning an automated tee-time reservation system. As any owner knows: If the price is right, the course is always for sale. In that spirit, the Management track will feature a session on "Making Your Course Attractive for Sale," featuring Mike Rippey, president of North American Golf, and golf course appraiser Sam Hines.

Information on attending the conference and exhibiting at the trade show can be obtained by calling the *Golf Course News* Conference Group at 207-846-0600.

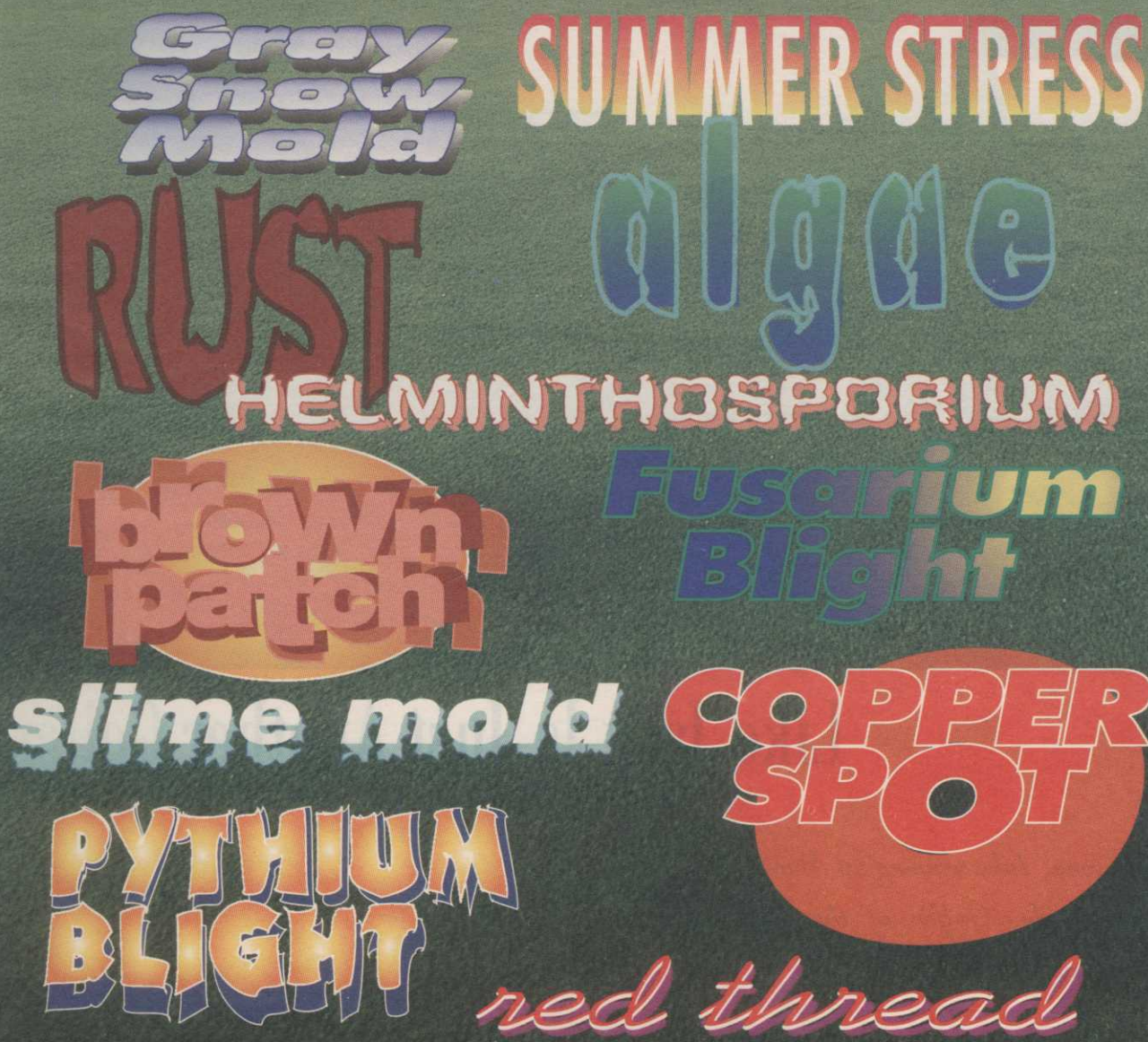
## Phillips comment

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no retrofitting required. Expect the other players in golf cobbling to quickly strike similar deals with the oodles of spike-alternative makers now crowding what had been a pretty static marketplace.

Reebok has chosen to equip its Performance Convertible golf shoes with Softspike Extra Traction cleats, "because they outperformed all other spikeless alternatives in our testing," said Phil Percuoco, Reebok product development manager.

The athletic footwear behemoth appears to have taken the "whole-hog" approach to its spikeless commitment. Reebok has agreed to respice, on request, any model in its golf shoe line with Extra Traction cleats at no additional charge. The manufacturer also plans convenience programs for clubs to go spikeless, including rental-shoe discounts of 40 percent of the standard wholesale price and shoe program for tournaments.



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