

## Of specs, crumbs & broken pottery

When it comes to green construction specifications, there isn't much common ground out there: 70:30, 85:15, tiles or no tiles...

While the U.S. Golf Association openly admits its current specs should be considered a work in progress, critics continue to unfairly blast the Gang from Far Hills at every turn. The vitriol is distasteful and, for that matter, unprofessional. But the prospect of failed greens seems to prompt an unmatched level of tension in the golf course industry.

However, there is one thing everyone can agree on: The quality of sand is integral to the sound construction and lasting success of putting surfaces. In Orlando, at the recent International Golf Course Conference and Show, I informally polled soil mixers and course construction folks on whether the sand specified was always the sand received. The consensus? About 25 percent of the time, sand received at the construction site is not the sand specified, and the Phoenix area was singled out as a real problem area.

Responsible mixers routinely send sand to labs for testing, but poor-quality sand is a variable the industry must demystify before we can argue about proper specs.

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On the architectural front, Rodney Wright has amicably left partners Robin Nelson and Neil Haworth to start his own design firm. The remaining two components will continue their collaboration with offices in Hawaii and Singapore. Wright will also set up shop in Singapore. Having established itself in Asia-Pacific, the new firm of Nelson Haworth is beginning to look East, to America... The American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) session in Orlando was well attended and extremely informative, especially a panel discussion featuring Rees Jones, Bobby Jones (yes, they sat next to each other and chatted amiably throughout), Art Hills, Ed Seay, Alice Dye and Pete Dye. At one stage, moderator and ASGCA president Jeffrey Brauer asked the panelists who recommends green construction to USGA specs. Everyone raised their hands but Pete Dye, who extolled the virtues of sand, dirt and broken pieces of pottery. Then Seay chimed in, saying he's had great success with soil amendments like Profile, which is "basically broken up pieces of pottery."

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During the USGA session in Orlando, I was interested to see Green Section agronomist Chris Hartwigger heap praise on the practice of top dressing with crumb rubber. A few months back, our front-page story on crumb rubber was met with yawns and skepticism. But according to Hartwigger, superintendent Mark Hoban has been using the stuff with success at the Standard Club in Duluth, Ga. Because of its lower density, crumb rubber does not move down through the soil profile like sand does. Hoban has discovered that light, frequent applications curb turf abrasion and compaction in high-traffic areas. Unexpectedly, they also make for better green-up come spring. Hoban even top dresses portions of his

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Hal Phillips,  
editor

## What might the future bring?

"I never think of the future. It comes soon enough," said Albert Einstein.

"My interest is in the future because I am going to spend the rest of my life there," said Charles Kettering, an early-1900s electrical engineer and inventor.

Whatever your thoughts of the future, it will come. And folks in the golf industry may be surprised by some of the advances it brings with it.

Two very interesting comments were made at the International Golf Course Conference and Show, both pertaining to the future.

Golf course architect and Old Tom Morris Award-winner Tom Fazio said that instead of improvements in golf balls, clubs and other equipment, he firmly believes the greatest changes ahead will be better playing surfaces (a thanks in advance here to the plant breeders of the world).

Meanwhile, one of my favorite superintendents — Chief Agronomic Officer Kevin Ross of Country Club of the Rockies — put equipment advances in perspective. "We're setting our irrigation systems with computers now — and from hand-held radios at that," he said. "I don't think a remote-control sprayer is too far away, where you could follow it along controlling it with a joy stick... Laser technology has also come a long ways. They may someday invent a laser-controlled mower."

Satellites once reserved for the world's governments are now beaming information down to golf course superintendents and managers to help with such chores as disease scouting golf car monitoring. Computers once reserved for the "business world" are now the nerve centers of golf maintenance facilities. When will this all stop — and what are its effects on superintendents?

"The kids in college now are way ahead of superintendents in the field on computers," Ross said. "They have massive amounts of computer experience because they learned it in high school. These folks have had computers since they were 14, 15 years old. It will give them a big, big benefit in this field in the future. I've taken night courses on the computer. You have to keep up."

On the other hand, what about golf course design — where only a handful of architects use computer software in their work and where some consider even the idea a pox on the House of Ross?

A panel of American Society of Golf Course Architects members — Pete and Alice Dye, Robert Trent Jones Jr., Rees Jones, Ed Seay, Jeff Brauer and Art Hills — unanimously said advances in equipment have helped course design.

"You can do 'minimalism' when you have a maximum site. But you can't when you have a minimal site," Bob Jones said.

"Donald Ross doesn't have an original golf course and neither will we in 50 years. So, [to the audience] have at it [in renovations]," said Pete Dye.

The panel also had some interesting comments on entering the 21st century:

- "More and more different people will be playing and we will adapt our golf courses for them... We will use less water and have a new word for 'pesticides.'" — Alice Dye.

- "We will build seven-, 11-, 12- and 14-hole golf courses —"



Mark Leslie,  
managing editor

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## Letters

### HOVER MOWER MANUFACTURER RESPONDS

To the editor:

In an article you authored in the February issue of *Golf Course News* entitled "Hover-mower manufacturer recapitalizes" (p. 87), we found some inaccurate statements; we feel they need to be corrected.

Flymo is referred to as a "British company with U.S. distribution" while Grasscraft is said to be manufactured "domestically." Precision Small Engine Co., in Pompano Beach, Fla., has been selling direct to the public in all of North America, the Caribbean and the West Indies for more than 17 years. Flymo units have been manufactured by Precision in our Pompano Beach, Fla. facilities for over 5 years. Not only are Flymo hovering trimmers

made and sold here but they are also tested on Florida's year-round golf courses.

You quoted Steven Searle of Grasscraft as saying that, due to their domestic manufacturing, "we can offer lower pricing and better service." Precision guarantees the lowest prices in the industry, starting as low as \$369.95 for the Flymo GCT12. And Grasscraft didn't answer their toll-free number you printed at the end of the article, even though we repeatedly tried to call and get some of their "lower prices" and "better service."

David Rodway, Grasscraft's vice president of sales, is also quoted in the article. He claims the 2-cycle engine "bogs a little bit and you may have to pull off" when you attempt to mow "heavy

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### MISSING GEESE HAVE BEEN LOCATED!

To the editor:

Re: "Canada geese count is down" (*Golf Course News*, February 1996)

Don't worry. ALL the missing Canadian geese plus their offspring are here in Connecticut. Please reinstate the hunting season.

Bob Chalifour, CGCS  
Shennecossett GC  
Groton, Conn.

Ed. — Phew! Closing goose season in the Atlantic flyway must have done the trick. Now those state fish and wildlife officials can rest easier... As for you, Mr. Chalifour, have you considered a border collie?

Contributing Editor Terry Buchen filed the following report, which updates a story that appeared in the April 1995 edition of *Golf Course News*:

To the editor:

The back nine of The Links of North Dakota at Red Mike Resort in Williston, N.D., opened for play on July 4, 1995, with 8,000 rounds being played last year. "We need about 11,000 rounds per year to break even, so this year is looking good for us," stated Stan Weeks, superintendent and part owner.

In keeping with the theme of Red Mike Hill, where a horse thief was hung back in the late 1800s, the course has red golf carts, red golf tees, red golf pencils and red-colored letters on its billboard

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