

GOLF COURSE NEWS

THE NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

A UNITED PUBLICATION
VOLUME 8, NUMBER 10
OCTOBER 1996 • \$4.50

INSIDE

The War On Thatch

Just say, "street cleaner"? Superintendent Brett Harris shares a novel approach to turf cultivation..... 13

Minimum Impact

Course managers and supers need not despair over the recent minimum wage hike 39

DNA fingerprinting pegs rogue cultivars

By LARRY KIEFFER

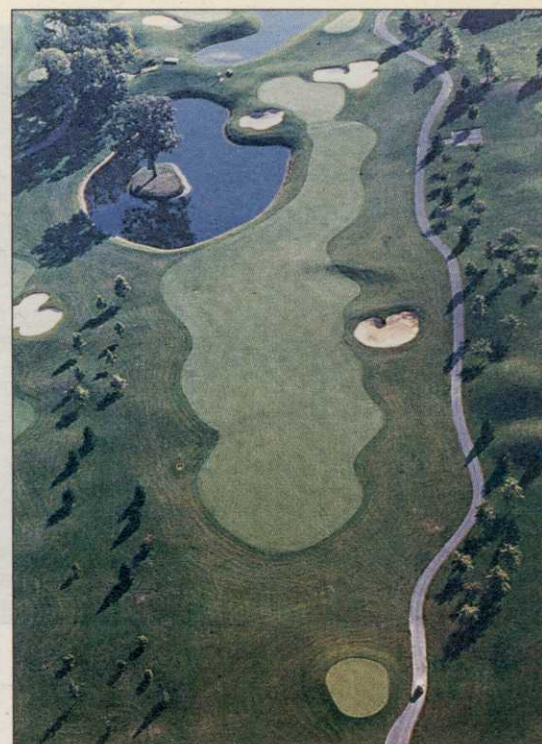
TAMPA, Fla. — Developing techniques to identify "off-types" of Bermuda grass through DNA analysis has become a market-driven research project in Florida. Superintendents in the state increasingly face job insecurity as these off-types appear on their golf courses, particularly on the greens.

The objective is to find a reliable means of verifying a cultivar before it is planted. With his job on the line, the superintendent wants to make sure he is getting what his boss

is paying for.

"We have found that DNA fingerprinting has proved to be a powerful tool for identifying off-types in Tifway Bermuda grass," said Dr. Phil Busey, one of four researchers with the University of Florida's Institute of Food

Continued on page 28



FERTIGATION OVERVIEW

This blimp shot of the 10th hole at Bent Creek Country Club in Lancaster, Pa., was taken last August at the height of heat and humidity season. How did superintendent H. James Loke maintain such color and plant vitality? The answer is fertigation. See this month's Super Focus on page 22.

Biosolids gain favor

By MARK LESLIE

OGUNQUIT, Maine — Nutrient-rich, disease-suppressant "biosolid" compost is gaining support and becoming a player in the world of golf course design and maintenance.

Some took notice when Firestone Country Club used a biosolid compost to rebuild its greens two years ago. Others have watched as several courses in Ohio purchased the Kurtz Bros.' sludge compost product, Technigrow.

Now courses are contracting companies like Kurtz and Brown & Ferris Industries (BFI) to provide biosolids for the root-zone mix on greens in new course construction and

Continued on page 34



Forum Update See page 54

U.S. OPEN GOES PUBLIC IN 2002

Score another victory for public-access golf in America: The U.S. Golf Association will, for the first time, conduct its Open Championship at a publicly-owned facility: the Black Course at Bethpage State Park on Long Island (the par-3, 17th is shown here). For story, see page 3.

Course marketing entering new media

• The Internet

By PETER BLAIS

ST. GEORGE, Utah — Developers of a golf and residential community in southwest Utah have started their own web page to keep the 2,000 investors informed about the project's status on a daily basis.

Golf Ventures Inc., a publicly traded company specializing in golf and related real-estate development, is building Red Hawk International Golf Community, located 30 minutes from Zion National Park and 90 minutes from Las Vegas.

Through its web site — www.gvim.com — GVI



keeps investors apprised of daily developments at the 670-acre project, home to a 27-hole Fred Couples/Gene Bates-designed golf course, clubhouse, tennis facilities and 945 residences. The first phase, 18 holes and 114 dwelling units, should be completed by spring 1998.

"We use a digital camera to take photos and update them on the web page on a regular basis," com-

Continued on page 41

• TV and Radio

By MARK LESLIE

LINCOLNSHIRE, Ill. — Intimidated by the mere thought of doing a television or radio commercial — the dynamics, the costs, the stage fright — most golf course operators flee exclusively to other media to promote their facilities.

Resist no longer, urges Vince Alfonso Jr., president of Alfonso Creative Golf Enterprises in Williamsville, Ill. Alfonso will conduct a one-day seminar, "Marketing Your Course on TV and Radio," following the Public Golf Forum here this month.

Continued on page 42



THE GAME'S THE THING

Architect Ken Kavanaugh said he won't compromise the game for appearance's sake. See story page 29.

COURSE MAINTENANCE

Personnel Management: UMass meets need 13
GCSAA membership dues at issue, again 17
The Savvy Super charts his way to success 24

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Atlanta developers warn Sydney counterparts 4
Love & Fought hang out their own shingles 29
Bruce Matthews project mixes golf & fishing 31

COURSE MANAGEMENT

AGC eyes Cleveland market 5
Fore Star promotes hands-on approach 39
Today, only the nimble manager survives 54

SUPPLIER BUSINESS

States assume regulatory responsibilities 45
Ransomes, Toro join on-line service 49
What's new in the marketplace? 50

Red Hawk web page

Continued from page 1

pany President and major shareholder George Badger said in late August. "We'll use photos of the groundbreaking this Friday [Aug. 23]. We can display the golf architect's drawings or sketched designs of some of the amenities.

"The information is accessible to brokerage and investment firms who deal

with potential investors. We can put SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission] filings, stock values and real-estate values, as well as photos of what is actually happening on the course or house lots right on the web page. It's a great marketing tool."

Red Hawk is GVI's flagship project. The St. George area is being marketed as a second Palm Springs, cooler in summer and hotter in winter than nearby Las Vegas, Badger said. The company president

expects Red Hawk to draw most of its members and homeowners from the Utah Front Range communities of Salt Lake City, Ogden, Provo and Logan as well as from the surrounding states of Montana, Idaho, Colorado and Wyoming. Public play will be allowed until the course reaches 300 members, according to the company.

"We're looking at four other projects that are within a couple of hours of St. George by air," Badger said.

Minimum wage

Continued from page 39

his starting pay scale from \$5.50 per hour to \$7 to \$7.50 per hour in order to attract better quality applicants and lower employee turnover.

"We get around 20 applicants for job openings now," Sloan estimated. "We were only getting two to three before. Our choices were much more limited. I'm glad the minimum wage is going up. The jobs we ask people to do on a golf course aren't the easiest in the world."

Across the border in Jackson, Miss., Country Club of Jackson superintendent Stephen Harrell said the minimum-wage increase would have little or no effect on courses in his area.

"If it had any, it would just be with the summertime help," he said. "But courses around here hire a lot of summer help from the Mississippi State University Cooperative program. Alabama courses pay them \$6.50 an hour plus room and board to work there. We have to pay them at least \$5.50 in order to compete. The last thing the members want to hear is the course is in bad shape because we don't have enough people to maintain it."

Even in the poorer sections of the Northeast, laborers generally make above minimum wage.

"I start new people at \$5 to \$5.50 an hour, depending on experience and references," said Jim Hodge, head superintendent at Val Halla Golf Club in Cumberland, Maine, and the state's representative to the September Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Chapter Relations Meeting. "If people return the following summer, they can generally expect a raise."

"I don't think we'll have to raise our starting wages 50 cents just because the minimum went up that amount, though. People like working here because they get to play some golf, work outside and are done for the day around 1 p.m. They like this a lot better than flipping burgers."

The issue was discussed at the GCSAA's annual Chapter Relations Meeting. GCSAA media spokesman Jeff Bollig said a recent survey noted that golf courses typically pay well above the minimum wage, i.e. an average \$6.49 for greens crew workers, \$7 for gardeners and \$8.56 for office assistants.

"We've gotten a lot of questions about it on our web site," Bollig said. "One of the concerns was that raising the minimum wage would have a trickle up effect that would cause golf courses to raise wages on the lower end. An increase in the minimum wage could do that in some cases."



control of crabgrass,

goosegrass and other tough

weeds. Consistent control that lasts for

up to 26 weeks depending on the rate you

choose. For even more confidence and security,

Barricade keeps golf shoes and everything else

on your course stain-free. And since you're

applying as little as one-fourth as much active

ingredient, you'll reduce worker exposure and

lessen the environmental load. What's more, its

low water solubility means Barricade

will stay right where you put it, even on slopes

and hillsides. Choose from two different

formulations: on-fertilizer and sprayable.

Barricade really can provide the added confidence

and security you need. But only if you apply it.

For more details, talk to your authorized

Barricade distributor, Sandoz sales representative

Barricade
HERBICIDE

or call 1-800-248-7763.

THEY HAVE TO BE APPLIED.



Always read and follow label directions. Sandoz Agro, Inc., 1300 E. Touhy Ave., Des Plaines, IL 60018. Barricade is a trademark of Sandoz Ltd. ©1995 Sandoz Agro, Inc.

Metro Milorganite, Inc.
Bedford Hills, NY 914-666-3171

The Andersons
Maumee, OH 800-537-3370

Turf Supply Co.
Eagan, MN 612-454-3106

United Horticultural Supply
Tampa, FL 813-628-0496

Western Farm Service
Fresno, CA 209-436-0450

Professional Turf Specialties
Champaign, IL 217-352-0591

Turf Industries, Inc.
Dallas, TX 214-241-0545

United Horticultural Supply
Aurora, OR 503-678-9000

United Horticultural Supply
Tucson, AZ 520-293-4330

Wilbur-Ellis Co.
Auburn, WA 206-230-0577

Regal Chemical Co.
Alpharetta, GA 800-621-5208

Turf Industries, Inc.
Houston, TX 800-288-8873

United Horticultural Supply
Fresno, CA 209-253-5717

Vigoro Industries
Winter Haven, FL 800-329-4238

CIRCLE #132

Advertising can be effective: if done correctly

By MARK LESLIE

LINCOLNSHIRE, Ill. — Frequent advertising on television and radio works, but effectiveness can be gained much more cheaply, according to Vince Alfonso Jr., president of Alfonso Creative Golf Enterprises in Williamsville.

Advertising salespersons try to sell frequency, but golf course operators should pay no attention, advises Alfonso, who is lead-

ing a one-hour presentation on "Turning On to TV and Radio" during the Public Golf Forum Oct. 28-29 as well as a one-day post-conference workshop here, Oct. 30.

A sampling of the tips Alfonso will give in his presentations includes:

- Don't be overcome by that sales push for buying frequent ads. "All of a sudden, in their first outreach, they [operators] think of

big dollars or are told of big dollars and they withdraw to look at other [advertising] vehicles."

- Don't be intimidated by appearing in your own ad. "Anticipating a TV shot, the first thing a person thinks is, 'I'm not able. I've got to hire a professional.' They need to do some homework first. The idea is to equip them with the information they need to go home and get the job done."

- Don't be frightened by the talk of \$1 million-a-minute ads on the Super Bowl broadcast. "People hear that and think that in the smallest logical increment for them, it will cost \$1,000 or \$10,000 a minute, and they run from the idea. They operate in an absence of information and are not comparing apples and apples."

- Road block. "If I wanted to gain new customers with radio, I would run a commercial on all the radio stations in our market (that is, say, 100,000-population cities, not New York City, Chicago, or LA). You might have four or five stations. I would run all week at the same time of the day — preferably drive-time. It's called 'road blocking.' Listeners have to hear my commercial."

"You're doing this on a reasonable trial investment of dollars," Alfonso added, "seven days a week times five stations."

- Eliminate for new customers. "When golfers come to the pro shop and say what stations they heard the ad on, I eliminate those stations and concentrate on the stations where my customers don't listen because I want new customers."

"Of course, when you want to communicate with your present customer base, you use those stations."

- Use the "creatures-of-habit" approach. "I feel people set their radios to their station and leave it there," Alfonso said. "While they're getting ready for work they're listening to the same station. I will run a commercial on a news talk station from Monday from 6 to 7 a.m., Tuesday from 7 to 8, Wednesday from 8 to 9, Thursday from 6 to 7 and Friday from 7 to 8. I've bought five commercials. Everyone who listens has heard it in two time frames."

"After two weeks, those people can't distinguish if I'm on there every day or not. In 18 years I've done this and people have told me they hear me every day on the radio. I'm not there but they think I am. I multiply my dollar value by buying that particular schedule."

"A radio station won't tell you that because they're making their money selling frequency."

They want you to buy two spots an hour for five days. They're not lying because it will work, but you don't have to do all that."

- Be constant with advertising. It pays big long-term dividends. "If you're on the radio for nine weeks, even if you're not on afterward, golfers think you are."

During his seminar, Alfonso will delve into use of local stations' in-house talent, independent production companies, cable stations, pre-commercial planning and post-production costs, among other issues.

"I'm trying to encourage golf course owners to turn the tide — to learn the whole story, not the half-truth about TV and radio advertising," Alfonso said, "so they can be better equipped. Maybe TV or radio will work for them."

"The point is that a course with a \$12 or \$28 greens fee had better have a mission, know what and how they want to communicate, put out a budget and get the job done as best as they can using everything at their disposal."

TV and Radio

Continued from page 1

The Forum, sponsored by *Golf Course News* Oct. 27-29 at Marriott's Lincolnshire Resort, is the only national golf conference serving course owners, managers, developers and superintendents at public-access golf facilities.

"No one in the industry, to my knowledge, has ever done a television and radio workshop where you can spend a day to get information on how this all works," said Alfonso, past president of the National Golf Course Own-

ers Association and former co-owner of The Rail in Springfield whose background also includes many years managing some widely known music stars.

"Most [general managers and pros] are dependent on the professional at the local TV or radio station, or on the station's sales department, or an independent production firm. Some of these people are phenomenal. Some are very responsible and stay within budget. But an owner of a course could benefit greatly by learning more about it themselves."

In a room of 350 PGA pros at a recent function, only two acknowledged using TV or radio, Alfonso said, adding that golf owners and operators have simply not kept pace with technology.

"We're catching up fast," Alfonso said. "Computers in the golf shop are not strangers any more. The same thing is happening in terms of how we market our facilities."

"It's no longer just the big courses that spend television and radio money. We all want the most efficient use of our advertising, promotion and marketing dollars."

"In this workshop, we want people to learn more about these types of opportunities which can only benefit them economically. That's what this is all about. How can I gain information that will help me go home and improve my bottom line?"

Alfonso's 8 a.m.-5 p.m. session will include information on what to do and not do in TV and radio promotions, what to say and when and where to buy advertising. It will also feature critiques of attendees' video and radio spots as well as two "Star Search" periods.

"We want participants to send us video and radio spots ahead of

Continued on next page

GOLF COURSE NEWS

Green It Up And Keep It Green!

TeeTime
21-3-16 w/
97% NUTRALENE®

TeeTime
22-4-18 w/
92% NUTRALENE®

The Andersons' Tee Time with NUTRALENE formulations incorporate the industry's ideal nitrogen source together with advanced, small particle fertilizer. In these or other fertilizer formulas you may select, NUTRALENE works two ways. You get an initial release of nitrogen followed up with a slow, controlled-release that can feed up to 16 weeks. You get it green and it stays green longer.

Tee Time Fertilizers with NUTRALENE: Uniformly the best in the business.

1-800-225-ANDY
the professional's partner®

The Andersons

© NUTRALENE is a Registered Trademark of Nor-Am Chemical Company
© 1993 Tee Time is a Registered Trademark of The Andersons

EPAERATION

THE LEADER IN SUB-SURFACE ACTIVATED OXYGEN AERATION SYSTEMS

Your Water...As Nature Intended It

Low Cost:

- * Installation
- * Operation & Maintenance
- * 120 VAC, Single-phase

Proven Technology:

- * Inhibits Algae Growth
- * Reduces Dependence on Chemicals
- * Hundreds of Installations

Our bottom-laid, linear aeration modules move as much water as a 10-h.p. fountain, more efficiently, and at a fraction the cost. That helps you to:

Enhance the Environment...and Your Community Relations!

CALL: 800-556-9251

For Free Specifications, Questionnaire, and Information Packet

2615 MEADOW ST., SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA 93401

Fore Star

Continued from page 39

Yonke. Like Yonke, Jeff was reared in daily operations. He received Colbert's Golf Manager of the Year in 1990 and has managed 10 courses. He is in charge of marketing all Fore Star properties and manages Picacho Hills Country Club in Las Cruces, N.M. Gary oversees Fore Star's financial and administrative functions. A certified public accountant, he served 16 years as chief financial officer of AGF Industries, a \$500 million company.

Fore Star has grown steadily, adding one or two courses annually. In addition to Meadowbrook and Picacho Hills, the company operates Hollywood Park Golf Center in Los Angeles, Hound Hollow Golf Center in Portland, Ore., The Links at Sierra Blanca in Ruidoso, N.M., and Scott Park Municipal Golf Course in Silver City, N.M.

"I've seen other companies have growth spurts where they've added a bunch of courses all at once and then played catch-up until they could manage them efficiently," Yonke said. We want to have a more planned growth and stay within our means to be a daily part of each operation.

TV and radio

Continued from previous page

time if possible — for critique purposes," Alfonso said. "We want what they think are their best and worst commercials. They might have loved one but it was a bomb, or vice versa. We'll discuss them."

The idea of Star Search sessions, he said, is "to find that latent personality and bring it out that day. We will videotape it and show them just what they look like doing their own commercials. Some people may not like how they look on TV or sound on radio, but it may be just the ticket. This may have tremendous value."

Learning how to most effectively use all media for promotions can exponentially multiply profits, Alfonso said.

"Everything I've done in the last 10 years," he said, "has three components: direct mail, radio and television. Research shows that if you were able to communicate your message in one medium, you have made one impression.

"If a person hears the same message on the radio that they see in the newspaper, you have made more than two impressions... When they then see a billboard saying the same thing, you don't have three messages but maybe 9. And when they watch the news that night and see it on television, it's not four impressions, it's 16."

To register for the Forum and/or the post-conference workshop contact the *Golf Course News* Conference Group at 207-846-0600.

"We've added one or two properties a year. I see that continuing, especially since it takes three years to get a course operating the way you want. The first year you fix what's broken. The second you institute a marketing plan. The third year, hopefully, all your work begins to pay off."

Fore Star's primary focus is on acquiring long-term leases coupled with purchase options, if possible. It also provides man-

agement and consulting services and co-owns another facility. But the firm prefers leases.

"Our last two courses have been leases from municipalities," Yonke said. "They fit well into our niche. Municipalities have usually overlooked certain things for many years. We try to focus on those first. It's often the lack of an on-site manager. The golf pro and superintendent usually answer to different people

within the city government and it makes it difficult to get things done. We put one person, the general manager, in charge of both positions and things run more smoothly."

Fore Star found some major capital improvements were needed at Meadowbrook. The company sunk more than \$1 million into the complex, including a total clubhouse renovation that "gave us the opportunity to run the opera-

tion smoothly," Yonke said.

Though small compared to some major management companies, Yonke prefers to see Fore Star's size as an advantage.

"Large companies have to prioritize their problems," he said. "An individual course that is part of a six-course group has a better chance of someone noticing its problems and getting them taken care of than one in a 200- to 300-course portfolio."

FOR MAXIMUM PROTECTION FROM STRESS...

MACRO-SORB® CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE!!!

Whether it's excessive cold or heat, drought or too much rain, pests and disease, less than optimum soil conditions, or just too many rounds of golf — you need healthy turf to withstand the stress caused by these and many other adverse conditions.

Macro-Sorb® is an amino acid based, nutraceutical plant biostimulant that provides maximum resistance to adverse conditions by maintaining the photosynthetic activity which normally slows down during periods of stress.

The action of the amino acids stimulates the natural processes of the plant causing improved nutrient absorption and increased availability of the managing micro nutrients. By providing the same L form amino acids a plant normally produces, Macro-Sorb® helps the plant retain the vital energy it needs to sustain growth while fighting the effects of adverse conditions.



Macro-Sorb® — a true systemic... it's new... it's unique... and nothing else works quite like it!

Macro-Sorb® truly can make the difference.



"The summer of 1995 was one of the worst on record in the Mid-Atlantic region. Twenty eight consecutive days over 90° during a period of thirty straight days without rain. Talk about stress!!! We added Macro-Sorb® to our normal IPM program and experienced little or no turf loss — fairways, tees or greens. I'm convinced that Macro-Sorb® made the difference."

*Geoffrey R. Blind
Golf Course Superintendent
Hillendale Country Club
Phoenix, Maryland*

nutramax

LABORATORIES, INC.

AGRICULTURAL DIVISION

Baltimore, Maryland 21236

Call 1-800-925-5187 for more information.