

BRIEFS



MATRIX PROPERTIES JOIN AUDUBON

JAMESBURG, N.J. — Forsgate Country Club and its sister clubs Commonwealth National Golf Club of Horsham, Pa., and Ashbourne Country Club of Cheltenham, Pa., have joined the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System (ACSS). Matrix-Stafford Hospitality, a management and consulting group based in Cranbury, manages all three clubs. The program will be coordinated by superintendents Bob Ribbans at Forsgate, Larry Schlippert at Commonwealth and Mark Yates at Ashbourne.

GOLEMBIEWSKI GETS MUSSER AWARD

The Musser International Turfgrass Foundation has named Ohio State University graduate student Robert C. Golembiewski the recipient of its 1997

Award of Excellence, which includes an \$8,500 scholarship toward Golembiewski's doctoral studies. A graduate of Michigan

State, with a master's degree in botany and plant pathology, he is working on a thesis titled "Characterization of creeping bentgrass using randomly amplified polymorphic DNA (RAPD) markers."

MSU GETS CRUMB RUBBER PATENT

DENVER, Colo. — The US Patent Office on May 1 issued a major patent to Michigan State University for using crumb rubber as a turf top dressing. Its exclusive licensee, JaiTire Industries in Denver, has been marketing the product under the trade name of Crown III for two years through its national dealer network. The product has been installed at more than 500 locations across the country — including many high-profile golf courses, collegiate and prep athletic fields, and professional sports stadiums.

NICKLAUS CITES SCOTT LEWIS

LAS VEGAS — Scott Lewis, superintendent of golf course maintenance here at SouthShore Golf Club at Lake Las Vegas Resort, has been named the Nicklaus Superintendent of the Year. Lewis was selected from superintendents tending to 138 Nicklaus-designed courses, as well as those managed by the Nicklaus golf course maintenance company, Golf Turf. "The honor says a lot about Scott's talent and ability. It is nice to see him recognized by his peers. It also speaks volumes about the talents of his first-class staff," said Harry Turner, vice president of operations at Lake Las Vegas Resort.

Nationwide test greens to yield results this year

By MARK LESLIE

FAR HILLS, N.J. — Inspired by the old pie greens of the 1930s and '40s, three national organizations expect to plant test putting greens at 16 golf courses and have initial data readings by the end of the year.

"We're excited by this," said Jim Snow, national director of the U.S. Golf Association (USGA) Green Section, which is sponsoring the project along with the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) and National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP). "One of the things superintendents have wanted is data from variety trials that was gathered under golf course conditions. For whatever

reasons, even if they are cut daily, most sites are not maintained that way. They don't get the traffic you get on a green.

"There have been some prominent grasses over the years that looked great in tests but failed miserably under field conditions."

With \$15,000 in funding each, the participating golf courses will build practice greens, which will be used as test plots for bentgrasses or Bermudagrasses. As of mid-May, 17 bents and 12 Bermudas were expected to be included, although that number will change.



Four courses will test the Bermudas, a dozen will test bents, according to NTEP National Director Kevin Morris.

"We're trying to get the bentgrass greens built this summer and established this fall," Snow said. "We can begin taking data this fall regarding establishment rate and other things. Next year will be the first full year."

The Bermudagrass greens will be planted next spring.

Professors at nearby universities will be charged with keeping the data.

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GETTING OPEN-READY

Latshaw faces compelling challenge at Congressional

By MARK LESLIE

BETHESDA, Md. — When the U.S. Open begins on June 12 at Congressional Country Club here, it will mark the beginning of the end of the three longest years of Paul R. Latshaw's life.

"It will be a letdown, actually," said the Congressional superintendent. "It's been a three-year grind." For three years, every day has pointed toward 96 hours in 1997 when the venerable old course becomes the focal point of golf for the world.

Latshaw had tackled the rigors of maintaining Augusta National for Masters competitions in 1986-89 and of preparing Oakmont (Pa.) Country Club for PGA and U.S. Open events in 1978 and 1983. And his arrival at Congressional was akin to University of Kentucky coach Rick Pitino taking control of the woeful Boston Celtics last month. The golf world looked on in anticipation.

"These were the most publicized greens in the world," Latshaw said of Congressional's putting surfaces, which were in sad condition but for reasons no one could fathom.

"Everyone said, 'They're never going to make it; forget saving

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A work crew performs its daily chores as the day (June 12) draws near for the long-awaited 1997 U.S. Open at Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Md.



Paul R. Latshaw



RECYCLING MADE EASY

Wood chippers have a place on the golf course, especially where the club is dedicated to recycling. At Longaberger Golf Club in Hanover, Ohio, which will open in 1998, wood chips will be used for paper products. See On the Green article on page 23.



Texas A&M program a model for clubs considering Audubon

COLLEGE STATION, Texas — A unique program at Texas A&M University is helping more than 70 courses in Texas, such as Champions Country Club, to pursue certification as wildlife sanctuaries under a program of the Audubon International and the United States Golf Association.

Lake Side Country Club in Houston is the first fully-certified course in Texas, according to Audubon ecologist Marla Briggs. Some 2,000 courses in the United States and Canada have paid a \$100 membership fee with the intent to pursue the program, and 95 have completed the strenuous, six-part program since its inception in 1991, she said.

But the unique boost in Texas, where long sunny days have sparked a passion for golf played on some 900 courses,

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Latshaw's ready for U.S. Open

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those greens,' Latshaw recalled. "But our goal is: We can do it."

"Dad likes and wants challenges, and this has been the greatest in his whole career," said Latshaw's son Paul B., superintendent at another high-profile facility, Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, Pa. "There were a lot of problems there [Congressional] and he has started to turn the place around. Last week I was there and the greens were the best I've ever seen them."

"Dad is like the Michael Jordan of superintendents. He's in a class of his own. You think you do a good job and then visit his course. It's humbling."

When architect Rees Jones was hired to renovate the 70-year-old Devereux Emmet-designed Congressional for the 1995 U.S. Senior Open and this month's U.S. Open, the condition of the greens was first brought to national attention. Fairway contouring and other restoration went well, but the greens reportedly remained a dismal problem.

Many experts, including agronomists from various universities, couldn't resolve the issue. And while other clubs

faced with this situation decide to rebuild the greens entirely, the membership here declined to do that.

"We never did pinpoint the problem," Latshaw said. "There is nothing we have not tried. We changed a lot of programs around to find something that would work. We did a lot of aerification, modified the existing root zone, and got very involved in biological-type maintenance, adding natural organics for fertility."

After a lot of experimentation on the all-sand greens, Latshaw settled on a program adding Nature Safe, humates and soil amendments to build up cation exchange capacity. "We found that combination of three was the best," he said. "I firmly believe you need organic matter. We used a lot of foliar feeding with trace elements. And we are tissue-testing regularly, almost weekly now."

Paul B. said from his Pennsylvania office that his father, in the Washington, D.C., area, is "living in the armpit of the world to grow grass."

Dad is like the Michael Jordan of superintendents. He's in a class of his own.'

Paul B. Latshaw

could do it. I'm going to do it." Come June 12, he said, he will find out if he is right.

...

Attesting to the popularity of golf, when the 35,000 to 40,000 daily spectators arrive at Congressional there will be 37 hospital-ity tents. "At Oakmont in 1983," Latshaw said, "we had six or seven tents... This dwarfs the PGA and other events I was at."

The major course conditioning factor during the Open is weather, he said. "If it's not raining, you can spend some time watching. But if it rains, you have to mulch and sand the crosswalks and move people around. Safety is an obligation."

Management at Congressional, he said, did a exceptional job cleaning out a wooded area to make the spectator area at the 17th and 18th holes, "the two finest in golf to watch."

In his 32 years as a superintendent, the Pennsylvania State University graduate said, the profession has become much more mechanized. "We have much more play now. People really use the facilities. They come out early and play late. They used to not play after mid-afternoon. That has brought a lot of change. We have some great aerification equipment, but you need a chance to use it. That's the problem: working around the golfers."

"He's made so many changes in geographical areas. At Wilmington [CC in Delaware] we never thought of these things. He went from Pittsburgh [Oakmont (Pa.) CC], one of better places in the U.S. to grow grass, to Augusta [National in Georgia] where the heat makes it very difficult to grow bentgrass, then to D.C."

Indeed, the greens the pros will be putting on in the Open were originally bentgrass but have been taken over by poa annua, which now covers 60 to 70 percent of the turf, Latshaw said.

In the midst of the battle for the greens, Latshaw has refurbished all the bunkers. His crew, which will expand to 50 for Open week, removed all the sand, installed new drainage and liner and brought in new sand, completing the job in May.

"I accomplished more here in 3 years than at any other time in my life," he said.

In the midst of the job, Latshaw had the chance to leave for at least one more lucrative position. Why did he turn it down?

"Pride," he said. "I wanted to prove I



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