**BUSMAN'S HOLIDAY**

A number of golfing superintendents tried their hands at the new Desert Pines Golf Club while visiting Las Vegas. The time was perfect: Desert Pines opened its Perry Dye-designed 18-hole course and state-of-the-art practice range in early February.

McLaughlin Group panelists clash over golf course benefits

By PETER BLAIS

LAS VEGAS — While generally agreeing golf courses and nature can co-exist, panelists from television's The McLaughlin Group and an Arizona real-estate developer disagreed on how environmentally friendly the golf industry has actually been.

"Fifty percent of the wetlands in the United States have been destroyed and golf courses have done some of that damage," McLaughlin panelist Eleanor Clift said during the Environmental Session at the recent GCSAA International Conference and Show. "Golf courses can help the environment, and there are appropriate ways to build them. With the water problems we're facing, that [building responsibly] is the only way you can do a course today."

Clift, who commended GCSAA's efforts to recognize superintendents who enhanced the environment, was generally under fire from fellow McLaughlin panelist Fred Barnes, developer Kim Richards of The Athens

Group and moderator Bruce Williams, the GCSAA's immediate past resident.

"Many environmentalists don't want any development, period," Barnes said.

Richards pointed out that 970 million acres of the United States are devoted to agriculture, an industry that uses far more water and pesticides per acre than the roughly 15,000 U.S. golf courses that cover a relatively small 1.5 million acres nationwide.

"The problem is one of perception," Richards said. "We've found that when we sit down with reasonable people at government agencies we can work out solutions. Unfortunately, it's the extremists who show up at the public meetings and receive the news coverage."

Richards pointed to Ventana Canyon in Tucson, Ariz., as an example of what can result from overzealous environmental wrangling. In response to environmental pressure, Richards said developers built a target course at Ventana. Unfortunately, golfers couldn't hit the small-ish fairways and frequently ventured into the desert, where they inadvertently killed cactus while retrieving their wayward shots.

"We ended up replanting grass in the desert areas," Richards said. "It was a noble effort that failed."

Barnes responded to the topic of over-regulation in the golf industry by noting the more conservative Congress of recent years has required new environmental laws pass a strict cost/benefit analysis. And yet, water and air regulations EPA is proposing are too expensive for most businesses to comply with and provide no major improvements to the environment.

"Unfortunately, if you're against the regulations, then you're characterized as being against their purpose," Richards lamented. "I'm very concerned about the environment we'll leave for my 10-year-old. But many laws were passed during the 1970s and 1980s that are simply too extreme."

"The development business is extremely over-regulated and these

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Suess comes out of the pack to win GCSAA Championship

LAS VEGAS — Michael Suess, golf course superintendent at King's Mountain (N.C.) Golf Course, drilled a 15-foot birdie putt on the final hole of regulation to win the championship flight of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) '97 Golf Championship.

Suess shot a 3-over par 75 at Sunrise Country Club to go along with his first-day, tournament-leading 5-over par 77 for a two-day total of 152. His final putt gave him a one-stroke victory over William Martin, CGCS at Victoria Club, Hemet, Calif. The top round of the 120-participant championship flight was recorded by Tim Scott, golf course superintendent at Stony Creek Golf Course, Addison, Ill., with a 71 in the final round at Sunrise.

The entire tournament field included 720 golfers in the members-only event played at six courses in the area: Pauite Resort-Nu Wav Kaiv and Tav ai Kaiv courses, Las Vegas Hilton Country Club, Badlands Golf Club, Sunrise Country Club and Wildhorse Golf Club.

Also conducted was a team competition, with the Scottish Trophy (low gross) going to the Carolinas "A" team of Suess, Mitch Clodfelter, Cowans Ford Country Club in Stanley, N.C.; William Lewis, Brierwood Country Club, Shallotte, N.C.; and Steven Campbell, Ironwood Golf Club, Greenville, N.C.

The Frank Lamphier Trophy (low net) was captured by California "7" team of David Fleming, CGCS, El Tamarindo Golf Club, El Cajon, Calif.; Ronald Nolf, CGCS, Vista Valley Country Club, Vista, Calif.; Michael Pifferini, La Riconada Country Club, Capitola, Calif.; and Blake Swint, Castlewood Country Club, Pleasanton, Calif.

This year marks the 47th year of the GCSAA Golf Championship, presented in partnership with The Toro Company. Toro helps to staff the event, contributes tee prizes and hosts numerous social events for participants. The company will also make donations to The GCSAA Foundation in the name of individual flight and

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Spodnik wins Scotts Tradition

LAS VEGAS — The Scotts Company has named John J. Spodnik its recipient of the 1997 Scotts Tradition of Excellence Award.

The Scotts Tradition of Excellence Award recognizes outstanding achievements among golf course superintendents who are dedicated to advancing the science of course maintenance and making golf the best it can be. Spodnik was named recipient of the fourth annual peer-nominated award here at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's (GCSAA) 68th International Golf Course Conference and Show.

Spodnik retired in 1995 follow-

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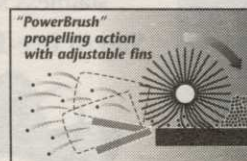
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By MARK LESLIE

Zontek accepts Rossi Award

LAS VEGAS — Declaring that “agronomists like myself are comfortable working behind the scenes,” Stanley Zontek nevertheless came forward here to accept the Don A. Rossi Humanitarian Award from the Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBA).

Presented by President Paul Eldredge of Wadsworth Golf Construction Co. during the GCBA's annual banquet at the International Golf Course Conference and Show, the Rossi Award is named for the

organization's former executive director. Zontek is the longest-tenured employee of the U.S. Golf Association (USGA) Green Section and directs its Mid-Atlantic Region.

“The USGA has been the vehicle that brought me here this evening,” Zontek said. “My thanks to a great organization and great people.”

He also thanked his wife, Marty, and

son, Christopher, and said of his hosts: “I have always had a special bond with golf course builders.”

Zontek said of Dr. Joe Duich, who taught him at Penn State University: “Dr. Duich set a standard of hard work, common sense, practicality and honesty. I have built my life around [those characteristics].”

Citing Don Rossi as “a nice man,” Zontek said, “There are fewer and fewer nice people

in this world, and to be recognized as a humanitarian is truly an honor.”

•••

Sam Sakocius of SAJO Construction, Inc. in Richmond, Texas, and Allan MacCurrach III of MacCurrach Golf Construction, Inc. in Jacksonville, Fla., were presented the Golf Course Builder of the Year and Small Builder of the Year awards at the banquet.

Both men saluted their families and their crews in accepting the *Golf Course News*-sponsored awards.

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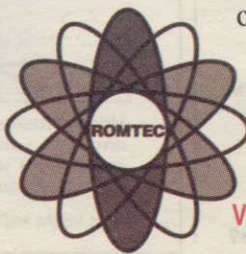


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Scotts honors Spodnik's achievements

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ing 35 years at Westfield Country Club in Westfield Center, Ohio, and a career spanning 45 years in the golf industry. During his time as a superintendent, Spodnik trained more than 25 turfgrass students, many of whom became superintendents themselves.

Spodnik remains very active in the profession as well as in his community. He participates in seminars at local, regional and national conferences and makes presentations to community organizations. He served as president of the GCSAA in 1969, and has been secretary/treasurer of the Northern Ohio Turf Foundation for 35 consecutive years. Presently, he is treasurer of the Musser International Turfgrass Foundation, serves on the Northern Ohio GCSA Employment Relations Committee and the GCSAA Historical Preservation Committee.

The Scotts Tradition of Excellence Award is not Spodnik's first recognition from the industry. He received the McLaren Award from the Northern Ohio GCSA in 1981, the GCSAA Distinguished Service Award in 1994, and the Ohio Turf Federation Man of the Year Award in 1983 and 1986.

Throughout his career, Spodnik has championed sound environmental practices on the course. He was an originator of programs now considered “Integrated Pest Management” and also developed inventive recycling rinse pads and pesticide storage areas.

Twenty of his peers nominated Spodnik to receive the Scotts Tradition of Excellence Award. In his nomination of Spodnik, Robert Mitchell, 1994 Scotts Tradition of Excellence Award recipient and executive director of golf and grounds at The Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs, W.Va., said, “All who have had the pleasure of playing either of his courses will attest to the greatest condition of both and the minute attention to detail, setting them apart from other courses.”

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