

Chemical exhibitors pump up the volume

Making noise is perhaps the primary objective of exhibitors at the annual Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) show. By that I mean creating some buzz on the show floor. You know what I'm saying: People talking about, making noise regarding a particular company or its products.



Hal Phillips, editor

Without a doubt, chemical companies made the most noise in Las Vegas. This industry sector was busy on several different fronts, from new product releases, to division realignments, to distribution relationships.

Who made the most noise? It's a toss-up between Novartis — the newly merged entity comprising what were formerly Ciba and Sandoz — and Zeneca, which rolled out its highly anticipated new broad-spectrum fungicide, Heritage.

The Heritage buzz was enormous (see stories page 59). Testing has shown the product to be effective on just about everything except dollar spot. Indeed, the prospects are so good for Heritage that companies were lining up to distribute it on Zeneca's behalf. Not just anyone, mind you. But The Scotts Company, United Horticultural Supply, Lesco, Terra, Wilbur-Ellis and others. Clearly, this is a product to watch.

Another new product creating a stir, though it has yet to receive Environmental Protection Agency approval, is Mach2 — an insecticide born of the collaboration between American Cyanamid Co. and Rohm and Haas (GCN February '97). Principals in the joint venture, called RohMid, held a news conference in Las Vegas to herald the coming of Mach2, which has tested very well in the field. When EPA signs off sometime this spring, Mach2 will go directly to market.

Novartis made noise by distilling the message behind its mega-merger, which was announced last spring and finalized Jan. 1. While Novartis is Latin for "new skills," the company brings a plethora of existing skills to bear. At a news conference held in Las Vegas, Novartis formally introduced its new Head of Specialty Products, Thomas McGowan; its Director of Turf & Ornamental Products, former Sandoz employee Gene Hintze; its National Sales Manager, former Ciba employee Jose Milan; and its new Market Manager for Golf, Jerry

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We need another dead-ball era

Thump. Thump. Thump. The drum beat escalates, calling for a special less-juiced golf ball for the Tour. It is a call that has ramifications for all in the golf industry — a call that would "protect the integrity of our older golf courses," according to Denis Griffiths, president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects.

Was it Jack Nicklaus or someone else who began the cry for a special Tour golf ball — one that reduces the distance, say, 10 percent? At Pinehurst last spring Nicklaus declared that a 10-percent reduction in distance would return a course to the way it was meant to be played.

Now others are banging the drum. It has become a hue and cry. In Las Vegas in February the beat went on:

- Ben Crenshaw: "I'm close to agreeing with Jack. We've got to do something with the golf ball... We're at a critical red line about a lot of things with equipment."

- Griffiths: "We can look at USGA statistics all day long. But if you look at black-and-white, real-world examples of what's going on, I don't think the statistics support the way the Tour is playing."

Griffiths lamented the fact that Tour pros oftentimes need not hit their mid-irons because they can drive today's ball so much farther than was possible when the grand old classic golf courses were designed.

"Take a par-4 from 1970 on which you hit a driver-7 iron, or even driver-wedge," he said. "In 1970 the average Tour player hit the driver around 260 yards and the wedge 115 yards. That's 375 yards. Today, they hit a driver an average 280 yards. Put a wedge in their hands at 135 yards, and you're at 415. How do we put a medium iron in these guys' hands? You have to have a 500-yard hole."

Historically, a shot of under 100 yards demanded finesse — determining how much of a swing to take. It was one of the toughest shots in golf.

But in 1997, pros are carrying three or four wedges, pared off so that they can be played with a full swing from 80 to 135 yards out.

A Georgia guy, Griffiths used a NASCAR analogy. Here it goes: "Car racing and golf are very similar. They require ultimate concentration. The first thing you have to do is beat the track you're on, or the golf course you're on. The second thing is to beat your competitor. In 1969, about 175 miles per hour won the pole position at Daytona. That speed climbed — very much like our [golf's]



Mark Leslie, managing editor

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Letters

A SPIKELESS BUT HARDLY TOOTHLESS REBUTTAL

To the editor:

Mr. Crist's comments on the spikeless revolution taking place now in golf ["They wouldn't let me wear my spikes, your honor", GCN January 1997] are both uneducated and that of the ambulance chasers that are lurking everywhere now.

Apparently he hasn't read about the gentleman member of a country club that just recently was awarded a large amount of money because he tripped with metal spikes and fell off the front walk of the clubhouse after consuming eight drinks. Why are cart paths finished rough or grooved? It is so golfers with metal spikes don't slip.

Furthermore, courses are not mandating "softspikes", they are mandating that metal spikes may not be worn. I think he is right in his second paragraph where he stated that he is "getting old," meaning he is unwilling to change. Of the centuries that golf has been played, spikes have only been around since the 1920s. And if he is so old he should check with an orthope-

dic doctor, who would probably recommend that spikeless golf shoes will save his feet and ankles in the future.

And to end, the traction of metal spikes are no better than tennis shoes — if you would take the lunge out of your swing.

Corey Eastwood, CGCS
Bakersfield, Calif.

GCN LINKED TO NGF DIRECTORY

To the editor:

I am happy to inform you that your company's Web site has been linked to your listing in the National Golf Foundation's online 1997 Directory of Golf. This new industry-wide directory is available on the Internet via GolfWeb (www.golfweb.com) and the NGF's own home page (www.ngf.org). Visitors to either site are now able to simply click on your Web address, which is a part of your company listing, and have direct access to your own Web site.

The reason behind this initiative is to provide NGF members with increased value. Since putting the Directory on GolfWeb's site, we've learned that GolfWeb's traffic has increased significantly.

We hope you will also benefit from increased traffic to your site and that this translates to more business for your company.

As always, we are grateful for your support of the NGF, and I welcome your input on how we can continue to improve our products, services and member benefits.

Barry S. Frank
Vice President,
Membership Services
National Golf Foundation
Jupiter, Fla.

FROM THE CYBER MAIL BAG

Ed. — The Golf Course News website, up and running for two months now, has received considerable praise from Internet-savvy superintendents. Below are a sampling of their comments. Have a look for yourself at:

www.golfcoursenews.com

Congrats to your mag and the wonderful new Website on the Internet. As a golf course superintendent in Fulton Ill., at Fulton Country Club, it is a pleasure to read such a fine magazine on the goings on in the golf course business. In reading your latest mag

I found your new website and was thoroughly impressed with layout and content. Keep up the good work and remember to think green!!!!

A. Simmons
Fulton, Ill.
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I'm a golf course superintendent, just new to the web. I'm totally impressed with the job you did on the *Golf Course News* web site! As the newspaper itself is broad and diverse, your work exceeds it! As only the web can! Great job, keep up the great work. I'm currently seeking to educate myself on the environmental and OSHA laws that apply to new golf courses in Vermont. Any suggestions? I'm going searching... thanks for any or everything.

Mary P. Knaggs
knag0002@gold.tc.umn.edu.

Great! I just purchased my new office computer and added *Golf Course News* to my "favorite places" folder... Good timing. Nice addition to a good publication!

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Leslie comment

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distance has gone up — so that in 1987 or '88 the pole position was 210-211 mph, and we had several horrific wrecks.

"So NASCAR's sanctioning agency came back with the restrictor plate. This year the pole position was 189 mph. And it has made the sport better."

In golf it would make the Merions, Pinehurst #2s and Medinahs play the way they were meant to be played for the pros. The lesser hitters among the population — which is 99-plus percent of golfers — would

retain the long-distance balls which, after all, only help us regain the yardage lost to ball roll because of today's heavy irrigation.

Now that Nicklaus, Crenshaw, Griffiths and I have weighed in on this subject, perhaps some of the heavy hitters in the industry will come forward and push for the less-juiced Tour ball.

"The limbo pole is probably as low as it can go." That according to GCSAA Immediate Past President Bruce Williams, speaking about the care of turfgrass on golf courses. He was joining Ben Crenshaw in a press conference prior to Crenshaw's ac-

ceptance of the GCSAA's Old Tom Morris Award. Crenshaw agreed with Williams, adding: "Without a doubt, the most important person on the golf course is the person who takes care of it."

So, you'd like to be a golf course architect? Dana Fry, new partner of Mike Hurdzan (see story page 44), would not dispell any of the aura of the job. Fry determined that since he couldn't make a living on the Tour, he'd find another job in the industry, and circumstances led him into design. "To this day," he said, "I've never had a 'job.' My life is a continuous adventure, from one place to the other."

Tax-exempt bonds

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periods of time, which should lead to more efficiency by reducing manager turnover and fees — and by encouraging managers to make capital expenditures whose value extends beyond the short contract term. The manager benefits from a longer contract term (up to 15 years) and more stable projected compensation. Additionally, the new rules permit a one-time productivity reward which will not disqualify the contract if it provides a stated dollar amount based upon revenue increases or expense reductions (but not both). As an example, the manager may be rewarded upon attaining a desired benchmark, such as a number of rounds played.

Three compensation/term formulas permitted under current law continue to be permissible:

1) At least half of the total compensation is a fixed, periodic sum (a stated dollar amount for a specified period of time) with a maximum 5-year term that is cancelable after three years without penalty or cause.

2) Per-unit compensation (for example, a stated dollar amount for each round played) with a maximum 3-year term that is cancelable after two years.

3) Unlimited variable compensation (based upon a percentage of either revenues or expenses) during the initial start-up period for the facility which cannot exceed two years and must be cancelable after the first year.

The new rules permit two longer periods, but limit their value by requiring a higher percentage of total compensation that must be fixed and periodic:

1) Fifteen years with 95 percent of the total compensation as a periodic, fixed fee.

2) Or 10 years with at least 80 percent as a periodic, fixed fee.

Importantly, neither of the longer terms requires the cancellation-without-penalty clause at the end of the third (or second) year contained in present law. Also, it remains permissible to increase the fixed fee automatically according to a specified, objective, external standard, such as the Consumer Price Index, which is not linked to the output or efficiency of the property.

While current contracts may be renegotiated to reflect these more liberal provisions, the period that the contract has actually been in force must be reflected in determining the maximum remaining term of the contract. For example, a contract that commenced two years ago cannot be extended for more than 13 years. Parties to management contracts now will be able to select whichever of the five compensation formulas that best suits their circumstances.



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