

# Sugarloaf's Ed Michaud: A man of two worlds

By MARK LESLIE

CARRABASSETT, Maine — Ed Michaud may just transform the phrase “jack of all trades, master of none” into “master of both.” The Sugarloaf Golf Club superintendent has kept his course in the No. 1 ranking in this state for years while gaining each season on the nation's best. And last September, Snow Country magazine named the Michaud-designed terrain park at Sugarloaf USA Ski Area the best resort park in North America, while ranking Sugarloaf one of the top five resorts on the continent for snowboarding.

From the world where he for nine years has maintained the “bunkers,” “berms” and “greens” of Sugarloaf Golf Club, Michaud five winters ago began sculpting Sugarloaf USA's snowboarding world of “pipes,” “parks,” “table tops” and “pyramids.”

His reputation for keeping the golf course in top shape despite the battles with heavy and lingering snows may already have been overshadowed by his wintertime work, where local boarders and skiers revere his artistry and where Sugarloaf owner American Ski Co. (ASC) is sending him around the country preparing slopes for national snowboarding championships.

Instead of carting around hose, plug-cutters and other greenkeeping paraphernalia behind his Truckster, Michaud is operating a Snowcat with a Halfpipe Grinder mounted on the front, or dragging a mammoth Pipe Dragon behind a Bombardier groomer.

In addition to building Sugarloaf's giant slalom and half-pipe for the only Grand Prix event on the East Coast the

last two years and the Olympic tryout this winter, he built the pipe at ASC's Attitash Mountain, the terrain park at The Canyons in Utah, and “carved the pipe” at Sunday River [in Bethel] for the National Snowboarding Championships at the end of March. Ski Wentworth in Nova Scotia, which is not even an ASC slope, hired Michaud to build its terrain park and pipe.

“I was one ecstatic person,” said Michaud about learning of the Number One ranking his terrain park received last fall. But it was surprising that it came before his golf-course rating.

“My goal when I took over as superintendent [in 1989] was to make the top 100 list in 10 years,” Michaud said of the Robert Trent Jones Jr.-designed golf course. “I knew we had the track. Granted, not the amenities, but we had the layout. Those who play here go away shaking their heads. They can't get over it. We're now 23rd in America's upscale public courses, and *Golf Magazine's* top 100 list. But not *Golf Digest's* top 100.

“Some courses in the top 100 list are ranked behind us on top 75 upscale list [including Bay Hill and Golden Horseshoe]. The problem is we need 24 raters to rate the course before we can qualify to make the top 100 list.”

Michaud takes solace in the fact that Men's Journal last year listed Sugarloaf Golf Club the No. 1 course in America “Remote But Worth the Effort.”

While seeking recognition for his course, Michaud is enjoying the challenges of his two jobs and meeting the increasing demands for perfection at both.

“The snowboarding is a little more



Ed Michaud, above left, is all smiles when snowboarders soar over the 'hits' he has created on Sugarloaf USA's nationally top-ranked terrain park, above right.



fun, but the golf is more satisfying,” he said.

“You can get really creative making the snowboarding pipes and parks. You look at the flow of the land, the width of the trail and the pitch, and think about what kind of feature will fit. It's a lot like golf. An architect tries to use the lay of the land rather than fight it, to blend it in so it looks like it belongs there. I want the tabletop to look like it belongs there.

“I'd like to get my hands on a 200-acre farm and see what kind of a golf course I could build. Something tells me it would be a little unorthodox.”

Looking at the pitch of the land, Michaud determines how fast a snowboarder or skier will go down through a section so he can build a “hit” — or feature — accordingly. “Then you can develop a hit like a tabletop, or teetop spine, or flat-top spine, or double-roller, bank turns, pyramids — whatever your imagination comes up with,” he said, breaking into his wintertime vernacular.

How does the park feel compared to the course when his work is done?



“Aesthetics isn't as big in the park, but it's very important first thing in the morning when you're standing there and it's all groomed perfect — no chunks or ridges. Whether transition is perfect or not it feels like it's riding wonderful because it

looks so appetizing,” Michaud said. “It's the same idea of the aesthetics on the golf course when you're the first one out there, and it's all striped up and everything looks crisp and sharp. If it looks good and you get that good first impression aesthetically, then it plays well. Whether it plays any different or not doesn't matter, because in your mind it is playing better because it looks so nice.”

Maintaining an edge with his two jobs is a balancing act for Michaud.

“This time of the year [mid-March],” he said, “I feel the pressure of getting behind on the golf course job. I haven't had time to shop for the best price on equipment. I come down here [maintenance complex] April 1, a month before the crew begins. So, it's difficult. I could be busy enough with planning, working on the computer and getting

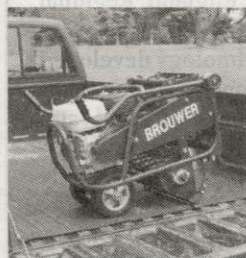
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## Tifton Lab earns A2LA accreditation

TIFTON, Ga. — Tifton Physical Soil Testing Laboratory, Inc. became an accredited laboratory on Feb. 4 by the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) for technical competence in the field of Geotechnical (Putting Green Materials) Testing.

The A2LA is a non-profit, scientific, membership organization dedicated to the formal recognition of testing laboratories and related organizations which have achieved a demonstrated level of competence. Accreditation demonstrates ongoing competency by the lab in per-

forming the required tests specified by the U.S. Golf Association (USGA) for Putting Green Construction Recommendations.

The USGA recommends that only A2LA accredited laboratories be used for testing and analyzing materials for building greens according to specific guidelines.

The company's president and owner, Powell Gaines, served on the review panel and offered much technical expertise to the USGA in writing the 1993 revision of the USGA Green Construction Recommendations.



The 3rd hole at Sugarloaf Golf Club, Maine's top-ranked golf course, under Ed Michaud's care.

## Focus on Michaud

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information most of the winter. It would be nice to work 30 or 40 hours a week during the winter after working all those hours in the summertime, and have some time to myself.

"But I do enjoy the snowboard end of it. Those kids are so grateful for whatever you do for them. I swear I could just push up a pile of snow and drop my tiller to smooth it out, and they'd think it was great."

Nevertheless, "the more you deliver, the more the guests expect the next year," he said. "Instead of grooming the pipe three days a week, now they want it groomed five days a week. Next year it may be every day.

"Basically each year the challenge now is to keep wowing them, keep dazzling them."

"We wrestle every year with that on the golf course," he added. "They expect a great-conditioned course, smooth cart paths and everything we've done so far."

The new "wow factor" this year, he expects, will be a GPS (Global Positioning System) on the golf carts.

Which of the two "careers" came first is hard to figure. Michaud earned a college degree in forestry, then found himself running heavy equipment.

During the winters for many years, he worked as a groomer and became manager of the Sugarloaf USA grooming department.

When Jones and golf course builder Greenscape started to build Sugarloaf Golf Club, Michaud was on an earth-moving machine. Superintendent of construction Fred Downs liked

Michaud's work ethic and hired him to help finish the golf course, installing the irrigation system, seeding and as a shaper.

When the work was done, Michaud stayed on to operate the complex irrigation system, and when superintendent George Howe left in 1989, Michaud was hired as head superintendent. He attended the University of Massachusetts' Winter School for Turfgrass Managers and dropped his management position in the grooming department, although continuing to work for it.

Still, the two jobs overlap.

"Last year we skied until June 1," he said, "and we had two weekends of 'Ski and Tee,' so imagine what kind of shape I would have been in running both those departments."

Which of the jobs does Michaud prefer?

"Both have good and bad points," he said. "The snowboarding job in the past was more relaxed and the expectations were less; but as I get more involved in national events and national championships, the pressure is on and the expectations are about the same as with golfers.

"The snow is not living. If it gets icy, you can push snow on top of it, groom out, and it's fixed. You don't have a soil profile and micro-organisms working for or against you. Snow doesn't get thirsty or sick... You don't worry about an outbreak of snow mold.

"On the other hand, you don't get the feeling of satisfaction that you get from looking at the golf course at peak foliage. It may be the best pipe on the East Coast, but it's not alive and living and depending on you to feed and water it and give it medicine when it's sick."

## Softspikes continues suit parade

ROCKVILLE, Md.—Softspikes, Inc., has filed separate lawsuits against four manufacturers of alternative golf cleats, claiming violation of intellectual properties against patents the company holds in Canada. The four manufacturers are Green Keeper, Flatspikes, Smart Spikes and Gripper Golf Cleats.

"These lawsuits are a continua-

tion of an aggressive position the Softspikes, Inc., has taken, and will continue to take to vigorously protect our intellectual properties," said CEO Jon Hyman.

Softspikes has 12 issued patents in the United States, with 12 more patents pending. In addition to Canada, Softspikes has other patents issued in the United Kingdom, Japan and Australia.

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