

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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INSIDE

Identify and Supply

First Tee Executive Director Tod Leiweke delivers State of the Program Address to the industry 11

Irrigation & Pump Stations

The key to a solid agronomic program is great irrigation. Here's the latest news and product info 27



Photo by Bob Spivak

THRONSON HAS DESIGNS ON ARCHITECTURE

Eagle Crest Resort superintendent John Thronson moonlights as a golf course designer. His latest project was as construction supervisor at Running Y Ranch in Oregon, a Palmer Golf Design Co. layout. See story page 19.

COURSE MAINTENANCE

- Michigan pilots self-audit program 15
- Heat, drought drub the South 23
- Birdwatching Open shows course diversity 24

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

- Q&A with Hall-of-Famer Gary Player 31
- Weiskopf eyes Michigan opening 35
- International report: from Ireland to China 38-40

COURSE MANAGEMENT

- Reebok's Fireman buys mgt./brokerage firm 4
- AG-UK takes St. Mellion 41
- Management firm telephone listings 45

SUPPLIER BUSINESS

- Toro partners with Carnoustie 47
- St. Andrews links up with Barenbrug 47
- Griffin ready with global team 48

Medallist, Troon launch Australia operations

By PETER BLAIS

SYDNEY, Australia—An Australian development company has joined forces with an American-based management firm to form an international course development and management company that will also call on the expertise of famed professional golfer Greg Norman.

Medallist Golf Developments, a golf course and residential development company with offices in Australia and the United States, and Troon Golf, a high-end management/development firm based in Scottsdale, Ariz.,

Continued on page 46



Photo by Scott Bessette

Assistant superintendents Ron Kugler, driving, and Brian Coates check the progress of a wetlands fire at LPGA Golf Course's three-hole practice facility in Daytona, Fla.

Fla. fires: Golf escapes catastrophe

By MARK LESLIE

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — With a wildfire leaping across LPGA Boulevard here and licking at his doorstep, LPGA International Golf Course superintendent Scott Bessette turned the irrigation heads on his new course toward the rough and flipped on the water.

When fire cut electricity to River Bend Golf Course in Ormond Beach, superintendent Bobby Gonzales couldn't turn on the sprinklers, but the course's fairways and greens

served as a fire break that may have saved a community of homes.

When a "wall of flames" jumped U.S. Route 1 and reached the 3rd and 4th holes at Matanzas Woods Golf Course in Palm Coast, the last two evacuees were superintendent Andy McGuire and Michael Fabrizio, director of golf maintenance and construction for Matanzas and Palm Coast Resort's four other golf courses, who kept the sprinklers going until the last

Continued on page 22



On Whistling Straits (#16 above): "In my lifetime I've never seen anything like this. Anyplace. Period." — Pete Dye (see pg. 31)

Abbott jumps into market with organic nematicide

By M. LEVANS

NORTH CHICAGO, Ill. — Abbott Laboratories' Chemical and Agricultural Products Division has officially entered the golf course market with the

recent release of its new biological nematicide, DiTera WDG.

According to Abbott — a manufacturer and marketer of nutritional, pharmaceutical, diagnostic, hospital and agricultural products that did more than \$11 billion in sales in 1997 — DiTera has been produced from a naturally occurring microorganism (*Myrothecium spp.*) isolated from a cyst nematode.

"The non-toxic profile of DiTera is its key differen-

Continued on page 49

PGF Development Track: Get the balance right

By M. LEVANS

PALM SPRINGS, Calif. — If you're ready to break ground on a new public course or put a new spin on a faithful old layout, this year's Development Track at Public Golf Forum was designed to help you save time and money in the process.

Six Development sessions are slated at this

Continued on page 54

By M. LEVANS

CHESAPEAKE, Va. — The city of Chesapeake is finding that as industry booms public golf is sure to follow.

In the last year, Chesapeake has seen Chubb Insurance, Panasonic, Canon and Volvo, among others, expand existing physical plants and add well over 1,000 employees to

Continued on page 54

Development Track

Continued from page 1

year's Public Golf Forum, the *Golf Course News*-sponsored business conference and expo for superintendents, owners, managers and developers of public-access golf facilities on October 26 & 27 at Rancho Las Palmas Marriott Resort in Palm Springs, Calif. The Development Track, Management Track and Maintenance track will run concurrently over the two days.

This year's Development Track topics will cover everything from getting started on a new project, course renovation, new design concepts, permitting issues, even ways to control speed of play before the first spade of dirt is turned. The goal is to inspire a well-balanced course, one that is accessible, affordable, sustainable and profitable.

But before ground is broken and public golf can move forward, it's first things first, according to Public Golf Forum first-day keynoter Dr. Michael Hurdzan.

"You have to target your market and look at people who've had successes and failures in that market," said Hurdzan. "You don't want to build a \$4 million golf course in a market that can only afford a \$3 million golf course. But if the market is loaded with \$2 million golf courses maybe building a \$4 million golf course would

put you into a market niche that works."

From there, it's a matter of setting time and money budgets and sticking to them — easier said than done, added Hurdzan. "It's easy to let emotions get in the way and overspend your market," he said.

If you don't have a lot of acreage, an alternative form of golf might be the ideal first step into public golf. Course architects Tom Clark and Brian Ault will share their insights on the pitch-'n-putt course as a natural lead-in to regulation course development.

"We've specialized in a lot of these projects in the Mid-Atlantic region due to site restrictions," said Clark. "When you get into major metropolitan areas, you often don't have 180 acres to work with. The pitch-'n-putt becomes the best way to bring golf to a region. There are all sorts of alternative golf designs. We've actually seen some of them become more financially successful than an 18-hole regulation course."

According to Don Knott, a golf course architect working with Robert Trent Jones II, the pace-of-play issue is one that demands a near-perfect balance of design and management needs.

"The first thing you need to consider is total length of a course, which includes not only playing length, but distances between the greens and the next tee," said Knott, who will present a session on

design's impact on pace of play at Public Golf Forum. "If you have the option, you want to keep green-to-tee distances down or keep the length of the course down."

Related to length is the golf car issue. This is where the course owner will have to make some critical decisions up front.

"From a designer's point of view, we need to work with course management to find out if they're going to make players stay on the paths. If so, the closer the path is to the high-play areas the more time we can reduce," said Knott.

"Access for all" is the driving factor behind the work of William Judah and Jerry Harris, principals of Harris-Judah Limited Liability Co., a golf course design and construction firm (see related story on cover). Judah and Harris will use Public Golf Forum to share the nuts and bolts of their "barrier-free" golf course design that went into Glencoe Greens in Chesapeake, Va.

"A lot of people can play golf if given the opportunity," said Judah. "There are many types of handicaps and our course will not just be barrier-free for the handicapped, but for the elderly, the visually impaired and youth of the region."

Offering ramps to tees and greens and establishing accessible fairway waste bunkers are just part of what makes up the concept of "barrier free."

"New equipment is making courses more accessible to more people. We want to make sure that our course allows all products available today to traverse the golf course without having obstacles," said Judah.

If you're looking to renovate the old track to keep up with the new development down the street, Bob Lohmann, the American Society of Golf Course Architects' current president and principal of the course architecture firm Lohmann Golf Designs, has a few key points outlined for his session on completing a successful renovation.

"If you can't close your course for the year, the you have to do this work late in the year or in off times, in order to keep revenues flowing," said Lohmann. "We often suggest you bite the bullet and do it all at once. In that case, you can add the extra marketing push for your course when it comes time to reopen."

For more information on Public Golf Forum, please contact United Publications at 800-441-6982 ext. 262.

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'Barrier Free' design

Continued from page 1

the city's population.

"Employers and employees of this caliber like and desire golf facilities geared toward every skill level," said Warren Harris, spokesman for the Chesapeake department of economic development. According to Harris, both parties are about to get public golf — and get it in spades.

At the beginning of the year, Chesapeake, a city of 195,000, had only three golf courses inside its 353 square miles. Two of those three are private. Within the next year, an additional 72 public-access holes are scheduled to open, 18 of which developers/designers Harris-Judah Limited Liability Co. are calling 'barrier-free.'

"We've designed Glencoe Greens for the average golfer, a 16-18 handicapper, but at the same time, we've done everything we can to incorporate a 'barrier-free' design to help accommodate the disabled golfer," said William Judah, a partner on the 120-acre, \$3.5 million project.

The 'barrier-free' concept is the brainchild of partner Jerry Harris. Harris, the husband of an occupational therapist, has been involved in easy-access remodeling of homes and decided that the ideas translate into course design.

"On every tee box and every green we're working in a naturally ramped-up area so everybody can get up there and play," said Harris. "We're also going to have a lot of waste bunkers that are easy to get in and out of." The waste bunkers will allow the disabled player to drive carts in and out.

"While you're designing you have to keep one thing in mind: If I can't get out of my cart how can I hit the ball?" said Judah.

Harris and Judah also plan to provide spotters for the sight impaired and eventually add a full-time certified day-care provider to accommodate busy parents.

"We'll have them set up the snack bar, move the tables, break out the toys and let the moms go out on the course. We'll give them walkie talkies if they need to check in with kids," said Judah.

Another development aimed to fill the public golf void is Cahoon Plantation, which has 45 holes under construction. On more than 500 acres, Cahoon Plantation will offer 27 regulation holes, designed by Tom Clark, and an 18-hole pitch-'n-putt course by end of 1998.

"This is the single most impressive golf complex in the area," said Clark. "There's a golf hungry population and they're getting a lot of resort traffic."

The site is an old farm, so Clark was faced with a treeless, totally flat piece of land to shape. "We had to move several hundred thousand yards of dirt to give it some form and shape," said Clark.

In order to give Cahoon a 'links' feel, Clark decided to go with bentgrass on tees, fairways and greens as well as all around the greens so players can bump and run.

"It's unique in that fact that everything down here is usually Bermudagrass fairways," said Clark. "The course has great air circulation and plenty of sunlight, so bentgrass will do just fine. We're going for that 'mini-links look.'"

Wallace Cahoon, the project's developer, has plans for nine more Clark-designed holes as well as a condominium and convention center development.