

BRIEFS



**SAHALEE STAFF BUILDS WEB SITE**

SEATTLE, Wash. — With the 80th PGA Championship three months away, the Sahalee Country Club maintenance staff has developed a web site on the Internet: [www.sahalee.com](http://www.sahalee.com).

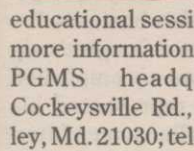


"The entire ... staff has worked very hard on the web site," said superintendent Tom Wolff. "We know this is going to

be a great experience for all of us, hosting a major championship, and it was the feeling of the crew that many people would be interested in the comprehensive information listed on the web site." The site covers history, staff, the 1998 PGA Championship, construction, equipment, weather, mowing, irrigation, turf, landscape and a fact sheet. Wolff can be called at 425-868-1600.

**PGMS, GREEN EXPO PLANNED**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The 1998 Conference of the Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS), coupled with the Green Industry Expo, is planned for Nov. 14-17 at the Opryland Hotel and Convention Center here. Fifty educational sessions are planned. For more information, people may contact PGMS headquarters at 120 Cockeysville Rd., Suite 104, Hunt Valley, Md. 21030; telephone 410-584-9754.



**PEST ACTIVITIES A CALL, OR FAX AWAY**

AMHERST, Mass. — The University of Massachusetts Extension's Landscape Message, a toll-free phone message which provides weekly regional updates on cultural and pest activity, is now available in a Faxed version. The Extension reports that subscribers will receive about 20 messages per year, including weekly during the growing season and monthly in the off-season. More information is available by calling 413-545-0895. The phone message can be heard by calling 800-226-4476 (4IPM).

**HOLLEBEAK GETS CREDIT**

SUGAR GROVE, Ill. — In May's page 1 story on Rich Harvest Links, the reporter neglected to mention that Hollebeak Construction, Inc. of Big Rock built the first 11 holes of Jerry Rich's 18-hole estate course. A member of the Golf Course Builders Association of America, Hollebeak did all the earthwork and shaping, except the irrigation, on those 11 holes. Ryan Inc. Central of Janesville, Wis., built the last seven holes.

GCSAA, PGA Tour Join In

**K-State's pioneering curriculum to start superintendents en route to management**



By MARK LESLIE

MANHATTAN, Kan. — A new breed of college curriculum, one that opens management avenues to future golf course superintendents, will begin with construction of a prototype Tournament Players Club (TPC) university course at Kansas State University here.

Colbert Hills Golf Course, named for PGA Senior Tour player Jim Colbert, will be many things to many people.

"The positive impact of this project will be far-reaching," said Stephen Mona, chief executive officer of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), "a golf management program to train tomorrow's leaders, a research facility to aid the golf industry, and a first-class

facility for golf enthusiasts..."

It will provide "unique research and academic opportunities for K-State researchers and students," said Bob Krause, K-State's vice president for institutional advancement.

"We have the opportunity to make something very special happen — something that will have a lasting impact on the world of golf and enhance the golf program at the university where I began my career," said Colbert, who donated \$500,000 and raised millions from friends toward the \$10 million facility.

"The university will use the course to train turf students how to manage, so that they can aspire upwards if they want," said Jeff Brauer of GolfScapes in Arlington, Texas, who is designing the

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18-hole championship course, nine-hole teaching layout and driving range.

While faculty, Audubon International and others draft environmental study proposals, it is the education element that particularly sets Colbert Hills apart as far as turfgrass students are concerned.

Assessing members' needs when he arrived as GCSAA chief operating officer in 1994, Joe O'Brien recalled superintendents said "one of the easiest things they did was grow grass. One of the most difficult was to explain it and justify it from a business perspective.

Couple that challenge with the fact that so many facilities — especially those in

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The 8th hole at Cedarbrook Golf & Country Club.

**Canada's new president sets goals for profession**

By PETER BLAIS

Becoming the 30th president of the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association (CGSA), mowing the 18th green at St. Andrews, marrying a wonderful woman and having a family — these are goals recently elected CGSA President Doug Meyer has met.

Hosting a major tournament, helping groom Augusta National in preparation for the Masters, building and growing in a new course, and making certain the CGSA's national conference continues moving across the country allowing more supers to become involved with their national association are goals Meyer hopes to achieve.

"Being part of this organization is a great honor and I look forward to representing the CGSA in the most professional way I can," Meyer said.

Meyer's entry into the superintendent field blossomed from an appreciation of the outdoors he gained during his upbringing on his parents' dairy farm in LaChute, Quebec. Following the lead of



his two brothers-in-law, one a golf pro and the other a turf industry student, he left agriculture and at age 16 got his first golf course job on former CGSA President Tom Johnson's summer grounds crew at Carling Lake Golf Club in Pine Hill, Quebec. Johnson became young Meyer's mentor and the newly elected CGSA president decided to make the golf business his career.

Meyer enrolled at Guelph University, studied turf management worked summers at Cutten Club in Guelph and later as a university research technician under retired professor and former dean Clay Switzer. He graduated with an associates degree in turfgrass science and eventually earned additional degrees in horticulture and a Turf Management Short Course degree from Guelph.

After a brief fling helping run the family dairy farm, Meyer accepted the post of superintendent at Cedarbrook Golf & Country Club in Ste. Sophie in 1975. He has remained at the private club ever since.

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**Canadian scientists shed light on roots and microbes**



ON THE GREEN

By PETER BLAIS

Roots and microbes is a marriage made in heaven that can only lead to healthier putting surfaces, according to a study funded by the Canadian Turfgrass Research Foundation (CTRF).

The CTRF is a coalition of the Royal Canadian Golf Association, Canadian Golf Superintendents Association and seven regional turfgrass foundations. With matching government grants, the coalition raised \$768,000 between 1993-97 and funded 10 projects at five different Canadian universities and facilities.

Dr. Brian Holl of the University of British Columbia was one of three researchers who discussed their projects during the recent CGSA annual conference in Calgary. Holl's speech was titled "Life in the Underworld — Roots and Microbes."

"On greens," Holl said, "we take the photosynthetic area and cut it down as close as possible to the ground without killing the plant. Then we hit it with a bunch of white projectiles every day. Then we give people spiked shoes and tell them to walk all over that minimal photosynthetic area. In the coastal region, we tell them to do it year-round. At the end of all that, we act surprised when we find that grass is in trouble. I'm not surprised. The amazing thing is that superintendents are able to keep the stuff alive at all."

Researchers and superintendents are so concerned about the actual putting surface, that they often forget what goes on below the surface, in the roots. "We want to

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# K-State breaks ground in curriculum

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the hands of management companies — were moving toward one person being the key individual and manager of a facility, and it was obvious that our members needed some better preparations to fulfill the types of jobs out there today and that would be in probably greater number tomorrow.”

O'Brien, Mona and others decided to work with universities to amend turf programs to prepare students for “a broader educational opportunity.”

Meanwhile, Colbert and Krause had related ideas. Many Tour players attended colleges that had no golf courses, or courses in poor condition, and Colbert thought the

PGA Tour had all the capabilities to design, build and manage a college course at a reasonably priced level than the normal corporate-level TPC facility.

“His vision was that the Tour could not only do these things, but use the Tour player as one of the chief fund-raisers and architect of name,” O'Brien said.

*“We may, in the next few years, step up our influence at existing turf programs that won't have a PGA Tour course, but do have hospitality and business education.”*

— Joe O'Brien, GCSAA chief operating officer

Krause was not only interested in a new golf course but in K-State being state-of-the-art in turfgrass and environmental re-

search and extending golf into the Outward Bound program the school conducts for minorities in the summers. When he mentioned building a course in conjunction with Colbert, the PGA Tour suggested that Krause contact the GCSAA. The timing was perfect.

“The opportunity sounds way too good to be true,” said O'Brien, “because it ties together three of our objectives (the golf course management program, a chance to reach minorities and research) all in one wrapping with an affiliation with the PGA Tour and an outstanding university.

“I thought this was too ideal. But I started working with Bob Krause and Kansas State, and I realized what a dynamic, progressive and unified university it is.”

From the beginning the GCSAA gave permission to use its name in fund-raising materials.

“We would like a big say in the curriculum,” O'Brien said. “We were allowed a say in how to structure the two internships: one at Colbert Hills and the other at PGA Tour facilities. In essence, we were assured the internships would be quality and broad-based and introduce students to the whole business.”

GCSAA officials also helped develop the materials to attract students and consulted in structuring the position of superintendent at Colbert Hills and in future placement of graduates. And at the same time the GCSAA was considering how to improve the nature and quality of its scholarships, this move gives it “the opportunity to look at minority scholarships in this major because there is a shortage of minorities in this profession,” O'Brien said.

K-State's new major in golf course management focuses on all aspects of running a golf course. Curriculum includes traditional turfgrass management courses in the agricultural and biological sciences along with general education courses in business management, hospitality and food-service operations.

“If the PGA Tour were to move to another university that needed a golf course but not the prerequisite educational capabilities, we may not go on with our curriculum, etc.,” he said. “On the other hand, we may, in the next few years, step up our influence at existing turf programs that won't have a PGA Tour course, but do have hospitality and business education.”

“We are excited to be involved as the manager of the facility,”

Continued on next page

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# Royal Birkdale undergoes major changes in prep for British Open

By TREVOR LEDGER

**S**OUTHPORT, Lancashire, England — Confronted with greens below the standards required of an international golf venue, and at the same time faced with hosting this year's British Open, July 12-19, Royal Birkdale Golf Club has completed a major reconstruction of its putting surfaces.

Royal Birkdale, one of the world's premier links courses, has been reconstructing and partially redesigning every green on the course.

Royal Birkdale has been plagued with slow early-season grass growth and greens with schizophrenic qualities, sometimes dry and diseased, yet soft, spongy and slow at other times. The previous head greenkeeper, Tom O'Brien, practiced myriad procedures to remedy the problem — Verti-draining, solid and hollow tining, slitting, chisel tining, mole ploughing and top dressing.

After the Open at the club in 1991, the problem was addressed. A six-man committee was formed to review past practices, obtain advice, submit recommendations and research estimated costs for improvement.

It turned to such experts as the U.S. Golf Association, Dr. Martin Hawtree of Hawtree Ltd., the Sports Turf Research Institute and O'Brien. The unanimous opinion was that the problem lay in the greens' root zone.

From 2 to 6 inches deep, the soil was anaerobic, dense, contained too fine a particle size, had a plastic consistency and was too rich in humus.

The fine grass roots were unable to penetrate this layer. Thatch formed and this resulted in the shallow-rooted grasses dominating the fescues and bentgrasses.

The experts unanimously recom-



1998 British Open venue Royal Birkdale has undergone five years of renovation.

*From 2 to 6 inches deep, the soil was anaerobic, dense, contained too fine a particle size, had a plastic consistency and was too rich in humus.*

mended that the worst greens — 1, 2, 10, 15 and 17 — should be re-turfed onto a better root-zone base. The committee approved the project.

On Sept. 7, 1992, JD Greasley Ltd. began lifting the turf, removing the problem layer, replacing it with a soil/sand mix as designated by STRI and then re-laying the original turf. This avoided rejection of new turf, a distinct possibility especially in such a salty environment as found in dunes land.

The behaviour of the new greens was also a major consideration. They had been so soft that golfers walking over them left footprints.

It was imperative that the new root zone avoid high organic content and was sandy enough to enable free-draining greens, which would be in keeping with Birkdale's heritage.

With the greens being rebuilt, Dr. Martin Hawtree was hired as the third generation of Hawtrees to work on Royal Birkdale.

He had three aims in his designs: raise some greens to aid drainage, give more contour variation and interest, and marry the putting surfaces harmoniously and intricately with the surrounds.

Thus, the 17th green, once a single-tiered surface, is now double-tiered to the tune of about 75cm height variation and has a new pot bunker at the back right.

Although the work was scheduled for completion on Oct. 26, 1992, a mere seven weeks after it began, that did not happen.

A special general meeting was held in December 1992, and it was unanimously agreed to reconstruct the remaining 13 greens using the same team. Throughout the fall of 1993 the remaining greens underwent the same process as the first five and the practice putting green was moved.

Players who go too long on the approach to the 18th will find a new fate awaiting them as Ken Moodie of

Hawtree Ltd. explained: "There are some significant new hollows on the back of the green which will make a trip back much trickier than before."

Again, time was of the essence, but fair weather and good teamwork aided the job and it was only 17 weeks in the making. It was time for the "icing on the cake."

"Since then we have constructed new championship tees on holes 7 and 17, and repositioned and remodeled the left-hand drive bunkers on hole 15," Moodie said. "The bunker at the front right of green 6 has now been remodeled ... into two pot bunkers."

Having laid the greens, it was essential that they be brought on and the fine grass encouraged to re-establish its supremacy over the invading *poa annua*.

A significant program of hollow tining was a major part of that work. Having overseen the initial regeneration, O'Brien retired after many years service and passed the greenkeeper's baton to Chris Whittle in November 1994. Whittle was no stranger to high-class turf, having previously been at Muirfield.

Indeed, 1998 is not his first British Open. He had prepared Muirfield for the 1992 tournament. For Whittle, the primary task was to continue the work that had been started. He was happy with the good foundation from which to work, thanks to the radical decisions taken by the green committee in 1991.

What does he think about the millions of viewers casting their eyes over the fruits of his daily labor?

"I try not to think about it," he said. "You can't sit back and worry. You just have to get on with the work. I'm looking forward to it."

The firm and fast putting surfaces that golfers expect at Royal Birkdale will be unveiled to the world in July.

## K-State pioneering

Continued from previous page

PGA Tour Properties President Vernon Kelly said in a press release.

Ground-breaking ceremonies will be held at 11 a.m. June 12 on the 1,200-acre site, three or four miles from the football stadium, on the northwest corner of town.

Brauer, who will design the course alongside builder Wildcat Golf Inc. of Wichita, selected the property from four available. The course will meander through several valleys, and a few of the holes will have trees, he said, but "the predominant character is konza prairie."

"We are going to disturb as little of the prairie as possible," he said.

The layout will stretch from 5,000 yards on a special set of "senior tees" to 7,500 yards for collegiate tournaments.

Because of the type of play expected, Brauer said he "pushed the envelope" for fairways. "The standard corridor is 300 to 350 yards," he said. "We're at 400 feet here."

Therefore, future residential development will not impact the course, he said.

The par-3 course was included in the project, keeping in mind The First Tee program to attract youths and minorities to the game of golf.

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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