

BRIEFS



MICHIGAN TURF CONFERENCE SET

LANSING, Mich. — The highlight of the 69th Annual Michigan Turfgrass Conference here, Jan. 18-21, will be honoring the retirement of Dr. Paul Rieke of Michigan State University (MSU). Rieke has garnered many honors, including the Distinguished Service Award from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America in 1996 and the Green Section Award from the U.S. Golf Association in 1997. The conference will be held at the Holiday Inn South — Hotel and Convention Center. For further information contact Kay at 517-321-1660.



Dr. Paul Rieke

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UMASS STARTS FUSARIUM PATCH STUDY

AMHERST, Mass. — Dr. Gail Schumann of the University of Massachusetts is initiating a study to deal with some of the problems with Fusarium patch on golf courses. The study will include timing of fall applications for winter snow mold control, disease prediction during spring and fall outbreaks, and evaluation of fungicide resistance. People wishing to participate should contact Schumann at the Department of Microbiology, Fernald Hall, UMass, Amherst, Mass. 01103-2420; telephone 413-545-3413.



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TEXAS A&M HONORS WATSON

COLLEGE STATION, Texas — Dr. James R. Watson, a long-time leader in the turfgrass industry, has been named an Outstanding Alumnus by Texas A&M University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. The award was presented at the college's 1998 Faculty Awards Convocation on Sept. 11. Watson, vice president and agronomist for the Toro Co. since 1952, has been praised as a leader in all phases of the turfgrass industry, especially involving irrigation and environmental matters. As an assistant professor of agronomy at Texas A&M prior to joining Toro, Watson is a founder of the International Turfgrass Society, which he served as president one year and director since 1979.



Dr. James Watson

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Mr. Certification: Feltman leads 2nd course in Audubon

By MIKE JAMISON

LONGWOOD, Fla. — Adam Feltman can't remember when he decided to become a golf course superintendent, but he knows exactly where his special relationship with the environment began. It all started, fittingly enough, at church.

"My Dad was a Baptist minister, and I kept up the grounds at the church when I was younger," said the 29-year-old native of Moultrie, Ga. "I really enjoyed that. That's when I found out that maintenance was much more than mowing grass."

Feltman is currently head superintendent at the semi-private The Legacy Club at Alaqua Lakes, a new Tom Fazio design in this Taylor Woodrow Communities development just north of Orlando, which opened Sept. 1.

The Legacy Club at Alaqua Lakes is a registered member of Audubon International's Signature Cooperative Sanctuary Program, and Feltman expects full certification soon. That means, among other things, that the developer spent approximately \$150,000 extra on construction and man hours to take special care of the natural environment. Audubon International has established enough standards and requirements to fill a pair of one-inch spiral notebooks, and the work, which starts at the very beginning of development, is monitored monthly throughout the life of the project.

Although Feltman is only seven years



Photos by Jerry White Photography



Environmental areas are everywhere at The Legacy Club at Alaqua Lakes, including along the 17th hole.

into his career, he has been the head superintendent at two of the first nine golf courses worldwide to achieve the Signature status. Prior to The Legacy Club, he was head superintendent at Champions Club, a Signature status club in south Florida.

Why go to that kind of expense and trouble?

"Obviously there is the benefit of doing the right thing for the environment," said Feltman, who majored in agronomy at the University of Georgia. "We also did it because of the recognition of being one of the top-notch semi-private facilities in the country. This goes hand-in-hand."

Sarasota-based Taylor Woodrow Communities gave Fazio plenty of land on

which to work, allowing ample natural buffer between fairways and homesites. As a result, two positive golf course qualities were born. Each hole became its own stage. On only one place in the routing is one hole completely visible from another. Nos. 9 and 18 share a tee, a lake and a stand of trees as they deliver golfers toward the clubhouse. The other holes are all framed by oaks and pines, wetlands and other natural areas.

Therein lies the second positive result of the land planning. The natural habitat, which includes 158 acres of wetlands, was left basically untouched. It's one of the many reasons why The Legacy Club met stringent Audubon standards for Sig-

Continued on page 12

Retiring circumstances for two famed supers

Dan Jones resigns his post in Florida for job as regional sales rep, while...

... Bob Mitchell leaves The Greenbriar, eyeing retirement and turf consultancy

By MARK LESLIE

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — Golf course superintendents, especially in the South, are on "a collision course" with job pressures — pressures that are forcing them beyond their own personal capabilities, and pushing their turfgrass beyond its ability to survive.

That is the assessment of Dan Jones, who after 33 years has retired as a superintendent in Florida, where he once served as president of the Florida Turfgrass Association and South Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association (GCSA).

"The pressure on superintendents is getting more and more every day," said Jones, who has left Banyan Golf Club here after 18 years of service to take on a position as sales representative for Toro Co.'s Liquid Ag Systems Inc. in Florida. "It's like a locomotive gaining steam all the time. It has to be lower cuts, no weeds, perfect conditions, like Augusta National every day."

"Our job has gotten much more volatile in the last few years," he added. "Twenty-five or 30 years ago, we used to do our jobs,

Continued on page 16

By MARK LESLIE

LEWISBURG, W. Va. — The world of CPAs never did get him. Now the world of golf course superintendents has lost him from its "active" roles after 48 years. Bob Mitchell, longtime executive director of grounds at The Greenbriar hotel and resort here and 1972 president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), has retired from his post.

"I had a real good life in golf course superintendency. I don't regret a nickel's worth," said Mitchell. "I had bad times. All superintendents do. When my grass is good, I feel great. When it's sick, I am, too. It keeps you around seven days a week all season long, but I still like it. Now I'm glad it has drawn to a close, and I hope I can help people."

To that end, Mitchell will work out of his home as a turfgrass consultant, doing business as RVM Enterprises.

Growing up working on golf courses as the son and grandson of golf superintendents, Mitchell nevertheless wanted to be a CPA like his uncle, whom he idolized. Yet, it was his other idol, Arnold Palmer, whose career path he most closely followed. Attending Southern Illinois University as a business student, he received a golf scholarship as the team's No. 1 player his final year. And when he graduated, he remained in golf as a superintendent, putting to use the experience he had gained working for his father at Franklin County Country Club in West Frankfort, Ill.

His first job, in 1950, was for the town of Alton, Ill., maintaining its nine-hole public course and ball diamonds, and later

Continued on page 14



Dan Jones, left, receives an editorial award from Clay Loyd of the Golf Course Superintendents Association for Florida Green magazine.



Bob Mitchell

Feltman leads 2nd course to Audubon certification

Continued from page 11
nature status.

"Alaqua Lakes is a pristine piece of property, and we intend to make certain the golf course serves not only as a nurturing habitat for wildlife, birds and native or indigenous plants, but also as a role model for existing and future golf course developers in Central Florida," said Mike Moser, director of golf operations for Taylor Woodrow Communities. The Signature status is a rare achieve-

ment. But exactly what does it mean and entail?

For starters, extra work and attention to detail is required. The work starts long before a course opens, and it begins at the very edge of the superintendent's world — the maintenance facility. That building even has a different name at The Legacy Club: Natural Resources Management Center.

The building must be constructed to exact specifications, with special areas

for various aspects of the operation. It includes a separate building for chemicals, and an equipment washroom, so that water can be purified in a mini-water treatment plant and re-used.

The special requirements spread throughout the property, which had been used for cattle ranching.

"There were three years of pre-development monitoring on this property," said Tom Spence, land development manager. "Much of the wetlands were

distressed when we arrived. We watched the property, studied it, then tried to restore it to its natural state. Then, with Tom Fazio, we routed a golf course and a community through the land, leaving the area as natural as we possibly could. I have enjoyed very much working this property."

Most holes border an environmentally sensitive area, though these areas don't always come into play. Obvious attention was given to making the course playable while leaving the best of Mother Nature's work intact. That explains why several dozen species of wildlife — from wild turkey to birds of all types, to deer — still share the development with the residents of Alaqua Lakes.

"It was extremely important to us and the developers to leave the natural habitat alone," said Feltman. "We went to great lengths and cost to do that, and we are proud of what was left — and even improved upon."

The care for the environment is obvious to players from the 1st tee. Printed instructions on the scorecards tell players how to deal with the protected areas, which are clearly marked with green and yellow stakes. They are to be played as hazards and not to be entered.

The efforts to gain Signature status mean reaching outside the boundaries of the golf course. The Legacy Club "adopted" nearby Heathrow Elementary School as part of the program, working with the students to become better environmental stewards. Feltman and his crew have developed a butterfly garden and a sanctuary garden at the school, and have been involved in several field trips with the students.

"People are always giving golf courses a bad name, saying that chemicals are bad for the environment and stuff like that," said Feltman. "I believe just the opposite. I think a golf course can have a dramatically positive effect on the environment. There is no better feeling than to bring 40 elementary school kids out here and watch them roll around on the fairways knowing they are in no harm from use of chemicals. The teachers have been brought here and shown exactly what we do in our maintenance program. They can feel comfortable that the kids are in a safe environment."

The effort at The Legacy Club at Alaqua Lakes, and other golf course developments like it, provides a win-win-win scenario. The environment wins, as a nature-laden area is improved upon for the natural inhabitants. The homeowners and golfers win with an inviting place to call home and a relaxing stage on which their skills are put to a test. And the developers win, simply by having accomplished their financial and business goals while enhancing the environment within the project.

For Feltman, it boils down to taking pride in his role as a golf course superintendent.

"Taking special care of the environment does a great deal for the superintendent's role in society," he said. "When we work hand-in-hand with the developers in taking proper care of the natural surroundings as we did here at Alaqua Lakes, then we've done our part in providing a safe and fun environment to live and play in."

GRAYHAWK GOLF COURSE, ARIZONA



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