

April is so cruel, and other random notes

When you live up north this is the cruellest time of year. We're on the shoulder up here, taking a long walk on a 50-degree Sunday then fighting to keep your car on the road on a blustery Monday. The snow is just about gone and a brownish covering is becoming visible through the trees at my local 18. You peer through the maze in hopes of seeing the superintendent's utility vehicle making the rounds. Nothing.

On Saturdays and Sundays they're feeding us third and final round coverage of the fresh PGA Tour season. Knowing that we're at least three weeks away from dropping a ball in the queue makes the Tour, at this stage in the game, almost unwatchable. I turn the channel to hockey. April is too cruel.

I wish I could go on about Fairways '99 in Munich last month, but to be perfectly honest, there wasn't much breaking news rattling around the halls this year. Last year, of course, all the chatter focused on the Asian market and its inevitable halt. Most projects remain on hold while a precious few get underway. *GCN* will have a full Asian report ready to go next month.

In the meantime, the European market appears to be cruising along at a steady pace. It's funny how the top European issue continues to parallel one of the hottest issues in the U.S. — affordable, accessible golf. While Europe has nothing in place like The First Tee program just yet, talk was banded about on how to establish such an industrywide initiative. Perhaps we'll drop a couple First Tee stories in our next international edition to push them along.

Golf has an identity problem in Europe, but that could be changed if the industry begins to reach for a broad market outside of the tourist and existing wealthy.

Toro has been doing it for close to five years, now John Deere has launched its JD ProConditioned line of golf and turf products, the company's first formal program to help put turf equipment rolling out of a lease back on the golf course (page 61). It seems the perfect time to get on the used equipment bandwagon, especially with the increasing number of additions under construction.

A program like this, however, demands full distributor cooperation, according to Toro's Jim Heinz, the company's aftermarket business manager. "Our business opportunity has been through distribution, whether it's refurbishing or repair," he said. "We're spending resources to help our distribution channel improve their offering to the end user."

If distribution is the key, I can't imagine that Deere will have much trouble getting the new program off the ground.

Managing Editor Mark Leslie isn't too keen on his new photo (cast your eyes to the right). I think it captures Mark perfectly. Let him know what you think about our new venture into realism.



Michael Levans,
editor

A heapin' helpin' of Canadian hospitality

So you haven't tasted Canadian camaraderie and hospitality, eh? Haven't sampled that country's version of turfgrass conference, networking and banqueting, eh?

American superintendents, especially those along the Northern tier of The States, might want to check out future Canadian International Turfgrass Conference and Shows.

Much smaller and briefer than the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's 17,000-attendee event, the Canadian show nonetheless packs a lot of information into three days of sessions. And when attendees aren't learning, they're having fun with one another — and life in general.

Thanking my hosts, particularly Canadian Golf Superintendents Association (CGSA) Executive Director Vince Gillis, I brought back a brief sampling from Toronto:

- Superintendent of the Year Bob Heron on the difference between golf course maintenance in Canada and the United States:

"Southern superintendents like to tease us about working six months a year. We tease them that it's a tough job to kill Bermudagrass."

Any comparison, he said, must be budget-related. "Compare private to private course and public to public and there is not a lot of difference. The grasses are different. But in terms of grooming, the good courses are all groomed properly."

While Southerners have "their set of problems with insects and mole crickets and high humidity," he said, "we start preparing for winter back in May — aerification, fertility, draining the irrigation system, starting from scratch every spring."

- Toronto Board of Trade superintendent Gordon Witteveen on his longtime friend, Heron: "Bob and I have one thing in common: For awhile we both had hairpieces..."

"He seems to have overcome an affliction which he had early in his career — which is to throw golf clubs."

- Superintendent Bert McFadden of Chateau Whistler Golf Course in British Columbia: "In BC grass can grow anywhere. You can grow it on the side of your car."

- Superintendent and former GCSAA President Gary Grigg on courtesy: "A number of superintendents have lost their jobs because of how a crew member treated a member or guest... Courteously respond quickly to requests from guests, members and others."

- Dean Piller, new president of the CGSA, from Cordova Bay in Victoria, B.C., on priorities: "We tend to make the golf course our top priority. But, the most important thing we manage is people."

- Serious science was also shared, such as the report from Dr. Tom Hsiang of Guelph University that the biological agent *Typhula phacouhiza* effectively controls snow mold. From last year through 2001, he said, \$300,000 more will be spent on work to register *Tp* as a biological control through the Pesticide Management Registration Agency.

Hsiang also predicted that in the next year or two fungicides effective against snow mold will be released by Zeneca (*Azoxystrobin*) and Rohm and Haas (*Myclobutanol*).

I hope this encourages readers to attend the first conference of the new millennium, in Ottawa, next year. Eh?

...

A dream from the fertile mind of Audubon International President Ron Dodson: A biodegradable golf ball implanted with a native seed, so that when a golfer loses it, out of that spot will spring, say, a saguaro cactus, or a pine tree.



Mark Leslie,
managing editor

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SPOTLIGHT ON ASIA • PUBLIC GOLF MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Seri Selangor swings toward teaching success

By ANDREW OVERBECK

SELANGOR, Malaysia — There was a time when the golf industry claimed that public golf would not work in Asia. Since August 1998, the Seri Selangor Public Golf Course outside of Kuala Lumpur has been working to prove the pundits wrong.

The playing public has so far embraced the public golf concept and Seri Selangor has met with success both on and off the course in its first several months of operation. The level of play has been strong and the junior development programs and the

golfers career college have been well attended.

From August to December 1998, Seri Selangor did 18,286 rounds of golf and was often operating at full capacity. "The queue and the turning away of golfers became the talk of the town," said general manager, A.S. Khamis. Additionally, the first session of the 'homeless' golfer program trained 150 golfers and beginners who were without a club and handicap. The program opens to new participants every two months.

Khamis' junior development

program at Seri Selangor has been extremely well attended. Khamis closes the course every Sunday from 3-7 p.m. and opens it to juniors between the ages of 6-20 who receive instruction from six professionally qualified in-



Youngsters warm up before a class at Seri Selangor Public Golf Course.

structors and players from the Malaysian National Team. At present there are 400 registered juniors and around 150 come each Sunday.

"We intend to continue this program as a contribution to the national golf industry. Who knows, we could get a Malaysian 'Tiger' out of the program," said Khamis.