



Oh, Canada!

COVERAGE OF THE 50TH CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL TURFGRASS CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW CONTINUES ON PAGES 20-25.

Super of the Year: Stay enthusiastic

By MARK LESLIE

BRAMPTON, Ontario, Canada — Ask Bob Heron about his accomplishments and he first points away from himself, to his many assistants who have gone on to take head superintendent jobs from North America to Loch Lomond, Scotland. Ask about his family and he embellishes about 29-year-old son Scott “whose resume is better than mine.” But ask colleagues of Canada’s 1998 Superintendent of the Year and they remark about a man who has greatly impacted this career field.

“Bob Heron has a good relationship with his members and he produces a pretty fine golf club,” Gordon Witteveen of The Board of Trade Country Club in Woodbridge said about the man who is now head superintendent at Beacon Hall Golf Club here. “He’s an upbeat guy and always has a positive personality, which makes him fun to be around.”

“R. Tee’s contributions to the game of golf locally, nationally and internationally have been many and continue to be ongoing,” said golfing pal Paul Dermott



Above is Beacon Hall Golf Club’s 2nd hole, which keeps Bob Heron, below, and his crew busy in Brampton, Ontario.

of Oakdale Golf & Country Club in Downsview, who nominated Heron on behalf of the Ontario Golf Course Superintendents Association. “He’s a good player and always turns out a playable and well-maintained course for his membership. He’s always been a real proponent of bentgrass, and he was one of the first ones up here to experiment with some chemicals to eradicate poa annua.”

Indeed, several innovations in golf course maintenance have been pio-

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Bubble Cover wins converts in Quebec

By MARK LESLIE

TORONTO — Be it laser shooting, Global Positioning Satellite technology or soil sensors, some of the greatest advances in the world of golf have been borrowed from other industries. Enter the latest: Bubble Covers, originally designed to lay over swimming pools to keep them warm.

Quebec superintendents have been experimenting with Bubble Covers to protect their greens from winter injury, and, according to Serge Gauthier, they have found success while saving money.

Speaking at the Canadian International Turfgrass Conference here, the superintendent at Islesmere Golf and Country Club in Laval, Quebec, said his experience with Bubble Cover over the last three winters has been extraordinary in terms of effectiveness, ease of installation and removal, and cost compared to using straw.

Traditionally, Gauthier had protected his greens during winters by laying down a strong netting, spreading a layer of straw over that and then covering both with a greens cover.

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BRIEFS



PTC AWARDS \$175,000 FOR RESEARCH

The Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council has announced allocation of funds to Penn State for the 1998-99 fiscal year. The \$175,000 research grant brings to almost \$2.5 million what the council has donated to Penn State over the years. The funds will support research projects in the departments of agronomy, entomology, and plant pathology. It will also support eight scholarships and awards granted to undergraduate and graduate students.

IGCSA ANNOUNCES NEW DIRECTORS

DES MOINES, Iowa — The following superintendents were elected to serve on the board of directors for the Iowa Golf Course Superintendents Association at the Iowa Turfgrass Conference here. President Dennis Watters, of the Fort Dodge Country Club in Fort Dodge, Iowa, will be assisted by new directors Ron Stephan, Joyce Hamilton, John Ausen and Tom Verrips.

Pooch sniffs out golf course’s elusive PVC

By PETER BLAIS

BRUTUS, Mich. — Think dogs are just good for chasing geese off golf courses? Well, Steve Sump, superintendent at Hidden River Golf & Casting Club here has a PVC-seeking missile of a Labrador Retriever that can find clogged drainage caps through the deepest, murkiest standing water allowing Sump to get the flooded parts of his course back in play in two shakes of a dog’s tail.

Buddy is an 18-month-old, 80-pound yellow lab who has lived in the Sump household since he was six weeks old. Buddy began accompanying Sump to work almost immediately, riding on the superintendent’s cart and quickly developing into a top-flight goose deterrent.

“I originally brought him out here to chase the geese,” Sump said. “We don’t have any geese now. We’ve got more turkeys than anything, and a few ducks. I got him to understand not to chase the turkeys or the ducks.”

Being a retriever, Buddy loved to pick things up and bring

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Buddy and partner Steve Sump quite a team at Hidden River Golf & Casting Club.

Headhunters are the new niche in job placement

By TERRY BUCHEN

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. — While networking with fellow course officials and investigating local and national job-referral services have long been used to discover superintendents’ jobs, search firms, or “headhunters,” are gaining credence with clubs and general managers.

“We are sensing there is a growing need for using search firms such as ours in the recruiting of superintendents and

directors of golf maintenance operations,” said Richard Farrell, a partner with Golf Search Personnel in Clemont, Fla. “We found we can be a neutral source for private clubs, ensuring no favoritism is involved as there can be in club politics. Also, using a search firm brings the confidentiality that needs to be involved in a search.”

Headhunters follow a similar format, though each has their own unique style.

Dick Kopplin of Kopplin Search, Inc. in LaQuinta, Calif., has been in the golf business for 28 years, many of those as a well-connected club general manager.

“We provide a specialty service to clubs where the general manager or president will contact me to help them find a qualified superintendent,” Kopplin said. “After sending them a packet of information about my company, with references, I

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Headhunters

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will meet in person with the search committee and mutually draw up a position description."

Kopplin feels there are three critical factors for finding the right superintendent: competence, integrity and compatibility.

"We advertise the position whereas the best candidates usually have a position with a similar type environment at an existing club," he said. "I talk with and recruit all of the candidates, perform reference and due-diligence checks, clarify everything and bring in three good, quality candidates. I telephone interview each candidate and meet with them in person, at their respective clubs, before they become eligible as one of the three final candidates."

"One of the key qualities," said Farrell, "is someone who is hands-on already; who has a very good, detailed knowledge of the industry; and who, from the technical aspect, is computer literate. Our clients are looking for people with successful business backgrounds."

The headhunter's job, Farrell said, "is to identify for our clients the most qualified candidates we feel are out there for the particular job. In that process we are interviewing, on a preliminary basis, all candidates. Before our client sees them, we will have interviewed them, toured their golf facilities and thoroughly checked their references."

Jerry Faubel, a partner with Bruce Williams in the firm Executive Golf Search, Inc., said: "We go to each club and interview them to find their needs for a superintendent, make suggestions as to the type of superintendent they want and need, look at the golf course and then begin a search in our large database with the club's job specifications in mind."

Faubel and Williams, both former presidents of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, then perform in-depth interviews and personality tests for each club's specific needs, narrow down the candidates to between three and five, perform a background check with the superintendents' permission and then send the club the resumes and Faubel's and Williams' assessments.

Once candidates are presented to the search committee, according to Kopplin the panel usually interviews them, allowing them to showcase their talents in a relaxed atmosphere.

"We ask each candidate to go step by step through each job they have had," Kopplin said, "to discuss their management abilities. Then the committee asks questions; the candidate asks

questions, all in a one-hour time limit and then the candidate receives a complete tour of the facility," Kopplin said. "We do not do any personality or psychological testing unless a club specifically asks for it, then we use professional companies that specialize in it."

"The quality of the superintendent candidates that I deal with is so good, and their work ethic is very strong," Kopplin said.

'One of the key qualities is someone who is hands-on already; who has a very good, detailed knowledge of the industry; and who, from the technical aspect, is computer literate.'

— Richard Farrell

Executive Golf Search, Faubel said, recommends candidates who

can grow grass, have communication skills and a personality that best fits a particular club.

Faubel and Williams do not get involved in the salary, fringe benefits (unless asked) and negotiations, but will offer sample contracts if desirable, he added.

All these search firms have golf backgrounds—from Faubel and Williams' years as certified golf course superintendents who are close to a variety of industry

leaders, to Golf Search Personnel, whose three partners have many years background in finance and recruiting (Steven Lieberman), agronomy (Mark Miller, who worked with IMG and Arnold Palmer Golf Management), and course management (Farrell).

Their payments vary.

Kopplin Search clients—about 80 percent of whom are equity

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PREVENT
GRUBS.
STOP THEM IN
THEIR TRACKS.
OR MAKE SURE
IT'S NOT EVEN
AN ISSUE.

Sod producers donate \$62,000 for research projects

ROLLING MEADOWS, Ill. — Eight turfgrass sod research projects will receive a record-setting \$62,436 in grant money for 1998-99 from the 5-year-old International Turf Producers Foundation (ITPF). The not-for-profit foundation's previous one-year grant award record was \$20,500, set in 1995-96.

Specific grant recipients cannot be announced, pending formalization of each project's goals and objectives. However,

general areas of study to be undertaken include extension of sod's post-harvest "shelf-life," shaded turf management and various projects related to water and nutrient management. ITPF is now in the process of notifying the recipients.

This year's eight recipients were selected by ITPF's Research Committee from among 20 projects, seeking a total of over \$220,000. ITPF, created as a stand-alone foundation

in 1994 by Turfgrass Producers International, has established a long-range endowment goal of \$2 million which it is beginning to accumulate through contributions from annual campaigns and a silent auction conducted in conjunction with TPI's summer convention. Each year, a portion of the newly raised funds and direct support from TPI is used to support research projects directed at questions of specific interest to turfgrass sod producers.

Headhunter firms

EXECUTIVE GOLF SEARCH
699 Westchester
Saganaw, Mich. 48603
(517) 797-0677 Office
(517) 793-2254 Fax
gfaubel@concentric.net
Jerry Faubel, CGCS

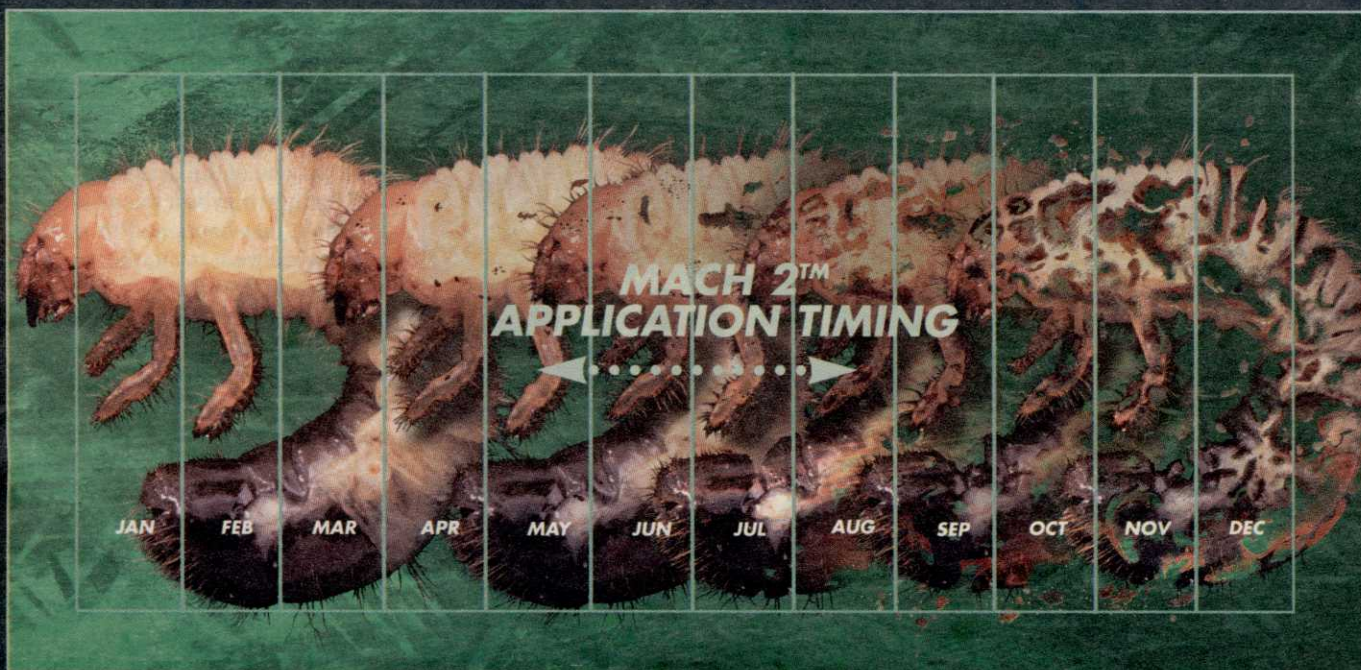
West Coast Office
2501 Pine Avenue
Manhattan Beach, Calif. 90266
(310) 546-2530 Office
brucewms@ix.netcom.com
Bruce Williams, CGCS

GOLF SEARCH PERSONNEL
Central Florida Office
301 U.S. Hwy 27, Ste. F
Clemont, Fla. 34711
(352) 241-8311 Office
(352) 241-8312 Fax
Richard Farrell

East Coast Office
2770 Indian River Blvd.
Vero Beach, Fla. 32960-3212
(561) 778-3033 Office
(561) 778-3012 Fax
Steve Lieberman

JOHN SIBBALD ASSOCIATES
7733 Forsyth Boulevard
St. Louis, Mo. 63105
800-896-1395 Office
Randy Martin

KOPLIN SEARCH, INC.
50855 Washington St.
Suite C-233
LaQuinta, Calif. 92253
(760) 564-0231 Office
(760) 564-7331 Fax
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CIRCLE #107

Headhunters

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private clubs and 20 percent are management companies, resorts and other public-access venues — pay a fee, usually 15 to 25 percent of the superintendent's first-year base salary.

"We have contact for one year after the successful candidate is hired, to offer complete and total service," Faubel said. "Our fees are on a percentage sliding scale of between \$5,000 and \$12,000, based on the superintendent's first-year salary."

Kopplin uses a database of more than 3,000 resumes. Twelve to 24 resumes come into his office daily. The last three years, 25 percent of its business has come from superintendents, 25 percent from golf professionals and 50 percent from general managers.

"We are in business to help superintendents, to strengthen their professional careers," Faubel said, "and we do headhunting only for superintendents. Seventy-five percent of our business is with private clubs and 25 percent with public-access courses, and we place from six to 12 superintendents each year."