

International superintendents report progress and challenges

By PETER BLAIS

ORLANDO, Florida, USA — Representatives from around the globe presented updates on their associations and the state of golf in their countries during the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's International Summit at the recent International Conference and Show.

Following is a summary of their comments:

• **Indonesia** — The Indonesian superintendents association (ASPGI) was established roughly three years ago, according to Garry Crothers. The association lists more than 100 members and meets every two months. The Pacific Rim economic crisis has basically halted new course construction in the country. One, part-time person is involved in turfgrass research in Indonesia. But Indonesian superintendents are still seeking educational opportunities abroad while developing their own educational programs.

• **Sweden** — The Swedish Greenkeepers Association is committed to environmental programs, said Stig Persson. The group's environmental efforts are chronicled at the ecologyunit.com web site. The association also recently moved its office to Skytteholm, Ekero S-17890; telephone 46 823336.

• **Britain** — Even though more than 100 new courses will open throughout Continental Europe in 1999, new golf course development has slowed, according to Howard Swan of the British Institute of Golf Course Architects. Still, certain areas, particularly Central Europe, have huge development potential.

There are three main European architects' associations located in France, Germany and Britain. The British Institute has 60 members, with half in Britain and half scattered throughout Europe.

The British Institute offers a post-graduate program in golf course architecture at a university in Surrey. The program lists 21 students from nine different countries.

• **Ireland** — The number of courses in Ireland has doubled in the past 10 years, according to Joseph Bedford a member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of Ireland. The 2005 Ryder Cup will be held south of Dublin.

There is a growing demand for improved playing conditions and most superintendents are hungry for the knowledge needed to provide those conditions. The Irish association has its own conference, trade show and magazine. British architect

Howard Swan and U.S. professor Paul Rieke will speak at the group's 5th annual conference.

Insuring job security is a major priority for Irish greenkeepers, who are working with members of the Irish Golf Course Owners Association to improve the situation.

Northern Ireland has its own

greenkeepers' association. Plans are to eventually merge the two Irish associations.

Because of its small size, the Irish association will continue to depend on and need to communicate with the Ecology Unit and other European associations.

• **South African GCSA** — The government has challenged

the golf industry to help correct some of the societal problems of the past, according to Nigel Butler of the South African superintendents association. Some superintendents are conducting training and literacy classes that extend beyond the workforce and into the employees' families. The government sees sports, like

golf, as an instrument of bringing peace to the country.

• **International Greenkeepers Association (Germany)** — Last year the 700-member IGA signed an agreement with the German Golf Association to share a new office in the golf association's building in

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GCSAA adding staff for 1st Tee

LAWRENCE, Kansas —The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America plans to hire a full-time staffer to oversee the national organization's efforts with The First Tee program and other junior golf programs nationwide.

GCSAA spokesman Jeff Bollig said GCSAA hopes to hire someone for the position by April

1. The new hire would likely work in the career development office where he or she would assume responsibility for GCSAA's initiatives with The First Tee, various junior golf initiatives, GCSAA student chapters and other youth-oriented programs. Those responsibilities are currently spread among existing board and staff members.

"GCSAA's decision to become more involved in The First Tee program and the importance of the superintendent in maintaining these new facilities led to the decision to create this new position," Bollig said.

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Wiesbaden, according to a German representative. The IGA has established a new certification program for greenkeepers, which is required by German law to make greenkeeping a profession. The IGA is growing by approximately 40 new members every year.

• Italian Golf Federation —

U.S. turfgrass specialist Jim Beard started working with IGF 12 years ago. Three Italian agronomists traveled to Texas (USA) A&M University where they studied under Beard. Upon returning to Italy, they developed a training program that has been in place for 10 years. The IGF has also initiated funding for putting green and fairway research. Five Italian universities now have their own turfgrass programs. And despite serious economic problems, the government has allocated \$2 million for turfgrass research in Italy. Beard said the progress in Italy can be traced back to the initial seed money invested in sending those three Italian agronomists abroad to study.

• Canadian Golf Superintendents Association — The CGSA recently released its new environmental resource, the results of nearly four years' work. Copies are available for \$300, although one free copy is available to national GCSA chapters, said Executive Director Vince Gillis. CGSA has a strong board with all votes during Gillis' 10-year tenure being unanimous.

The association launched its national occupational standards program last year, calling on the entire golf industry's input.

A compensation and benefits package survey received 63 percent response from CGSA members. The association also surveyed members on what they wanted on the CGSA's new web site, which will be launched later this year.

• GCSAA — Public relations and membership standards are the GCSAA's major foci heading into the millennium.

The association has hired a Boston public relations firm to help upgrade the superintendent's image and showcase the profession's importance in the minds of the American golfer. The April issue of *GOLF Magazine*, will feature an eight-page insert describing the superintendent's job. The goal is also to educate the course owner employer influential golfer in the hope these groups will better understand the difficulty of the superintendent's job resulting in improved job security. The insert will include a sweepstakes card that will entitle the winner to accompany the superintendent during the U.S. Open at Pinehurst in North Carolina.

The association is also working on a set of membership standards that will clarify to the golfing public exactly what is required to become a Class A GCSAA superintendent. Plans are to have a proposal to present for a full membership vote by the 2001 Conference and Show.

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