

Y2K AND THE EVERYDAY

President Clinton may have been telling the populace that all was hunky-dory in regards to Y2K scares, but golf course superintendents generally took matters into their own hands early in 1999 in order to be prepared for the turning of the millennial clock. From upgrading computers and software programs to stocking inventory, superintendents were preparing, late into the year, for the moment the clock ticks from 12:00 midnight to 12:01 a.m. Jan. 1, 2000.

Meanwhile, they continued to wrestle with hurricanes, droughts and diseases; invent some interesting devices for operating their maintenance shops and keeping their turf alive and well; contribute in a major way to new research efforts by the U.S. Golf Association and the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program; and even handle day-to-day business.

Turfgrass scientists continued their drive to breed bentgrasses that reach into the deep South and Bermudagrasses that will thrive in the Transition Zone.

And as time seemed to race on for most, some superintendents took the lead of Gordon Witteveen of the Toronto Board of Trade Golf Courses — and slowed down by retiring.

Quotable Quotes



Bob Heron

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

— **Bob Heron**
Canadian Superintendent of the Year

'We could have had 100 volunteers, without question, which shows the industrywide dedication to Pinehurst and the U.S. Open.'

— **Paul Jett, superintendent of Pinehurst #2 course**



George Frye

'Water is getting as expensive, if not more, than providing electricity. It's our biggest challenge of the future.'

— **George Frye, Kiawah Island Resort's Ocean**

Course superintendent

Superintendent, thy middle name is Invention

AUGUST



A leaf and debris blower can operate for hours with an auxiliary fuel tank.

Bunker rake blower aerates root zone

By TERRY BUCHEN

NAPLES, Fla. — A new portable turf aeration blower system can supply oxygen to the root zone of putting greens, suck water out of a green's drainage pipes, and even blow away surface debris in sand bunkers.

Superintendent Darren Davis of Olde Florida Golf Club here reports the versatile blower is "another great tool in our golf course maintenance equipment arsenal."

Davis has two of the self-contained blower units, which can be mounted easily onto a turf truckster bed, trailer, tractor three-point hitch, or on the back of a riding bunker rake.

The blower, he said, can move a significant amount of air through the perforated drainage piping of a U.S. Golf Association

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FEBRUARY



Flagstick storage within easy sight and reach.

Flagstick storage using unused ceiling space

By TERRY BUCHEN

PARAMUS, N.J. — Irrigation technician Dave Zollinger turned wasted space into valuable at The Ridgewood Country Club here, at the same time solving where to store flagsticks for the 27-hole facility.

Zollinger's "brilliant idea," said superintendent Todd W. Raisch, "was to store all of our spare flagsticks on the horizontal and sloping ceilings, which is totally out of the way from any of our activities."

Zollinger bought enough fishing pole holders at a local store to handle all the flagsticks. Each unit can hold six flagsticks. The holders have a foam-type slit so when the circular part of the flagstick is pushed all the way in it snaps into place.

Not only do the fishing pole holders were well, they are inexpensive, Raisch said.

"Storage space is always of para-

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APRIL



Crew member Daniel Fassina nails down the cover over one of the greens at Islesmere Golf & Country Club.

From Canada with love: Bubble covers for greens

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

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JANUARY

Y2K: Two little numbers, one big problem

By MARK LESLIE

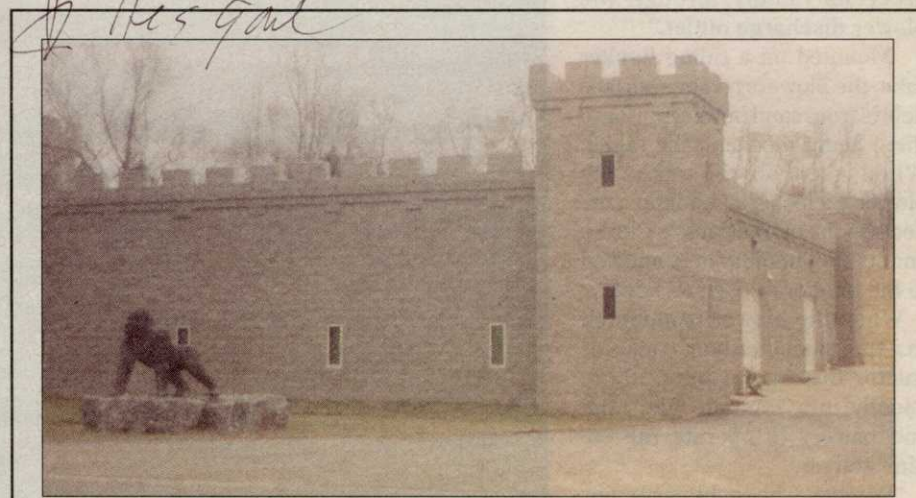
"On New Years Day I wouldn't want to be on a golf course because the sprinkler systems will probably be going nuts," said Pebble Beach Co.'s Dominic Van Ness.

Van Ness, director of the Information Services Department, foresees major problems beginning — and then perhaps snowballing — when the world's clocks tick from midnight Dec. 31 to 12:01 a.m. Jan. 1.

The situation has been dubbed "The Year 2000 Crisis," or Y2K, and the scenarios of its effects are endless — from hospitals where lives may hang in the balance to golf courses where the effects will be more mundane, but perhaps far more far-reaching than at first glance.

The whole thing seems so simple. Many computers are programmed to recognize only the last two digits of a year. So when "00" appears at 12:01 a.m., Jan. 1, 2000, it could be interpreted as 1900; or, on some computers, 1980, 1984 or even 1999. This could cause turmoil in how data is analyzed or result in freeze-ups or massive

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A MAN'S MAINTENANCE BUILDING IS HIS CASTLE

Superintendent Andy Mottel's maintenance building at Fieldstone Golf Club in Greenville, Del., is unlike any we have seen. So, when we wrote about the new Hurdzan/Fry-designed golf course in February we held onto this photo for a special occasion: our end-of-the-millennium edition.

FEBRUARY

New turf care takes bent toward Deep South

By MARK LESLIE

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. — With his sights keen on growing the cool-season bentgrass into the Deep South, Dr. Milt Engelke has broken the mold of turfgrass care and developed a regimen he feels will, once and for all, make his dream come true.

He already points to success here.

Working with Old Marsh Golf Club superintendent Steve Ehrbar, the Texas A&M professor said, "We feel strongly that we will be okay [with the regimen]."

What does it entail?

- Lean water management, irrigating every fourth day.
- Frequent flushing.

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A blower of another kind

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tion-spec putting green. This influx of oxygen to the root zone removes gases, which helps stimulate root growth and improve soil quality.

"To keep the air volume (5,000 cfm - 175 mph) on each green high enough to get our desired results," Davis said, "we isolate our greens' drainage system after it exits the green, so any excess air does not enter the surrounding drainage systems."

Olde Florida has a buried vault setup on the 15th and 18th greens, with green-colored removable plastic covers. A 4-inch-diameter slide valve is shut off during the blowing operation so no air can escape. Next to the slide valve is a 4-inch-diameter female hose fitting that is connected to the green's subsurface drainage piping. The blower has a 4- or 6-inch-diameter flexible ADS-type non-perforated discharge hose that is easily connected in the vault, with or without a reducer, to begin the blowing operation. It is hooked up to the blower by a 4-inch quick connect cam lock male (plastic) and female (aluminum) apparatus.

"When we wish to remove excess water from the green's subsurface drainage piping, we simply move the 4-inch-diameter hose to the cam lock quick connect in the center of the fan housing to provide a sucking action," Davis said. "The excess water proceeds rapidly through the blower discharge outlet."

Mounted on a riding bunker rake, the blowers remove surface debris from sand bunkers prior to them being mechanically raked. When used on the rake, the blower's electrical hookup connects to the bunker rake's battery and its fuel hookup is connected to the bunker rake's fuel tank.

When the blower is mounted to a turf truckster bed, trailer or tractor three-point hitch, there usually is a separate fuel tank and battery to operate the engine starter.

"We have been blowing our greens' subsurfaces for five years now, giving each green one to two hours per day when needed, depending on the local climatic conditions," Davis said. "We are fortunate to be able to blow during play because our vaults are far enough away from our greens for a mostly quiet operation."

Davis is involved in construction of the neighboring Golf Club of the Everglades that Rees Jones is designing, and said: "We are installing vaults to hook up blowers on all 18 greens, the putting green and chipping green there."

Davis said the manufacturer

of the self-contained blower also makes a new electrically operated low-pressure system that can produce heated and cooled air. Specifications include an air volume of 1,000 cfm, dual mode sucking and blowing, two 3 horsepower 230-volt motors with a power draw of 13 amps full load with a 60-amp start, quiet operation at 51 dba at 30 feet, and 4- or 6-inch outlets with quick disconnect hoses. ▶

The PVC pooch

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 who 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. Buddy loves to pick things up and bring them to Sump. One was a green drainage cap which became a favorite toy.

When parts of the course flooded last June, Sump said, "For some reason I said, 'Bud, find your drain,' the name we'd

given his cap toy. He starts looking around, paws under the water and pops out one of the drain caps.

"I thought maybe it was a fluke, that he'd just happened to step on it. So we went to another area and I said, 'Hey Bud, go find a drain.' He starts sniffing around and sniffing around, paws under the water again, lifts out another drain cap and the water starts draining down the hole. He must have found 10 caps that day."

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Bubble Cover makes transition from pools to golf

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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 net-

ting, spreading a layer of straw over that and then covering both with a greens cover.

"This was effective in most cases, but was time-consuming, and removal was also very time-consuming," he said. "But the main problem is, it's a living material... Also, in a mild winter, the greens did not come out so well."

Gauthier and his colleagues in the Northern regions considered that a perfect method of winter greens protection would include:

- control of water;
- isolation, such as an inorganic temperature buffer;
- ease of installation.

When a Bubble Cover sales-

man knocked on his door in late 1995, Gauthier jumped on the idea. "I knew it would be perfect," he recalled.

The product is sold from 4- to 28-foot widths, and Gauthier spent \$26,400 at 11 cents per square foot. He figures the Bubble Covers, which should be usable for at least six years,

will save \$5,336 or more per year.

Using straw cost \$7,000 per year for the straw and \$4,560 in labor and disposal costs. The Bubble Cover costs only \$1,824 in labor, and the \$26,400 spread over six years equals \$4,400.

Gauthier spelled out the process of covering his greens with the bubble material, which is so strong the bubbles do not pop even when jumped upon.

First, the plastic netting is laid over the green. Mouse repellent is sprayed over the green. The Bubble Cover is spread out over the netting and is clamped down with long, fluorescent-pink staples so they can be easily found come spring. All this is held down by a permeable greens cover.

"This top cover," he said, "is very important and we have to pull it all the way back from the green. If not clamped down well, wind will tear it out."

In his experiments Gauthier placed household heat monitors inside the greens, with a sensor near the middle of the green and the monitor in a Ziploc bag at the edge of the green.

The temperature never dipped below 5 or 6 degrees Celsius (32 to 34 degrees Fahrenheit), which poa annua can survive, he said.

A bonus of the Bubble Covers is that they are fairly translucent which helps kick-start the grass in the spring when the top cover is removed.

Since each cover is tailor-fit to a specific green, it is labeled for use the next year.

"The method is not perfect. Sometimes water infiltrates under the cover," Gauthier said. "But we are fine-tuning it. We are pulling the top cover even more taut. And some results are incredible."

"This is really taking off in Quebec," said Fern Maille of Charm Services Inc. in Bellefeuille, Quebec, who sells Bubble Cover. Although Bubble Cover is being shipped across North America for swimming pools, it is sold only in the Province of Quebec for golf courses, he said.

"I believe this year we will be selling it in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and looking for distributors in the United States.

"It's just a question of having enough testimony to convince the guys to at least use it on one or two greens. ▶

Ceiling storage

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mount importance," he added, "and it is always fun trying to use storage space properly in all of the miscellaneous areas throughout our maintenance building complex."

