

Y2K: Two little numbers, one big problem — even for golf

Continued from page 1

"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 malfunctions.

According to Brad Kocher, director of golf course maintenance at Pinehurst (N.C.) Resort and Country Club, an expert hired to whip the resort into "Y2K compliance" told department heads "if it plugs in, it's subject to [Y2K]. It could have date-sensitive parts in it."

The consultant, Kocher said, "walked into my office, took one look at my TV set, and said, 'That probably won't work in 2000.' It has a timer in it. There are so many things to check out. Irrigation clocks, computers, VCRs..."

Clocks, timers, embedded chips — these gadgets that have made life easier — loom as the culprits in a bad prank, golf course superintendents and general managers fear.

Embedded chips, for instance, on which programming is written, are used instead of clocks in many devices. Billions of them are in use in satellites, water and sewage systems, desktop and laptop computers, airplanes and trains, nuclear power stations, power grid systems, pipelines, credit card systems, telephone systems, cellular phones and answering machines, facsimile machines, photocopiers, cameras, time-recording systems and

'Our biggest concern is the things that we have no control over.'

— Dominic Van Ness, Pebble Beach Co.

voice mail, air conditioning and heating systems, fire alarms, sprinkler systems, signaling systems, Global Positioning System receivers, microwaves and VCRs, and digital organizers. The list goes on.

"There are things you wouldn't think were date-driven that have a date chip," said Dave Wilber of Wilber Turf & Soil Services in Rocklin, Calif. "The solid-state brain in the Fairway 5100, for instance."

And their effects more wide-reaching than expected. "Remember when a satellite went down a couple of months ago and shut off cell phones?" asked Ron Andrews of Grand Harbor Golf Course in Vero Beach. "[Weather service provider] DTN went down as well. Look what losing one satellite did in terms of temporarily losing beepers and DTN. Make that losing 10 satellites and I don't have a clue what would happen."

Yet, Andrews is not one of the Chicken Little-type prognosticators. His operation is Y2K compliant and ready for the ball to fall in Times Square. Well, perhaps not totally.

"Basically, it boils down to two ways you can have a problem," he said. "First, on your site with your equipment."

"Second, with your vendors. That is really the difficult issue to get a handle on because they all have shippers and vendors and suppliers, who all have shippers and vendors and suppliers, who all have... You can quickly see that we are so interconnected in this society, that the problems expand away from our own site."

Van Ness agreed.

"Our biggest concern is the things that we have no control over," he said. "We have no control over power, or water, or

whether the municipalities are ready. We have no control over our vendors. For instance, the vendors who provide our clothing. It is shipped from the Far East, and it's dubious whether they're ready. Who knows? Our stores might go empty — not immediately, but a couple of months down the road."

Dave Johnson, South Central regional director of agronomy for ClubCorp said: "The larger utility companies are making efforts to be Y2K compliant. Can the smaller ones afford it, or can they afford not to? It depends on who's driving the horse."

Unable to affect outside sources, golf courses should ensure their own operations.

Van Ness, who joined Pebble Beach three years ago, said: "We were way behind. We had to do something in a hurry to get ourselves up to date. The average computer when I got here was on Word Perfect on 123, 386s and 486s and none were Y2K compliant. The whole thrust of the last few years has been an upgrade process to get Y2K compliant. It's a very unique strategy. Because we were so far behind, we had to buy new [computers] anyway. And due to that, it is part of our Y2K [plan]."

"Our Information Systems people will not be celebrating New Years Day in the traditional fashion. They will be here," said Pebble Beach Golf Operations Manager Shawn Smith.

Indeed, Van Ness said: "I've told everybody not to plan on going to the pyramids in Egypt for that time. We will have one or two staff on that night and have everybody come in to work on Jan. 1 to see what happens. It will be the best of all



worlds if we're sitting there bored."

Van Ness acknowledged that by midnight Dec. 31 it will be too late for preventive actions. "It will be fire control at that point if you're not ready," he said. "You think you're going to get through on a support line? I don't think so. The question is, will the phones work?"

Many feel Jan. 1, 2000, will be an interesting, and challenging, time. They feel it will neither be the end of the world, nor nothing, but somewhere in between.

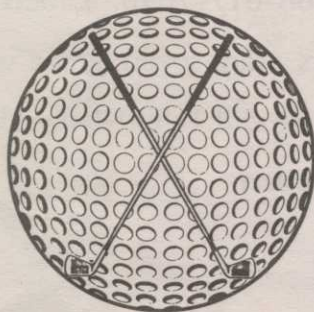
As superintendent Scott Cybulski, of Falmouth (Maine) Country Club, said: "I don't see us falling apart. Y2K's not going to stop photosynthesis, is it?"

One thing is certain, said Kocher: "All this conversation is going to take an incredible amount of time investment on people's parts. Every golf course has to call these vendors and ask if they're compliant, and that will create a lot of traffic. There will be a flurry of activity in 1999 about all this."

"Jan. 1, 2000, will be interesting but not that bad," Van Ness said. "I think it will be the longer-term effects that will start to show up. It will build — small problems at first and then more small problems and more, and before you know it, there will be all kinds of things going wrong. And if it affects the worldwide economy, it means less money, less expendable income. And what do you do when you stop income? You stop playing golf."

Formost Construction Co.

Serving the nation for over 30 years.



Golf Course Builders

"Doing One Thing Well"

STATE LIC. #267960

P.O. BOX 559

TEMECULA, CALIFORNIA 92593

(909) 698-7270
FAX (909) 698-6170

Getting a PC ready for the Year 2000

RUN A TEST ON ALL YOUR DESKTOP COMPUTERS TO SEE HOW THEY ARE EFFECTED BY THE YEAR 2000 PROBLEM

(Note: This test may effect demonstration or trial programs that have an expiration date making them unusable.)

1. Exit to DOS.
 2. At the C:\> prompt type: DATE and press the <ENTER> key.
 3. Enter the date 12/31/99 and press the <ENTER> key.
 4. At the C:\> prompt type: TIME and press the <ENTER> key.
 5. Enter the time 23:59:30.
 6. Wait one minute and check date (step 2).
(Date should be 0101/2000. Press the <ENTER> key to get back to C:\> prompt).
 7. Reboot the system, exit to DOS and check date (step 2).
 8. If the date is incorrect then enter 01/01/2000 for date and press the <ENTER> key.
 9. Reboot the system, exit to DOS and check date (step 2).
 10. IF the date is 01/01/2000 your system should operate correctly.
- Also, check your currently installed software.

OPERATING SYSTEM COMPLIANCE AND PROBLEMS

ALL Microsoft operating systems are Y2K compliant, but the following problems have been identified:

Windows 3.x: Control Panel Date function doesn't scroll to February 29, 2000. User must type in the number 29 from the keyboard.

Windows 3.x, Windows for Workgroups: The File Manager has cosmetic display error for dates in the 21st century ("19:0" instead of "2000"). This problem can be fixed by downloading a file from Microsoft that can be copied over the existing File Manager application.

Windows 95: (OSRI) File Manager has cosmetic display error for dates in the 21st century ("19:0" instead of "2000"). Windows Explorer does not have this problem. This problem can be fixed by downloading a file from Microsoft that can be copied over the existing File Manager application.