

# Ryder Cup prep a battle of logistics for Spence

By MARK LESLIE

**R**OCKPORT, Maine — When golf course superintendents prepare their properties for major events, they consider turf-type issues: greens, tees, fairways and bunkers. Bill Spence's day-planner is filled with meetings concerning building roads and parking lots, laying a 10,000-square-foot parking lot and a 40,000-square-foot slab for the caterer and bus terminal, putting down conduits to supply electricity to 57 corporate tents, and devising transportation for 30,000 or so spectators from the subway system of Boston to his property outside the city.

Spence is the superintendent at The Country Club in Brookline (Mass.), which on Sept. 24-26 will host the Ryder Cup, pitting America's greatest golfers against Europe's.

"As I sit at these meetings, so little about it is golf — it's puzzling some-



Bill Spence's crews refurbished all the bunkers at The Country Club in Brookline, including this bunker to the right and front of the 16th green.

times," Spence told an audience at the Maine Turfgrass Conference and Show at the Samoset Resort here.

Spence said his grounds crew "has made my job almost comically easy,"

Continued on page 26



The Country Club in Brookline's superintendent, Bill Spence, with one of his irreplaceable crew, Emma, who makes life difficult for any geese intending to visit the course's water holes or fairways.

## BRIEFS



### IGCSA ANNOUNCES DIRECTORS

AMES, Iowa — The Iowa Golf Course Superintendents Association has elected Dennis Watters, of the Fort Dodge Country Club in Fort Dodge, as president. He will be assisted by new directors Ron Stephan, Joyce Hamilton, John Ausen and Tom Verrips. Superintendent of the Year and Assistant Superintendent of the Year awards presented to two Cedar Rapids superintendents: Jeff Schmidt, of Twin Pines Golf Course, and Corey Shipman, of Ellis Park Golf Course, respectively.

### USGA PLANS ST. LOUIS CONFERENCE

ST. LOUIS, Mo. — The USGA will be holding a regional conference here March 16 at the Old Warson Country Club. During the morning session, Dr. James Murphy of Rutgers University will speak on "Water Injection Technology" and new uses for the Toro Hydroject. Dr. Erik Ervin of the University of Missouri will also be presenting "Are Your Greens Suffocating?" a seminar on monitoring O<sub>2</sub> and CO<sub>2</sub> in the root zone. The highlight of the afternoon session includes a presentation by Mark Passey, USGA Regional Manager, entitled "What's your golf IQ? Rules you need to know to manage the course." For more information on the conference, contact Mark Passey at 801-265-8620.

## Faucher undergoes 'birthing' of another kind in Bellaire



David Faucher

By PETER BLAIS

BELLAIRE, Mich. — Child birth and growing in a golf course. While admitting he has little experience in one of those areas, Shanty Creek Cedar River Golf Club grow-in superintendent David Faucher believes there are parallels between the two experiences.

"Someone said it was like having a baby," said Faucher, who served as Shanty Creek's The Legends course head superintendent for six years and will open the Tom Weiskopf-designed Cedar River layout on June 12.

"It was painful as hell at times, but now I'm ready to have another one. I mostly remember the fun. I've been working on this for two years, and I'm still not doing any of the routine maintenance I was doing at The Legends. It will probably be another year before we're just mowing and going. The work was hard, but the days didn't seem long because you're on your toes making decisions all the time.

"It was fun working with the contractors and the architect. I worked harder than I ever had before. It taxed every resource I had."

Raised in Marine City north of Detroit, Faucher, 47, moved West after completing high school. He worked a variety of jobs, including stints on the grounds crews at courses in Spokane, Wash., and Twin Lakes, Idaho.

At age 35, married with two children, he decided to get back into the golf course business. He returned home and enrolled in Michigan State University's two-year turfgrass management program, accumulating a 3.96 grade point average while earning the school's Outstanding Student Award. While in school, he worked at three Michigan courses — St. Clair Shores, Walnut Hills in

Continued on page 20

## WEED GENETICS

### Getting at the root of weed control

By DOUGLAS PAGE

**S**cience may finally be getting to the root of the weed problem. A group of geneticists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has isolated a plant gene that plays a critical role in the ability of roots to grow properly. The finding suggests that genetics could help scientists save time and money in developing effective, safe herbicides in the future.

As reported in the July 15, 1998 issue of Gene and Development, the work at MIT's Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research has succeeded in cloning and characterizing the gene (called Ethylene Insensitive Root 1, or EIR1) in a tiny weed called *Arabidopsis thaliana*. The roots of mutant *A. thaliana* weeds lacking this gene lose their ability to respond to gravity and are thus unable to grow downward into the soil — hence they perish.

"These findings provide important new insights into age-old mysteries about root growth," said Gerald R. Fink, director of the Whitehead Institute. "And they also may have tremendous implications for the agricultural and pharmaceutical industries. Currently, most herbicides are developed by trial and error. Compounds first are tested for their ability to kill weeds, and then later tested — often for years — to ensure their safety in animals. Often the most effective ones turn out, in hindsight, to be the compounds that act against genes present only in plants but not in animals."

The Whitehead findings suggest that scientists can design new classes of compounds targeted at plant-specific genes like EIR1, so that they would automatically be harmful to plants but have no adverse effects on worms and soil micro-organisms, bees, birds or game animals.

The war against weeds never ends for golf course superintendents, especially as demands increase for perfect turfgrass. Aggressive competitors for sunlight, moisture and nutrients, and prolific multipliers even under adverse conditions, weeds such as dandelion, buckthorn plantain, and broadleaf plantain present a challenge for even the most experienced turfgrass managers. Just one dandelion plant generates up to 15,000 seeds, each of which can survive six years in the soil — each one capable of creating 15,000 more seeds when it sprouts and matures.

Broadleaf weeds grow in all turfgrass areas. Many weeds in turfgrass are controlled by mowing, fertilizing and irrigating, but herbicides are the primary method of broadleaf weed control for superintendents. Turfgrass specialists advise that the best deterrent to weeds is a vigorously growing turf that is adapted to the site. However, perennial weeds, once established, usually require a herbicide treatment for effective control.

Continued from page 18