

Natural progress for supers

Kansas State University. State University of New York-Delhi. Who is next in the sweepstakes to become the "ultimate, deluxe, hybrid" educator of future golf course superintendents/general managers?

Penn State, Michigan State, Rutgers, Texas A&M, Guelph...

The list of excellent turfgrass management schools goes on and on in North America. We are truly blessed in that way. And now, as a handful of superintendents are "advancing" into general manager positions, K-State and SUNY-Delhi have jumped out front in the quest to teach all people would need to know if they desire to someday be promoted to running an entire golf course. (See stories, page 1.)



Mark Leslie
editor

"This is the perfect scenario," said David Gourlay, a Texas A&M graduate who is director of golf course operations and general manager at K-State's Colbert Hills Golf Course. "We are teaching the students that opportunities exist. When they finish here, they will have training in point-of-sales, merchandizing, the pro shop, food-and-beverage, the golf course... They are positioned to do a great job."

"What we hope to achieve in the 21st century is to get out of the box," said Dominic Morales, SUNY-Delhi's turfgrass professor and department chairman, explaining the school will teach the entire "team" for golf courses: superintendent, general manager and head pro.

K-State's enrollment tripled when it announced its new curriculum in 1998. Sounds like journalism schools in the wake of Watergate. Excitement reigned then for investigative journalism. Excitement reigns today as students foresee possibilities of a more comprehensive and promising future for superintendents.

It seems like a natural progression — if a person is so inclined. Many of the thousands of superintendents working today went into the profession because they loved the earth, working outdoors, growing living things, etc. They had no proclivity toward general manager-type jobs, and they still have none.

But, for those who believe they may want to take that step some day, the horizons have opened up to them.

And for golf course owners and developers, think about it: Superintendents already operate the bulk of a course's budget, the majority of its property, and perhaps the largest staff. Though they may not have been trained in finances and administration, they have gained the toughest training: the on-the-job type. Superintendents are also in charge of the most important asset, the thing that keeps golfers coming back — the course itself.

At many facilities, why look any further to find a new general manager? In Gourlay's case, for instance, Colbert Hills is the third facility at which he has been general manager as well as superintendent.

We tip our hats to K-State and SUNY-Delhi, and we wonder: Can others be far behind?

•••

Al Gore is like the man who people said opened his mouth only

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Meaningful award for builders

To the Editor:

We at Golf Development Construction, Inc. want to convey our sincerest thanks and appreciation for the Small Builder of the Year Award. The two awards given by Golf Course News each year are held in such high esteem by the builders and architects alike. The fact that these awards exist is a constant motivating factor to every golf course builder in the country and continues to raise the bar of excellence in golf course construction. This makes the last 30 years of moving and shaping earth and establishing grass all worth the time and effort.

It was an added pleasure to meet the Golf Course News staff at the Builders' Banquet. Please extend our gratitude to your entire staff for all that they do in producing what is regarded as the best publication in the golf course industry as well as present the highest award possible annually to the golf course builders.

What a motivating factor for this construction year! Thanks again for everything.

Sincerely,
Louis E. Miller
Managing Partner/Agronomist
Golf Development Construction, Inc.

What to do with all that cash?

What do the United States Treasury and the Royal Canadian Golf Association (RCGA) have in common? Both are sitting on piles of cash — the U.S. Treasury thanks to a strong American economy and the RCGA courtesy of last year's \$40-million sale of Toronto's Glen Abbey Golf Club to ClubLink, a Canadian course management firm.

What to do with the extra money is the focal point of much debate in both cases. We'll leave the U.S. Treasury situation to the Washington Post editorial writers and concentrate here on the RCGA.

The RCGA has been the governing body of men's amateur golf in Canada since 1895. Among its many functions are:

- running Future Links, Canada's junior national development program, and the RCGA Player Development program to identify and nurture Canada's best amateur golfers;
- operating 10 national championships and organizing two professional tournaments — the Bell Canadian Open and the AT&T Canada Senior Open;
- developing and overseeing the Rules of Golf and Amateur Status services, handicapping and rating courses throughout Canada;
- providing \$75,000 annually to the Canadian Turfgrass Research Foundation and working with the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System of Canada to improve agronomic conditions and the environment;
- publishing Golf Canada magazine seven times yearly;
- operating the Canadian Golf Hall of Fame; and
- conducting ongoing, rotating studies on a three-year basis: the golf participation study (1999) analyzing the demographics of the people playing golf in Canada; golf operations survey (1998) for superintendents, general managers and golf pros analyzing financial information from courses nationwide; and golf facility supply study (new) that will analyze the type of golf facilities in Canada and what gaps could be filled by new facilities.

RCGA represents 1,550 Canadian golf clubs and 280,000 golfers. So when it asks their opinions on what to do with the Glen Abbey windfall, it's likely to get 280,000 different opinions.

One of the most frequent recommendations is in the area of player development, said RCGA Managing Director of Member Programs Terri Yamada during the recent Canadian International Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show in Ottawa.

RCGA has been criticized over the years for not helping its better professional and amateur golfers improve their games to the point where they become prominent players on national and international circuits.

Sweden, with a comparable population and climate, has had great success developing world-class players. "Why haven't we had more Canadians on the PGA Tour?" is a frequent question, Yamada said. "There are a few, headed by Mike Weir. He's been quite stellar in creating excitement among Canadian youth. We want to encourage that even more."

But how to do that? That's where the \$40-million Glen Abbey windfall comes in.

The RCGA has proposed building what it calls "Centers of Golf Excellence" around the country. They would include championship courses plus a training academy in the three major urban areas of Montreal, Toronto and Calgary with satellite training centers in Vancouver and Halifax.

Ideally the Montreal, Toronto and Calgary facilities would have 18 to 36 holes, with at least 18 of PGA Tour quality so they could host PGA and Senior Tour events; a nine-hole short course for beginners, juniors and disabled golfers; and a training and teaching academy.

"We want someplace where kids can get good coaching and develop a camaraderie with people other than the golfers in their own area," Yamada said.

Why not use the \$40 million from the Glen Abbey sale to finance these projects? The problem is that that money, at least the interest, is already allocated.

The RCGA's existing programs cost approximately \$3.2 million a year. The RCGA must also find a way to pay for additional player-development programs, estimated to cost another \$350,000 to \$500,000, Yamada said.

RCGA membership fees yield about \$900,000 annually. Another \$1.5 million comes from the Bell Canadian Open. Glen



Peter Blais
managing editor

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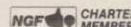
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Leslie comment

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to switch feet. Yet he is the candidate environmental activists are claiming as their man for the presidency. Knowing that golf course superintendents are environmental activists in the true sense of the word, I will continue to share such quotes as this from our vice president:

"It ought to be possible to establish a coordinated global program to accomplish the strategic goal of completely eliminating the internal combustion engine over, say, a 25-year period." pp.

325-326 *Earth in the Balance*.

To achieve his goals, Gore knows all too well that the best way to achieve an agenda oftentimes is a continuum of minor changes — a bit here, a chunk there.

"Minor shifts in policy, marginal adjustments in ongoing programs, moderate improvements in laws and regulations, rhetoric offered in lieu of genuine change — these are all forms of appeasement, designed to satisfy the public's desire to believe that sacrifice, struggle, and a wrenching transformation of society will not be necessary." pp. 274, *Earth in the Balance*

Blais comment

Continued from page 10

Abbey, when the RCGA owned it, contributed \$1 million annually in income. So, the Bell Canadian Open and Glen Abbey basically financed the bulk of RCGA's programs.

Now the association no longer owns Glen Abbey. That leaves the organization with a

\$1-million deficit, Yamada said. The interest from Glen Abbey's sale will have to bridge that gap.

The organization's bylaws forbid it from investing the \$40 million in high-risk financial instruments. "We are an extremely conservative association and our bylaws are extremely conservative. That means we can only do conservative investments. We have to preserve and somehow figure out how to make that \$40 million grow," Yamada said.

So, how do these golf centers get built if the \$40 million is already spoken for?

The original idea was to use the \$40 million as seed capital to help build and operate facilities that could generate income, like Glen Abbey did for many years. But other opportunities have recently presented themselves. And in this 'If-there-is-a-will-there-is-a-way' world of ours, they certainly deserve a serious look.

A second party — Yamada declined to reveal names while negotiations were taking place — has proposed building the golf centers while providing the RCGA a place to run its programs. If a satisfactory partnership can be developed, the partner would build, own and operate the regional golf centers. Different development scenarios are likely to be proposed in the Montreal, Toronto and Calgary markets, meaning the RCGA will have to analyze each one separately.

Another bitter pill for some to swallow would be if someone else builds the golf centers, RCGA would likely relinquish some control regarding accessibility, tee times and environmental sensitivity issues.

But, in the big picture, these seem like minor inconveniences. Golf in the United States has benefited greatly from the type of private/public partnership being discussed here.

Many a municipal course would never have made it off the drawing board were it not for the cooperative efforts of private developers and government agencies.

The First Tee program would still be a gleam in the golf industry's eye were it not for the willingness of U.S. golf associations and private firms to work together.

Here's hoping the RCGA keeps its nest egg intact to finance its many worthwhile projects and lets the private sector take part in developing Canada into the world golf power it can, and will, eventually become.



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