

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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Promoting golf course projects as 'smart growth'

By JASON STRAKA

A growing collaborative movement between development organizations, such as the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), and environmental groups, like the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is setting new development precedents around the country.

This new movement is called "Smart Growth" and is aimed at preventing and/or minimizing the effects of "unmanaged growth" or urban sprawl.

This collaborative effort has produced a consortium of development and environmental groups that back certain general principals of "Smart Growth" development including:

- Producing viable, economic development that protects and provides open space and environmentally sensitive areas.
- Providing predictability in the planning process and facilitating development that follows "Smart Growth" patterns to be permitted in a timely manner.
- Removing barriers to "Smart Growth" such as outdated zoning restrictions that separate and prohibit mixed uses.
- Providing safe, manageable land designs that enhance our communities and our quality of life.

While these principals are generally agreed upon, it is evident each supporting organization still places its own spin on the above principals and others they list in their "Smart Growth" policies.

For example, take the NAHB's recent

publication on its support of "Smart Growth." NAHB articles are entitled: "Smart Growth" Means Satisfying Demand for Housing; "Smart Growth" means Economic Growth Prosperity for Local Communities; and Cancel the Crisis: Farmland is not Disappearing.

Undoubtedly, these articles are focused on information that supports the ideals of "Smart Growth" and ways to improve our lives as seen by the homebuilders. They just do it with more of an economic-based spin and place more emphasis on that end of it. Rightfully so, since they are a development-based and -funded organization.

Conversely, the EPA's publication on "Smart Growth" emphasized the environmental end of "Smart Growth." Consider the titles of a few of their articles: "Smart Growth" Site Planning Protects Streams; Protecting Farmland: An Integral Part of Smart Growth; and "Smart Growth" and Floodplain Management.

These seemingly contradicting views on farmland and "Smart Growth" are the spin factor of opposing agencies trying to support the common good of providing viable, economic development while preserving and protecting our open space and natural environment. The essence of "Smart Growth" is to cluster housing closer together than most zoning would normally permit, and keep the "saved" ground as public or recreation open space — money versus environment, in extremely simplified terms, trying to reach a common goal.

What's this got to do with golf and politics? If the light bulb hasn't illumi-



Jason Straka

nated yet, it's that golf courses can be the link between both sides. In most instances, golf courses offer viable, economic income; provide for healthy recreation; and protect our natural environment. Golf courses would seem like the perfect "win-win" compromise that all interests are seeking.

Not only is this being proven in our suburban corridors — such as the Celebration development in Orlando, Fla., and The Ledges in Huntsville, Ala. — but on urban sites such as Eastlake Country Club in Atlanta.

Affordability, sustainability a must Promoting golf development as "Smart Growth" is beneficial in bringing a greater awareness to golf and its benefits. Golf is in prime position to be the glue or cement of "Smart Growth" development, but it will not be without its hurdles.

In order for golf to be the link between both sides, the golf industry must strive to build and create more affordable, accessible and sustainable courses. Designers, developers and operators must produce courses of economic vitality and protected environments if golf is going to be considered "Smart Growth."

Besides striving to ensure golf development continues to benefit "Smart Growth," the golf industry also faces the challenge of promoting the ideals and goals of "Smart Growth" in itself. Just as golf courses were objectionable to some environmentalists years ago, "Smart Growth" is facing objections of perceived increased densities and mixed residential and commercial use. In fact, certain zoning

The essence of "Smart Growth" is ... money versus environment, in extremely simplified terms, trying to reach a common goal.

makes it illegal.

"Smart Growth" would suggest that if a 400-acre site was up for development, it is better to have a 200-acre golf course and 400, half-acre lots than 400 one-acre lots with no environmental protection/preservation. A golf course could protect and preserve the environment, an EPA goal, while providing a source of open space recreation and viable income, which is a NAHB goal, all while providing the same units of housing.

This makes perfect sense, yet some communities resist change and/or are ignorant of "Smart Growth." Golf development not only fits the unique niche of being the glue among parties involved with "Smart Growth," but in addition it causes planners, developers and zoning boards to interact with other community entities on a regular basis.

Golf should become an educator and promoter of "Smart Growth" and at the forefront of innovative development and environmental stewardship. However, to teach others, we need to first educate ourselves so as to learn more about "Smart Growth." For more information, contact the NAHB, EPA, or the "Smart Growth" organization website at <http://www.smartgrowth.org>.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Button Hole extends accolades

To the editor:

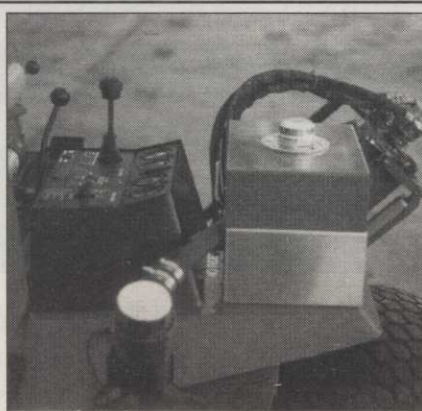
Thank you for the articles about Button Hole (*Golf Course News*, January). Regretfully, I failed to mention the extraordinary contributions, both financially and professionally, made by Sid Prichard's company, Earthforce. The final shaping of our nine holes and the construction of our 16,000-square-foot practice putting green were completed under some very adverse weather conditions.

The diligent work of Gordon Singer, the shaper on the job, confirmed his role of "ghost writer, par excellence" ... no pun intended!

The omission of Earthforce was not our only oversight. By way of explanation, the response and support for Button Hole has been so tremendous it has become very difficult to include all donors, but I would like to at this time.

We have received sizable contributions of materials and equipment from Allen Seed Store, Inc. Lesco, Bruedan Corp., Read Sand & Gravel, River Sand & Gravel, Pawtucket Ready Mix, Tee & Green Sod, Tuckahoe Turf Farms, Turf Products Corp., Dahn Tibbets, Weed and Feed Inc., and Textron Turf Equipment, which has been our largest contribution to date. Without the support and generosity of the above listed companies and countless individuals, Button Hole would be only a dream, rather than a reality.

Sincerely,
Edmund M. Mauro Jr.
Button Hole
Providence, R.I.



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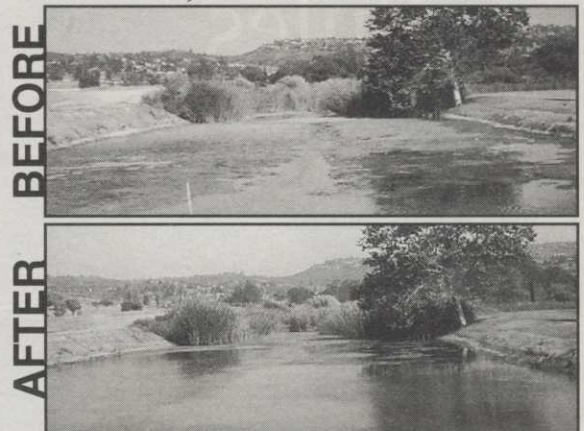
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