

East Lake interns win-win situation

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me sharper.

"There is a synergy there. We trade ideas and it makes me look at things differently as well. It's an enjoyment for me seeing them exposed to a different culture, teaching them, and seeing them go home and succeed."

The most recent success story was John Gubb of England, an intern in 1998 who recently was named course manager at Royal Bedfordshire in Bedford, England.

Course officials said what separated him from the other candidates for the position was that he had worked at a high-profile course in the States, Horr said.

"High visibility has something to do with attracting interns," said Kepple. "Bobby Jones was very popular in Great Britain and this is where he learned to play. It was known as the St. Andrews of America."

Ohio State University's (OSU) College of Agriculture has operated an international internship program since 1979 and a golf internship since 1988, sending American turfgrass students overseas and placing foreign students at golf courses in the United States. Program Coordinator Michael O'Keeffe, an Irishman who himself was an intern, works with foreign schools, screening and interviewing candidates, arranging their visas and placing them at American courses. So the host courses merely have to pay the wages.

Working with students from OSU, Penn State and Texas A&M, he will send 16 students to train at golf courses abroad — six or seven in Australia, seven in England, a few in Ireland and one at St. Andrews in Scotland.

"The demand from overseas is much greater," O'Keeffe said. "We have probably 60 students each year from Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand. They are training all over the country."

East Lake first got involved in 1997 when Irishman Ronan Brannigan, son of a golf course architect, interned here.

In 1998, Englishmen Gubb and Tim Randall spent a year. Then last April Jon Crook of England began a stay. Scotsman Kevin Bell and Irishman David Hickey, who both came aboard last November, will remain through the PGA Tour Championship at East Lake, Nov. 6-7.

"It's been a great experience," said Crook, whose internship is serving as the second year of his three-year turfgrass program at Myerscough College in Preston, England. "America is more advanced than Great Britain in turfgrass practices. We're trying to catch up in England."

Hickey, who studied at Elmwood College in Scotland and hopes to pursue turf studies at Myerscough, explained his reason for interning in the United States: "I thought it would be a great experience and get me ahead of the race. Not many people back home have come over and worked on courses in America."

At this point, the three students will be taking different things back with them to the UK.

Bell, who hails from Fife, Scotland, and owns a higher national diploma from

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Elmwood College, said the key element he has learned at East Lake has been "presentation on the course and quality of work."

"Back home there are a lot of differences," Bell said. "Soil tests, fertilizer content, etc. are done but those tests are more advanced over here... Money is a big issue. A lot more is spent over here on the championship courses. East Lake has corporate members and that income justifies the quality of the course. At our Open championship courses — Carnoustie, Turnberry and Troon, etc. — the price of greens fees dictates the quality of the course."

"In America it's a totally different approach to the business. It's much more professional," said Hickey. "In Ireland it's very laid back."

For both Hickey and England's Crook the most important learning has come in the areas of calibration of spreaders and sprayers, and irrigation set-up and repair.

Do the interns feel their countries' courses are becoming "Americanized" in their maintenance practices?

Hickey said that is the case at Arnold Palmer's K Club where he worked in Ireland, but added that is because of related housing and "the extraordinary amount of money being pumped into the course."

"I don't think they're becoming Americanized in Scotland," said Bell, "except in the construction process. Some new courses are using USGA-spec [U.S. Golf Association] greens... But the links courses are still very much traditional [in maintenance practices]."

East Lake's Horr, just back from a visit to England, said UK's inland courses "are starting to shift their focus to the parkland look. But even at the links courses, some things are changing. At Carnoustie they put in small mist-heads and are switching to a more detailed look."

He also pointed out that British, Irish and Scottish students are interning at Hilton Head and in Florida. "Ohio State has placed a lot of guys," he said, "and just by visiting courses and seeing equipment over here, they are starting to shift toward [American methods], and talk about bigger maintenance facilities, etc."

For instance, he said a couple of interns who returned home "get a little stressed out" seeing such simple things as leaves on a fairway.

But what they take back with them will not all relate to turfgrass management.

"I'll probably take home a lot of the values from East Lake," said Crook, "like how to manage a crew. It's very well-run, and there are a lot of people from different walks of life: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and from all over America. Back home they're all English, and there is no language barrier."

One barrier they will most likely face will be lack of opportunity for assistant greenkeeper positions.

"At home," said Hickey, "you can't get a first assistant's job unless you have at least six or seven years experience. The [condition of your] greens really don't count for anything. Experience is everything... It's very unusual to have a first assistant who is 25 or 26 years old back home." ▶

Opening doors

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can participate as well, he said, adding that some \$500 scholarships are available.

While OSU has strong ties with colleges in the British Isles, Australia and New Zealand, O'Keeffe said students are not limited to those countries. A student from Montana with solid German language skills was placed last year in Switzerland, for instance.

"Students will request cool-season or warm-season areas," he said, "to get a diversification from what they already know, which will make their resume more marketable if, say, they're back in continental Europe. A lot of British greenkeepers are hired in Spain, France and Greece, and even Morocco — wherever the European Tour goes, basically."

A group of seven American turfgrass students will embark on a unique adventure of their own in October.

Medalist-Troon, a joint venture between Troon Golf Management and Greg Norman, plans to develop more than two dozen properties in Australia. The company wants "American maintenance standards, but does not want to train greenkeepers from ground zero," O'Keeffe said.

The seven American students will train

PARTICIPATING COLLEGES

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Michael O'Keeffe, program coordinator for Ohio State University's College of Agriculture international internship program is working with a number of colleges in the United Kingdom and Australia. They include:

- In Scotland — Elmwood College.
- In Northern Ireland — Greenmount College.
- In northern England — Myerscough College, Askham Bryan College and Reaseheath College in Cheshire.
- In southeast England — Plumpton College, Oaklands College, Writtle College and Merrist Wood College.
- In southwest England — Carrington College.
- In Australia — A number of TAFE colleges in Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra and Adelaide.

there for six months "because they want the American maintenance standards," he said. "And they hope that if these students like it, in the future they may be potential employees."

People interested in the program should call O'Keeffe at 614-292-7720. ▶

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