

Golfsat.com

Continued from page 59

manufacturers, distributors and other related products and services. Golfsat users can also access DTN satellite weather for regional or national forecasts. In addition, Golfsat offers configurable chat, enabling a superintendent to filter or identify a region of peers with which to communicate.

There are 1,100 manufacturers and 50,000 products represented on the Golfsat website. Superintendents can look up a manufacturer, click on the product, configure the order, select a distributor, get pricing and throw the product in the virtual "forklift." The product is then ordered via Golfsat's secure distributor interface.

Likewise, Golfsat has catalogued research publications from 42 universities and has several consulting professors under contract. "Universities lead the Internet online," said Scott. "But you would be challenged to go to a site and in a few minutes find where their turfgrass or horticultural research is."

On Golfsat, superintendents can select a turf species and then choose from a list of insects specific to that turf. The site then links up to research relating to the pest and eventually to a product catalog page that suggests what to use to solve the problem and then places an order.

CHALLENGES

There are several challenges in launching Golfsat.

First, superintendents have limited computer hardware, 15 to 20 percent have no computer at all and only 10 to 15 percent have a computer with decent processing capabilities, said Scott. Those who already have computers and Internet access will be able to use the site for free.

Further, a very small percentage of superintendents has access to DSL or cable lines and only one to five percent have 56.6 modems.

To solve these problems, Golfsat is offering a hardware package to users that includes a fully equipped Pentium III personal computer and high-speed, broadband Internet access from anywhere in the nation using satellite, cable or DSL configurations. The package will cost \$29.95 a month and will be available this summer. Work on the satellite network is still being sorted out.

While Golfsat hopes to have direct access to a distributor's inventory, those agreements are also in flux.

"We have captured all the manufacturers' data. The challenges now lie with the distributors," said Scott. "We are on that road right now and if things start this summer we will begin to actively recruit other distributors and go through that conversion process."

However, if the interest shown at the GCSAA International Conference and show is any indication, signing on additional distributors and manufacturers will not be that difficult.

The manufacturer and distributor interest is something that we didn't anticipate," said Mike Trompeter, senior vice president of member and distributor relations. "The amount of top level people that stopped by and spent time with us understanding the program was very encouraging."

Continued on next page

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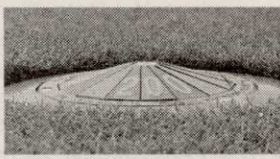
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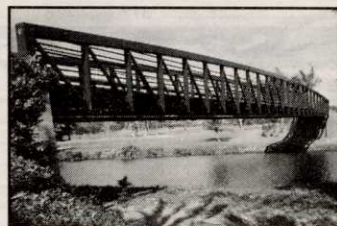


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A significant number of superintendents also registered for Golfsat at the show, said Trompeter.

GOING FORWARD

Golfsat will be tested at 200 beta sites in California, Arizona, North and South Carolina, and Florida this month which will be served by 12 distributors.

"We will work on flushing out bandwidth issues, but we expect that because of isolation and the limited availability of DSL, most golf courses will wind up with satellite connections," said Scott.

Golfsat is set to roll out nationwide this summer and Scott said the company is structuring itself to accommodate 70 to 80 percent of the nation's superintendents. "In the next three years, we hope to get to the 10,000 to 12,000 range," he said. ↑