

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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PERIODICAL

US-UK study: It is greener on the other side of pond

By ANDREW OVERBECK

SANTA ROSA, Calif. — The top American golf courses earn twice as much and spend twice as much on maintenance as their U.K. counterparts, according to a survey by novice architect Bettina Schrickel.

Following a year comparing the maintenance practices of 25 of the top golf courses in both the United States and the United Kingdom for her graduate thesis in golf course architecture at Merrist Wood College in Surrey, England, Schrickel has published the findings of her study.

"Some of the numbers really surprised me," said Schrickel. "For example, the large gap between the financial income of the clubs, the maintenance budgets and the number of greenkeepers."

Of the American courses that she visited, the average income was \$2 million, the maintenance budget was \$970,000 and the number of greenkeepers was 18. Comparably, U.K. courses had an average income of \$800,000, a maintenance budget of \$340,000 and an average of eight greenkeepers. Further, annual member-

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BIOLOGICAL CONTROLS

The world of biological controls is changing rapidly and GCN's special section, on pages 21-28, provides an in-depth look at the new research and products that are driving the industry. As government regulations and local legislation continue to take chemicals away from golf courses, the industry is primed for growth and many superintendents are starting to take notice. Also inside, a report on two ground-breaking research projects that use burrowing owls and wasps to fight pests on courses.

Certification the goal of CMAA env'l audit

By PETER BLAIS

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Audubon International (AI) hopes to develop a certification program within the next 12 months for clubs, club managers and superintendents, using the recently developed Club Managers Association of America (CMAA) Full Facility Environmental Audit for Clubs (see March issue).

"Audubon and CMAA are discussing what to do next with this information," said AI Executive Director Ron Dodson, referring to the self-audit that CMAA began mailing to its members in late March. "What we

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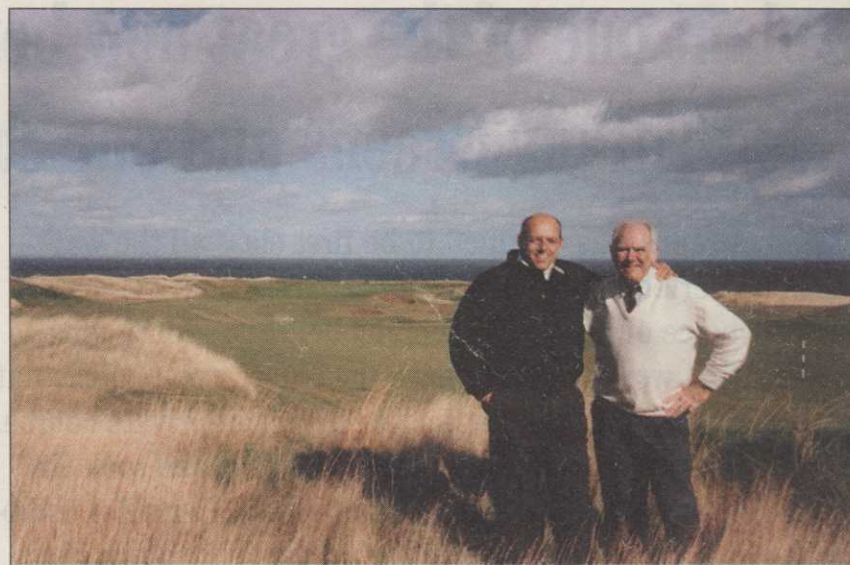
Simplot to buy Turf Partners

By A. OVERBECK

RANCHO BERNARDO, Calif. — Eco Soil Systems Inc. has accelerated its original February deal to sell the assets of its Turf Partners subsidiary to Post Falls, Idaho-based J.R. Simplot Co. Instead of buying \$20 million of convertible Eco Soil stock and enduring a 12-month valuation period before definitively purchasing Turf Partners, Simplot has agreed to buy out the distribution channel this summer.

"The stock deal was scrapped because Simplot didn't want to focus on our technology," said Max Gelwix, president and chief operating officer of

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NEIGHBORING THE OLD COURSE WITH AN OLD COURSE HERO

Longtime St. Andrews Old Course head greenkeeper Walter Woods, right, served as a turfgrass consultant for course architect Kyle Phillips, left, on Kingsbarns Golf Links whose 1st green sits in the far background. Kingsbarns, a public course, will have a grand opening the weekend following the British Open in July.

SubAir & Soil Air do patent combat in court

By MARK LESLIE

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — A battle about patents — spiced with added allegations of fraud, misappropriations and false advertising — will begin to be played out in U.S. District Court here in June between SubAir Inc. of Munnsville and Soil Air Technology of Middlefield, Conn.

The skirmish revolves around technology developed by Ferris Industries and

its subsidiary, SubAir Inc., starting in 1994 that uses subsurface piping to add air or remove water from the root zone of golf course greens to enhance root health; and a method developed by Soil Air Technology to measure pressure differentials and soil-gas concentrations to optimize soil growth.

But it gets much more personal than

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U.S.-UK study reveals differences in chemical, water use

Continued from page 1

ship fees in the United States averaged \$4,300 versus \$1,300 in the U.K. Schrickel also found that American courses consume more fertilizer, herbicide, fungicide, insecticide and water than their British counterparts.

"I found that the financial in-

come of golf clubs in the U.S. is three times higher, even though they have fewer members," said Schrickel. "U.S. members pay more because they can experience more — there are usually country club facilities — whereas on British courses there is only golf."

Schrickel said private golf

members in the United States also expect "carpet-like" turf conditions.

"This is influenced by the fact famous British courses are older and they are preserved for their historic character," she said. "For example, Sunningdale in England will never be as green as East Lake

Golf Club in Atlanta. The course is in absolutely great shape, but the natural character of the old heathland determines the appearance."

Another factor that drove up the cost of maintenance at U.S. facilities was irrigation. Schrickel found that only 4 percent of courses in the U.K. irri-

gated entirely, whereas 60 percent of the courses in the U.S. are.

"The courses that are in desert climates are the most expensive to maintain," said Schrickel. "Water certainly pushes up the costs. For example, at Troon Golf and Country Club in Scottsdale they only irrigate the playing areas and they have turf islands in the desert. This means that all the edges of fairways have to be cut regularly to control the speed of growth. Sure, a perfect irrigation system is a large investment, but the course also demands high maintenance."

Schrickel noted that some courses in the U.K. are emulating the U.S. style of maintenance.

"Courses that are designed by American architects are maintained in the American style because that is what the developer wanted. London Golf Club, which was designed by Jack Nicklaus, is in comparable condition to those in America," she said.

Environmental activities also differed greatly between the two countries. While 60 percent of the U.S. courses are members of an environmental accreditation scheme, only 8 percent of U.K. courses are involved.

"In America the courses are greener, but the out-of-play areas are more natural than in the U.K.," said Schrickel. "In the U.K. they feel that they already protect the environment and that their money would be better spent on turfgrass management than on bird houses."

How has all this information affected Schrickel's perspective on golf course architecture?

"The whole study made me analyze again what I should really consider in order to create easily maintainable golf courses," she said. "This was a learning process. I may have already known all of this, but I have become more aware of the importance of certain design principles."

Schrickel's design principles for an easily maintained golf course include:

- Generous surface sizing of greensites to moderate wear and tear.
- Spacious tees to allow for turfgrass regeneration.
- Consistently wide walk-ons and walk-offs.
- Limited bunker placing to moderate maintenance costs.
- Simplified irrigation systems.

But what if the developer wants flashy, deep, steep-faced bunkers?

"This is the ideal. Architects should consider all of these principles when building a golf course," she said, "But if a de-

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— Bettina Schrickel

U.S. versus UK study

Continued from previous page

Developer wants steep-faced bunkers I would work with them. They would have to serve playing and aesthetic purposes. We would have to work within the land, area, weather, budget and appearance of the surrounding landscape. Maybe we can do steep-faced bunkers, but they might have to have grass faces instead of sand."

Schrickel is also concerned about meeting market conditions when developing new golf courses.

"We would need to talk about who the target group is, who would come and play. I think that many developers still have the opinion that only a long golf course is a good course. Even championship layouts do not have to be par-72," she said.

"For a pay-and-play course it is much easier to break 80 on a par-70 course. It is the encouragement of the

Comparison of courses in the U.S. and British Isles

	U.S. courses	British courses
maintenance budget/year	970,000 USD	340,000 USD
% of club income	43%	43%
No. FT / PT crew	18 / 6	8 / 2
No. with turfgrass degree	2.7	2.0
No. sand bunkers	70	70
Annual fertilizer use	20,000 kg - used on 100% of courses 72% apply fert. on whole golf course 20% on whole course excluding rough 8% on greens, tees & fairways only 0% on greens and tees only	9,500 kg - used on 100% of courses 8% apply fert. on whole golf course 20% on whole course excluding rough 52% on greens, tees & fairways only 20% on greens and tees only
Annual herbicide use	133 ltrs. - used only on 92% of courses very individual application; mainly on tees but also fairways, semirough and rough (rarely on greens)	80 ltrs. - used only on 92% of courses very individual application; mainly on tees, fairways & semirough, sometimes on greens, rarely on rough
Annual fungicide use	90 ltrs. - used on 100% of golf courses 48% apply fungicides on greens only 32% on greens and tees 20% on greens, tees and fairways	60 ltrs. - used only on 92% of courses 56% apply fungicides on greens only 28% on greens and tees 8% on greens, tees and fairways
Annual insecticide use	105 ltrs. - used only on 92% of courses 56% apply pesticides on whole course 4% on greens, tees and fairways 20% on greens and fairways 12% on greens and tees	43 ltrs. - used only on 84% of courses very individual application. 8% apply pesticides on whole golf course 44% on greens, tees & fairways 34% only on selected parts of the course
Use chemicals for water irrigation/no. sprinkler heads	48% yes / 52% no 1,000 sprinkler heads 60% irrigate whole golf course 28% whole golf course excluding rough 12% greens, tees and fairways only	16% yes / 84% no 348 sprinkler heads 4% irrigate whole golf course 8% whole golf course excluding rough 28% greens, tees and fairways 52% greens and tees only 8% no irrigation system 8% yes / 92% no
Member of environmental accreditation scheme	60% yes / 40% no Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program, Safe the Wildlife	Countryside Stewardship Scheme

golfer and repeat play that we should work towards."

Schrickel is now working on putting her design ideals into practice. She is now a design associate with Golfplan/

Fream and Dale and is working on courses in Poland and England and will be heading to Texas in the near future to work on a project.

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