

## GCSAA shakes up management team, O'Brien leaves

LAWRENCE, Kan. — The departure of chief operating officer Joe O'Brien and the appointment of new directors highlight a management shakeup at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA).

A 27-year veteran of the golf industry, O'Brien said he is leaving to pursue new challenges. He joined GCSAA in 1994 to manage such programs as education, career development, communications, research and membership. "It was rewarding to work with such an outstanding group of individuals who represent the profession," he said. "I trust the association and its members are better off now than seven years ago."

He also was involved in the Golf and Environment Initiative, which in 1998 earned him the association's highest honor in the field, the President's Award for Environmental Leadership. "While we are losing a valued team player, he will always be our friend," said GCSAA president R. Scott Woodhead.

O'Brien began his golf career with the PGA of America in 1973 and worked his way up the ranks as director of education, manager of membership services and senior director for strategic planning. From there he became senior business developer for Marriott Golf.

"His contributions to the GCSAA and its

members were considerable and lasting," said Steve Mona, the association's CEO, who will consult with O'Brien and the management team before seeking a replacement.

Mona also announced that two new directors have been appointed to the management team — Clair Keizer, corporate marketing and sales, and Clark Throssell, research.

Keizer comes from Bernstein-Rein Advertising, in Kansas City, Kan. He has 19 years of marketing, advertising and association-related experience and will replace Bob Shively, who left the GCSAA to become CEO of the National Auctioneers Association. Keizer graduated from the University of Kansas in 1980 with a B.A. in journalism.

Throssell, a professor of turfgrass science at Purdue University, takes over as director of research. He holds a degree in biology from the University of Montana and an M.S. in agronomy from Penn State. He earned his doctorate in horticulture from Kansas State. His experience includes service as a GCSAA seminar instructor and member of the association's research committee, and as executive director of the Midwest Regional Turf Foundation. He replaces Jeff Nus, who left GCSAA to become research communicator at the U.S. Golf Association.



Joe O'Brien

## EPA clears Myrtle Beach National of wetlands violations

MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. — Federal environmental investigators have cleared two Horry County landowners of illegal wetlands ditching. Myrtle Beach National Golf Club Co. and Silver Carolina Development LLC got word recently that they are no longer subject to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's ongoing investigation of wetlands destruction in the county.

Myrtle Beach National was officially cleared in a letter from the EPA and the South Carolina Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM).

Silver Carolina got word that it was cleared in a conversation with OCRM officials, said Mike Wooten, president of DDC Engineering. DDC represents both Myrtle Beach National and Silver Carolina.

Both companies were included in the first round of investigations in the summer looking for violations of the federal Clean Water Act. The act protects wetlands because they filter water and absorb floods.

Investigators questioned activities on 570 acres Myrtle Beach National owns near U.S. 501. The company is growing trees on the site. "It was good to get

[the letter]," Myrtle Beach National president Clay Brittain said. "It is important for us to keep things right."



## Southern California PGA honors Thorman

BREA, Calif. — The Southern California Professional Golf Association (SCPGA) has honored golf consultant and benefactor Dick Thorman with its 2000 President's Award, recognizing his tireless work in the golf industry.

The award is presented each year to an individual who has given extraordinary service and contribution to the game. The SCPGA noted Thorman's major role in developing the association's two new championship layouts at Oak Valley, in Beaumont, 40 miles east of Los Angeles, making the association the first regional section of the PGA to own and operate its own courses.

"Thorman was so much more than a consultant to us," explained Greg Frederick, president of SCPGA. "He

helped us, educated us, nurtured our thinking and energized us to find out what we could do as professionals."

Thorman also has spent years donating time and expertise to develop golf programs for inner-city youths. He provided the development services and raised more than \$1 million for Pro Kids Golf and Learning Academy, a San Diego-based youth golf program chosen as the PGA Tour "charity of the year" in 1996. Thorman continues to serve on the president's council of Pro Kids Golf and to help other communities develop similar programs to bring urban youth in to golf.

With 25 years of experience in developing residential, resort and public golf projects, Thorman has participated in such high-profile projects as the purchase of the PGA West and La Quinta Golf Courses for KSL Recreation; restructuring of Del Mar Country Club; development of the Callaway Golf Design Center; and development and project management of Farm Neck Golf Club on Martha's Vineyard, Mass.



Dick Thorman

## Drought, wildfires, record cold — what a year 2000 was!

SILVER SPRING, Md. — The National Weather Service (NWS) has described 2000 as a "year of topsy-turvy weather," with the rest of this winter likely to bring more record cold.

Heat waves and drought scourged much of the southern and western United States in 2000, while the Midwest and northeastern regions encountered ex-

tended periods of cooler- and wetter-than-normal conditions, according to the NWS.

Months of below-normal precipitation and above-normal temperatures brought severe drought and widespread wildfires throughout the South and West. The Deep South experienced a third straight summer of below-normal precipitation, with the driest May-to-October stretch on record for Florida, Georgia, Ala-



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## First Tee breaks ground at Fort Smith project

FORT SMITH, Ark. — The First Tee program here kicked into gear in December, when ground was broken on a complex containing a six-hole executive-length course, a full driving range, a short-game practice area and a teaching facility.

The complex, laid out by Glen Day/Alan Blalock Golf Design, aims to provide afford-

able golf access and teaching programs for kids 17 and younger. "This is a great opportunity to be involved in exposing these youngsters to a great game that they might otherwise never have the opportunity to learn," Blalock said.

Students who participate in The First Tee learn much more than just how to swing a club.

Before being allowed on the course, they are taught the proper stances, grips and swing techniques, along with classroom instruction regarding golf etiquette and rules.

Once they learn the basics, they move out to the course to practice their skills. Students also work toward a certification that permits them privi-

leges and discounts at participating courses. Children who are interested can also receive supervision and training on golf course maintenance and care.

The Fort Smith project also will include an indoor training facility to be used in inclement weather. The clubhouse features classrooms, pro shop, a snack bar and restrooms. The classrooms will have doors



Blalock (left), and Day in Arkansas

that, when opened, directly face the driving range, so students can hit off indoor mats out onto the range. A maintenance facility will house golf carts and provide storage for machinery and tools.

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## NWS update

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bama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. The NWS said drought conditions were as severe as any observed during the 20th century.

The driest July to September on record occurred in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Arizona, Louisiana and Mississippi before torrential rains brought flooding to many cities and made



November the wettest November on record. The Dallas-Fort Worth area, location of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's annual Conference & Show, went 84 straight days without any measurable precipitation, breaking local records that started in 1898.

The widespread drought – 36 percent of the nation's landmass was in severe to extreme drought in August – contributed to one of the worst U.S. wildfire seasons in 50 years. Some 7.2 million acres of forest and grasslands were consumed by fire. The greatest losses were in western states, particularly Idaho and Montana, with nationwide losses estimated a \$1 billion.

For the first time since 1994, the United States escaped a direct hit from a hurricane. According to the NWS, there were 14 named storms in the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. Eight became hurricanes and three reached major hurricane strength.

After two years of unusually high numbers of tornadoes, the 2000 season remained relatively calm with 898 tornado reports.

The average U.S. temperature for 2000, once calculated, is expected to be between 54.1 degrees and 54.2 degrees F. "As we progress through the winter, there is a good chance of seeing a couple of more major cold outbreaks, and considerable swings in temperature and precipitation across the nation," said Jack Kelly, director of the NWS. ■