

# Off The Fringe

## Business briefs

### Fungus controls turfgrass insects, researchers say

A seed-borne fungus present in various fescues and ryegrasses is an effective means of controlling certain turfgrass insects, according to the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster, Ohio. The finding may offer turfgrass professionals an alternative to using synthetic insecticides.

Ohio State University entomologists found that overseeding endophytic perennial ryegrass into existing stands of nonendophytic grasses and Kentucky bluegrass slowed the spread of hairy chinch bug, bluegrass billbug and bluegrass webworm populations and their damage.

"Below ground-feeding insects aren't affected so much," said Doug Richmond, a researcher at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. "But the chinch bug, billbug and webworm all feed above ground or at the surface, so it works extremely well on them."

### Toro contest winners will work on Southern Hills during U.S. Open

Knowing where they want to be in 10 years netted three GCSAA members slots on the maintenance team at the U.S. Open at Southern Hills CC in Tulsa, Okla., as part of the Toro Championship Tournament Training Program. Contest applicants submitted essays on where they see themselves professionally in the next 10 years and what they hope to accomplish during that time.

The winners are Dan Tolson, a junior at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Co.; Brian K. Pardoe, assistant superintendent of Bethesda CC in Bethesda, Md.; and Brian Thompson, assistant superintendent of Elcona CC in Bristol, Ind.

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## Business As Usual

ECONOMIC SLUMP? WHAT ECONOMIC SLUMP?

By Todd Stumpf

**T**he stock market is a yo-yo and disposable income is no longer stretching the leather in wallets. But despite the economy's fickleness, folks in the golf industry aren't overly concerned that their business will see a downturn. Even if golfers' disposable incomes take a hit, the prevailing theory is that they will find other things to cut from their budgets so they can keep playing.

Still, industry veterans are prepared for what could happen if their economy turns sour. If the cash doesn't continue to flow, the maintenance department may take the heaviest hit.

Courses might have to curtail plans for aesthetic changes or large-scale renovation projects.

"If [revenue] is down, you streamline your operation as much as you can," said John Dodge, owner of Eldorado GC in Mason, Mich. "You could put off marginal or cosmetic improvements that might cost money."

Keith Ihms, superintendent at Bent Tree CC in Dallas, said some money-saving measures don't necessarily affect people or the quality of course conditions. Fewer overtime

hours might mean less income for employees, but at least it's not a job loss. Ihms seconded Dodge's idea about postponing visual changes, like flowerbed and tree plantings. He also suggested leasing, rather than purchasing, big-ticket equipment items for the short run.

Interestingly, Ihms believes a continued sagging economy could increase the availability of labor. Ihms has trouble keeping a full staff during

peak economic times because he can't compete in wages with area fast-food chains and retail outlets. Should there be layoffs in those areas, Ihms believes he'll have a better crop of potential help at his course.

"We're understaffed and getting employees is a problem," he says. "A lot of people work in construction, but that's one of the things people pull their horns in on when there's not a lot of money. If the economy [continues its] downturn, it will be easier to get employees."

Judy Thompson, spokeswoman of the National Golf Foundation, said the economic slump outside the golf industry could actually spur business within it. Even if they lose their jobs, dedicated golfers will view their situations as having more time to play golf, Thompson said. "They may not

### Money-saving Measures

- Institute fewer overtime hours for labor
- Postpone plans for renovation projects
- Lease big-ticket equipment for short run

## Business briefs

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### **GCSAA teams with XS Inc. for e-commerce program**

GCSAA Communications, a subsidiary of GCSAA, has entered into an agreement with Raleigh, N.C.-based XS Inc. to bring e-commerce to superintendents. The program began with a soft launch in May so that "GCSAA and XS can work with buyers and sellers to develop the best possible service prior to making a decision on a full-scale Internet commerce presence," according to GCSAA.

### **Eco Soil merges with PHC**

Rancho Bernardo, Calif.-based Eco Soil Systems merged with PHC (Plant Health Care), a privately held company with manufacturing headquarters in Pittsburgh.

Eco Soil is the surviving corporation in the merger and PHC stockholders will receive shares of Eco Soil stock. Both companies manufacture biological products that are alternatives to chemical pesticides and fertilizers.

### **Bayer changes name**

Bayer Garden & Professional Care is now known as Bayer Corp., Professional Care. The company said the new name better reflects the company's increased focus on the professional service provider.

### **Bush Hog building new facility**

To meet growing demand for its golf course maintenance equipment, Bush Hog will construct a new 330,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in Jonesborough, Tenn. Bush Hog is based in Selma, Ala.

### **Disney courses receive Audubon designation**

Audubon International designated the five championship golf courses at Walt Disney World Resort as Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries.

"We have a strong commitment to maintaining the balance between golf and the environment," says Gary Meyers, manager of sports turf and golf course maintenance at Walt Disney.

# Shopping for Hand-held Power Equipment

## DO YOU KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR?

**H**ow many hours a week would you say your hand-held power equipment is in use, especially during your peak season? Are you ever worried that it's going to break?

To get the most out of your equipment — and your crew — you should purchase hand-held power equipment with these key factors in mind:

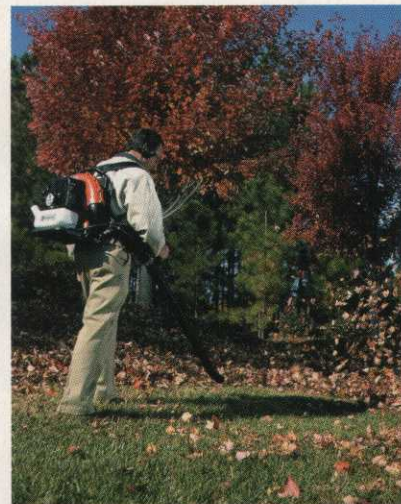
- Evaluate the durability of the product to ensure a good long-term investment.
- Test the power and power-to-weight ratio for maximum performance.
- Review important, and often overlooked, ergonomic features that lend to a better personal working environment — leading to reduced fatigue, increased worker productivity and improved worker satisfaction.

Generally, you should purchase equipment and accessories from manufacturers that spend a lot of time collaborating with professional users. As a professional, you benefit from the hours of hands-on research that goes into designing and manufacturing equipment to perform powerfully and comfortably.

### **Durability**

Your crew works hard, which means your equipment takes a beating. Ensuring that your equipment will run long and strong depends on your initial purchase decision and your ongoing maintenance. While many manufacturers use the words "tough" and "durable," take a closer look at the equipment to decide for yourself. Here are a few examples:

- How are the parts assembled? For example, check out the crankshaft. A forged connecting rod and forged three-piece crankshaft will provide longer life.
- When purchasing a string trimmer,



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**Hand-held equipment should be easy to use so it doesn't tire out your workers.**

look for a unit with fully enclosed throttle cables to reduce snagging and breaking when handling and storing the equipment. Also look for a solid steel or a tubed drive shaft to provide more durability and less vibration than a cable drive shaft.

- Does the equipment carry a good warranty? Buy from a manufacturer that backs its products.

### **Don't sacrifice power**

Look for equipment that provides the highest power-to-weight ratio available. Perhaps the equipment is light enough to handle, but does it provide enough power to accomplish all the tasks it's intended to do? For example, a power-to-weight ratio above .18 kw/kg means you've got high power combined with lightweight. Anything above 2.0 is exceptional.

In addition, you'll want to be mindful of recent regulations to reduce engine emissions. Some manufacturers have sacrificed power and increased weight in effort to be compliant. Look

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