

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

The 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

play as expensive courses, but they'll probably play," she added.

Another theory is that competition among courses will increase if the industry begins to struggle financially. Judy Hutt, owner of Shadow Valley GC in Boise, Idaho, says increased competition could initiate a change of attitude about customer service. "Golf courses are known for not having good customer service," she adds.

High-end public courses, the most popular among new courses, could take a hit if there's an economic slowdown in the industry. Consumers would play less glamorous courses to get more holes for their buck.

If the golf industry's economy does suffer, money will become even more of an issue than it is now. "Affordability is one of the great issues the industry has dealt with for years," Thompson says.

Stumpf is a free-lancer from Akron, Ohio.

Quotable

"The first time I ever saw a golf course laid out on paper, I said, 'Mr. Kidwell, that's what I want to do for the rest of my life.' He said, 'If you want to learn, I'll try to teach you all I know.' "

— Mike Hurdzan on his mentor Jack Kidwell, a famous Ohio architect who died in April at 82 after battling Parkinson's disease for more than 20 years. (*The Columbus Dispatch*)

"It's not always easy being a Supreme Court Justice. ... But not all of their decisions are tough, and the pending one involving Casey Martin ranks in that class. This should be a slam dunk. Ladies and gentlemen of the court, give the man his cart."

— CNN.com's "The Hot Button" columnist Jack McCallum on the impending Casey Martin vs. PGA Supreme Court decision

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