

increases rounds and volume of golfers to generate the appropriate revenue. "This is one of the biggest challenges facing the industry," he added.

Stuart Hayden, executive vice president of American Golf's Western Operations, replaced AGC co-CEO David Pillsbury on the panel. AGC has been in the news for its financial troubles. Reports late last year said AGC was having trouble paying its rent to its sister company, National Golf Properties (NGP). Hayden said AGC took a hit last year, especially in resort areas like Las Vegas, where rounds were down 25 percent.

"We were forced to take some dramatic action," Hayden said. "We laid off about 300 people at the end of December and the beginning of January."

Soon after the NGCOA show on Feb. 13, NGP announced it was merging with AGC. Upon completion of the proposed merger, the combined company will be the largest publicly traded golf management company.

Peer Pressure? What Peer Pressure?

SOUTHAMPTON GC SUPERINTENDENT HAS SIX SUPERINTENDENTS AS MEMBERS

By Todd Stumpf

A 3-foot downhill slider on the 72nd hole of the U.S. Open? Can't get more pressure-packed than that. Unless you're Elton Etheridge. Then it's a tap-in. In fact, just pick it up. It's good.

They say the toughest performance is one delivered in front of one's peers. Etheridge, 62, has been superintendent at Southampton GC in Southampton, N.Y., on Long Island for 28 years. For several years, his course has been home to six superintendents who have memberships at Southampton.

"It's an odd situation," Etheridge concedes. "They don't play here all that much, but it's still odd."

Regardless of who might be playing, Etheridge does his best to keep his 7,000-yard Seth Raynor-designed golf course in top shape. He brushes aside the notion of pressure, refusing to think about what his closest critics might be saying.

"I would think about it all the time," says Bob "Hook" Williams, superintendent at the Maidstone Club in East Hampton, N.Y., and a member at Southampton. "But it doesn't seem to bother Elton at all. That's probably because he does such a fantastic job."

Another member, Karl Olson, superintendent at the National Golf Links of America, also in Southampton, echoes that sentiment. He spun a tale of the club's championship,

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Quotable

"It's the first time in my life that anybody has been victorious toward the IRS."



— Mike Hughes, executive director of the National Golf Course Owners Association, on the new IRS rule that allows owners to claim the cost of modern golf green construction as depreciating assets.

"The patricians of the USGA aren't making decisions for the good of the game."

— Unbiased Acushnet CEO, Wally Uilhein, on USGA's recent attempts to begin to curb club size and ball flight. (*Sports Illustrated Golf Plus*)

"It runs between an 8 and a 9 on the Stimpmeter. I know it sounds crazy, but he's shown a lot of natural golf ability, and I want to encourage it."

— Robbie Curtis, of Beverly Hills, Calif., after replacing the wall-to-wall carpeting in the bedroom of his 9-year-old son, Dillon, with an artificial turf putting green. (*Golfweek*)

"The effort we witnessed in the aftershock of the World Trade Center collapse reminded us of how dependent we are on the protection and responsiveness of these unsung heroes in our communities. The 9-11 Initiative is our small way of showing our appreciation for their readiness and their ongoing contribution to our safety and well-being."

— KemperSports Management CEO Steve Lesnik on the company's 9-11 Initiative that calls for firemen, policemen and military to receive a 50-percent discount on greens fees at all KemperSports owned and leased courses in 13 states.

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Briefs continued from page 14

This development is due to improved expectations from Toro's residential segment related to the new line of walk power mowers for The Home Depot and dealers, increased snow shipments and expense timing.

Lesco refinancing

Cleveland-based Lesco is refinancing its principal debt agreements in a new senior secured credit facility. The new \$122 million facility includes an amortizing term loan of about \$7 million and a revolving credit line of up to \$115 million with a three-year maturity. Availability under the new revolving credit facility is determined by a borrowing formula based upon the company's eligible receivables and inventory.

Bayer stock makes its debut

On Jan. 24, Bayer AG listed its shares on the New York Stock Exchange under the ticker symbol, "BAY." In honor of the occasion, Bayer CEO Manfred Schneider rang the bell that traditionally signals the start of the trading day on Wall Street. Shortly afterwards, he placed the first order for Bayer shares from the trading floor.

Continued from page 15 when 2 inches of rain fell just before the event teed off. By the time players took to the course, Olson said you couldn't tell it rained.

Etheridge's job isn't easy to begin with, peers or no peers. Southampton features a rolling links-style course, reminiscent of old-style Scottish courses. Long rough, coupled with undulating greens, provide a stiff test for any superintendent's skills. "It's amazing," Williams says. "His turf is great all the time."

But Etheridge deflected praise back to Williams, noting that his old friend has a tougher gig. Williams' course spans 27 holes and has no water on the fairways. He also oversees grass tennis courts.

It doesn't hurt, either, that the men are friends. Not only are they playing partners, Williams and Etheridge have known each other since they were 7 years old. The two

The Silent Majority

Did you know that 75 percent of all golfers are only responsible for 20 percent of all rounds played, while a mere 25 percent of so-called "rabid" golfers (excuse us, that's "avid") play the remaining 80 percent?*



*Avid golfers are those that play 25 rounds or more per year.

SOURCE: NATIONAL GOLF FOUNDATION

ILLUSTRATION: DAN BEEBY

graduated from high school together before heading their separate ways. Eventually their paths crossed again and, ultimately, Etheridge wound up at Southampton because of Williams, the club's former superintendent.

"I am grateful for that," Etheridge says. "I learned a lot from him. We're still close friends."

Stumpf is a free-lance writer from Medina, Ohio.

Scanning the Web

Frank Andorka reviews www.pgatour.com/partner/wtw

(All sites are preceded by <http://> unless otherwise noted)

If you want to get a daily feel for what's going on in the golf business, you've come to the right place. The PGA Tour has partnered with Robinson Holliday, a golf writer who formerly produced a golf industry newsletter called, "What They're Writing." Now her newsletter is available to the general public through the PGA Tour's Web site. The newsletter is organized into easy-to-navigate sections.

The "Players" section contains updates on your favorite tour players, along with columnists commenting on their exploits. There is also a "Senior Tour" section, the

content of which mirrors the "Players" section, only focusing on the older players.

There's a section that focuses on stories about the past week's tournament. This week, it had a story about Buick Invitational winner José Marie Olazábul. It also had one about how the renovations done at Torrey Pines for the tournament will affect the public who play the course long after the professionals have moved on. Another section compiles stories on other tournaments throughout the world.

The final section, "Other Stories," often contains general-interest stories, which

focus on golf industry business news, but occasionally explore issues like club politics and agronomy.

The variety of sources and the notoriety of some of the authors are impressive. In the end, www.pgatour.com/partner/wtw will save you from spending hours scanning the Web looking for golf business information. Instead, you can spend the time taking care of the golf course.

Goldfom's managing editor Frank H. Andorka Jr. compiles Scanning the Web and wants to find a Web site that will save him from hours of writing stories every month. You can reach him at fandorka@advanstar.com with future column suggestions or sites you think he should visit.