

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Golfers spending, NGF says

A new National Golf Foundation (NGF) report signals that the downturn in the economy and the cratering stock market hasn't affected the way golf consumers spend their money.

The study, "The Spending Report: Sizing the Golf Consumer Marketplace," reports that consumer spending totaled more than \$23 billion in 2001, up 2.9 percent over the past two years.

Golfers spent \$26 billion on travel to play their favorite courses in 2001.

As a result of economic conditions of 2001, the NGF continues to monitor the spending habits of golfers in 2002, and will release a new report examining spending next April.

Lesco selling plants

Lesco plans to sell its Novex plant in Disputanta, Va., and its blending plant in Stockton, Calif. The company said it wants to source Novex from the eventual buyer of the Virginia plant and the blended fertilizer for its West Coast sales facilities from retained Lesco blending facilities or the eventual buyer of the Stockton plant.

"Novex is an excellent product for golf course greens and tees," said Michael P. DiMino, Lesco's president and CEO. "However, the Novex plant capacity is far greater than we need for our customer demand. We are looking for a buyer who can supply Novex to us and then use the remaining capacity in markets that are not competitive with Lesco's U.S. golf and professional lawn care markets."

Lesco announced that sales for the second quarter, excluding some charges,

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About That Fall Fungicide Application

IF YOU HAVEN'T DONE IT, KEEP IN MIND IT'S ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT APPLICATIONS OF THE YEAR

By Ed Vandenberg

Fall fungicide applications are some of the most important applications of the year. They keep turf disease-free throughout the winter when colder weather in some regions makes applying chemicals nearly impossible. With winter weather and cool-season turf disease working together to damage a course, superintendents need to get the most out of their late-season turf management practices.

Snow-cover, high moisture and low temperatures will weaken turf, providing ideal conditions for the spread of turf disease. By the time weather improves, damage from disease outbreaks may be widespread.

Gray and pink snow mold are the most widespread of the cool-season diseases and are main contributors to winter turf injury. Heavy snow cover prior to turf hardening-off increases moisture in the soil, providing ideal conditions for snow mold development.

Pink snow mold will appear during cool, wet weather, with temperatures ranging from 30 degrees F to 60 degrees F. Snow cover is not required for its appearance, but it does provide favorable conditions for dis-



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Snow molds are the most widespread diseases to afflict cool-season turf and are major contributors to winter turf injury.

ease development. Pink snow mold produces small (less than 6 inches across), round spots on the turf. The pink tint that gives the disease its name is most noticeable during the early morning.

Gray snow mold is caused by two species of fungi that thrive when moisture is plentiful (particularly during prolonged periods of snow cover). The disease is particularly common after snowfall on unfrozen ground. Gray snow mold can create significant damage in locations where snow cover has lasted three months or more. Damaged turf will have a grayish-

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increased 1.4 percent to \$166.5 million from \$164.1 million in 2001. Golf sales declined 4.3 percent.

"Second-quarter golf sales were disappointing, and there are no excuses," DiMino said. "We are changing the structure of the golf sales team, and we expect better results in the coming periods."

Lesco announced its third-quarter results in late October.

Billy Casper to manage Forest Preserve

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Ill., owner of 10 golf courses and two driving ranges in the Chicago metropolitan area, has entered into a multiyear agreement with Billy Casper Golf of Vienna, Va., to manage its golf facilities.

BCG will provide turnkey-management services to the Forest Preserve District, including agronomy, beginning after the 2002 golf season.

Bush Hog, Great Bend expand

Bush Hog and Great Bend recently opened a 400,000-square-foot plant expansion at Jonesborough, Tenn., to meet demand for their equipment. The facilities are designed to meet Bush Hog's and Great Bend's manufacturing needs for the next 10 years. Additional land has been set aside for future expansion.

Leave Your Ego at the Front Gate

BY DOING SO, YOU'LL RID YOURSELF OF A LOT OF STRESS

By Jim Black

I have some humble advice about this line of work that I would like to share, especially to assistants going after your first superintendent positions and students ready to take on the real work of a golf course. That advice is this:

Leave your ego at the front gate.

In my observation as a grunt, an assistant and a superintendent, I've noticed an amazing amount of golfers who assume they know my job better than I do. I didn't think about this angle going in and thought I could just grow the grass, mow the grass and everyone would be happy. Well, I can assure you that you won't be able to please everyone — no matter what you do. This is where the trouble starts.

Unfortunately, it's human nature to focus on the negative and overlook the positive. For example, you can have a day of 250 golfers traipsing around, stomping on, driving over and chunking out your turf. I'll take an unscientific guess that 90 percent of those golfers will have no contact with you; 5.4 percent will say the course looks great; you will smile and wave to 4 percent; and then the dreaded .6 percent (one or maybe two people) will have some sort of complaint, criticism or judgement about your hard work.

Now, I don't mean to be preaching to the choir, but bear with me a minute. Who do you listen to? I would venture a guess that while the 5.4 percent complimentary people are nice to listen to, the .6 percent will grate on your nerves. You may even lose sleep over whatever the complaint was.

You will wonder why this "thing" went wrong and who's to blame. If the



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A Friend of the Earth Offers Educational Tips

You might think someone like Brent Blackwelder, president of Friends of the Earth, a national environmental organization dedicated to preserving the health and diversity of the planet for future generations, would be down on golf. But Blackwelder enjoys the game and can drive and putt with the best of them. "I've spent my whole life playing golf," he says.

Blackwelder also loves the earth, and believes golf and the environ-

ment can co-exist. At the fourth National Golf & Environment Summit held in Nebraska City, Neb., earlier this year, he offered these ideas for golf courses to educate players on the importance of the environment.

- Use yardage books to convey an environmental message.

- Use signs to educate. "Sometimes signs say to keep out of an area because it's environmental," Blackwelder says. "But the sign

doesn't tell why to keep out. That message can be illuminating."

- Explain the health and harm a course can do to water and wildlife in a golfer's guide.

- Use the media for coverage on what your course is doing to preserve the environment.

- Stage a golf-and-environment tournament to raise money for environmental improvements.

— Larry Aylward, Editor