

# Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

## Business briefs

### Deere profits up

Moline, Ill.-based Deere & Co. reported a better-than-expected profit of \$68 million for the first quarter. That's compared to a \$38 million loss in the period a year ago. It's the third consecutive quarter the company has posted a profit.

In other company news, Deere & Co. announced it has extended two agreements with the PGA Tour, guaranteeing the company will continue its sponsorship of the John Deere Classic and its exclusive partnership to provide equipment to the Tour.

The agreements extend the Deere's sponsorship of the Classic through 2010, and its status as the official equipment supplier to the PGA Tour through 2014. "Our company's relationship with professional golf has resulted in many positive benefits since our first agreement with the PGA Tour in 1997," said Robert W. Lane, Deere's chairman and CEO.

### Toro off to good start

The Toro Co. reported net earnings of \$7 million on net sales of \$296 million for its fiscal 2003 first quarter ended Jan. 31. Compared to the same fiscal period in 2002, the Bloomington, Minn.-based company reported a net loss of \$29.7 million. Toro's professional segment sales increased 10.1 percent to \$193.4 million. The increase resulted from higher volume in golf, grounds and landscape contractor equipment and residential/commercial irrigation products.

### The Andersons plans new products

The Andersons Golf Products expects to register and sell a new product by the second half of this year, though company officials wouldn't discuss specifics until the registration is complete. Mike Bandy, manager

*Briefs continue on page 16*

## Baseball Manager or Superintendent?

LACK OF JOB SECURITY IN THE PROFESSION IS A BIG PROBLEM

By Dave Fearis

**W**hat's the common trait between a baseball manager and superintendent? The answer is that both lack job security.

Take the case of Mike Hargrove, manager of the Cleveland Indians from 1991-1999. In his last five years with the Indians, he led them to two American League pennants and five straight American League Central Division titles. His record in those five years was 491 wins and 319 losses. Sounds impressive, doesn't it? However, he was fired after the 1999 season, presumably for not winning a World Series.

It's a similar situation with some superintendents? I recently began writing down examples of superintendents being fired for what I would consider undue reasons. When I got done, I realized the list was too long to write this article. So I tried to find a common thread with all these firings.

Basically, it got down to personalities and egos — not on the superintendent's part, but on the part of the club president, board members and/or general manager. That's not to say that it certainly could be a two-way street, and the superintendent could also be at fault. But in the majority of the cases I had listed, I knew the superintendent

and would say that his ego and/or personality was not the problem.

When personality entered into the picture, it was that example where a superintendent had offended or upset a golfer. The golfer went on to become a board member and eventually president of the facility. Then the golfer made it his personal crusade to get rid of the superintendent.

Ego becomes a factor when a superintendent has tenure at a facility, such

**Ego becomes a factor when a superintendent has tenure at a facility, such as 15 to 30 years.**

as 15 years to 30 years. The superintendent has done a fine job, and in many cases has been involved in rebuilding or renovating the course or installing a new irrigation system. The person also has a strong membership backing.

But sometimes it all comes undone when the facility hires a new general manager who feels threatened because of the superintendent's long tenure and membership alle-

*Continued on page 16*

## Business briefs

### *Briefs continued from page 14*

of control and combination products in the professional turf products division, said the last two years have been spent integrating the people and products from The Scotts Co.'s professional products division. The Andersons purchased the division in 2000.

During that transition, the company has invested heavily in research and development and focused on creating a national brand name. "The results are finally starting to show themselves this year," Bandy said. "We expect to launch one new product in the second half of 2003 and one before the GCSAA show next year."

### **LESCO sales up for 2002**

Cleveland-based LESCO announced net sales for 2002 were \$511.7 million, up 1.5 percent from the \$504.3 million reported in 2001. Golf sales were flat (\$152.7 million vs. \$152.6 million).

### **Briggs & Stratton unveils division**

Briggs & Stratton ramped up its commitment to the commercial market by unveiling a new division devoted solely to engines designed for it. The new division, called the Commercial Power Group, was created because Briggs & Stratton felt a need to create a clear distinction between its consumer products and its products for commercial suppliers.

### **Maycock is Cebecco's 'Man of Year'**

Cebecco International Seeds honored Robert Cameron Maycock as its "Man of the Year." Maycock is the former owner of The Cameron Co. in Palm Springs, Calif., the first supplier of professional turf products to superintendents and landscapers in the area. He sold the company in 1997 to Eco Soil Systems DBA Turf Partners Inc. (now Simplot Partners).

### **Finlen honored by SRO**

Seed Research of Oregon named Pat Finlen as its Superintendent of the Year for his efforts as director of golf course maintenance at The Olympic Club in San Francisco. Seed Research also named the Arnold Palmer Signature Golf Course at Stonewall Resort as its Course of the Year for 2002.

*Continued from page 14*  
giance. Then, within two to three years, the general manager starts maneuvering to get rid of the superintendent. It's a matter of control — the general manager wants department heads that he or she hires and can control.

Another instance that is somewhat similar to the above happens when a new general manager is hired and soon fires the tenured and higher-paid department heads. He or she then replaces them with lower-paid and less-experienced people.

It looks good on the bottom line, but it doesn't work when the course conditions suffer in the ensuing years. However, that general manager is usually long gone to another job.

The last situation I will present is one where the average age of the membership at a facility changes from older to younger. These younger ones are what I call the "trust fund" group. Either they inherited their wealth or made it in the past five years in the stock market. They believe that money can solve any problem (even those dealing with Mother Nature) and want instant gratification. They rise to the ranks of board members at a golf facility and bring with them this "trust fund" philosophy. One of the first things they seem to do is make changes.

I realize that all of the above examples could be construed as whining. Also, I realize there are many golf facilities where the superintendent's relationship with the board and/or general manager is excellent. However, I believe that the situations described in the above paragraphs are realistic and not isolated situations. The lack of job security in golf course maintenance profession is a serious problem.

What's the answer to the problem? I called an attorney who deals with labor relations and asked him what he would recommend. He said every superintendent should have an employment agreement because it helps define his or



**Dave Fearis**

her position regarding expectations and addresses issues like benefits.

I realize the above explanation of an employment agreement is basic. However, the point I want to make is the importance of having one. According to the last GCSAA Employment & Compensation Survey, only 26 percent of the respondents had an employment agreement. Without an employment agreement, the employee is an "employee at will," which means he or she can be terminated anytime.

I realize that you know some superintendents who were terminated that had employment agreements, which proves there's no insurance policy that guarantees job security. However, another key that the attorney mentioned is communication.

That shouldn't surprise anyone because we all know that you can't communicate enough. Obviously, you have to communicate to the right people. This could be your immediate supervisor — the general manager, green chairman or director of golf. However, don't take it for granted that what you communicate to a person gets passed on.

For example, if you're at a country club, it would behoove you to attend the board meetings and give a brief presentation on what you are doing on the golf course — problems you're having and how you're solving them. Also, communicate with golfers through bulletin boards, newsletters and being accessible at the first tee. Plus, it doesn't hurt to be involved in your community.

Remember, you are constantly selling yourself. It certainly will help people realize that you are an important asset to your golf facility.

In comparison, perhaps it will be like winning a World Series — your own personal World Series.

---

*Fearis was a superintendent for 30 years and is currently the turf and ornamental products specialist at PBI Gordon.*

## Off The Fringe

# A Complete (and Pleasant) Surprise

GARVIN IS CAGCS'S SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR AND THE FIRST WOMAN TO RECEIVE THE HONOR

By Anthony Pioppi

**T**he Lowell family has had its fair share of golf awards over the years, but the latest — and most likely the last — came as quite a surprise.

In January, the Connecticut Association of Golf Course Superintendents (CAGCS) named Heather Lowell Garvin its 2002 Superintendent of the Year, making her the first woman to hold that distinction in the 22 years of the award.

Garvin is the superintendent at the nine-hole Canton (Conn.) Public GC that was built by her great-grandfather



Heather Lowell Garvin (front) with her family: (from left) father Walter Lowell, mother Ruth and husband Dana Garvin.

and grandfather and run by the family since it opened in 1932. Her husband, Dana, is the assistant superintendent and mechanic. The previous superintendent was her father Walter Lowell, a

CAGCS Life Member who is also a PGA pro. In 1978, he was selected National PGA Golf Professional of the Year.

In 2000, the Metropolitan Golf Writers Association named the Lowells as the national golf family of the year.

For Garvin, the award was a complete surprise. The family was informed of the honor a few days before the presenta-

tion. Her father, mother Ruth, who works in the pro shop, and husband managed to sneak into the awards ceremony without Garvin finding out. When her name was announced, Garvin said she was stunned, but managed to leave the microphone before getting too choked up.

"I didn't say too much," she said. "You just say your thank yous. I got off before I cried. It's nice to be honored by your peers."

Voting was open to the 44 Class A superintendents as well as the life members of the Connecticut association. There are three other women Class A superintendents in the Connecticut Association.

John Callahan, president/owner of The Cardinals, a golf course supply company, is the commercial representative to the CAGCS and was in charge of the voting. He surmised many members cast their ballot for Garvin, 42, as a way of honoring her for her years of service to the association in what might be her final season as a superintendent.

Sadly, Canton may have hosted its last round. Since the mid-1990s, the extended Lowell family has been negotiating to sell some of the most viable undeveloped property in the wealthy Hartford suburb. The course has 1,400 feet that borders the busy four-lane Route 44. The final paperwork is expected to be completed this spring. Once sold, the layout is slated to be

*Continued on page 20*

## Quotable

**"Something that really gets twisted around is the idea that our headquarters needs to be close to the PGA for us to be respected. If we were in the same building as PGA, we'd still be in the basement."**

— *A California superintendent commenting on GCSAA's consideration to move to a "golf-centric" location.*



**"You can't say to your green chairman, 'You may be a successful businessman, but you don't know diddly-squat about growing grass,' but you want to."**

— *Tim Moraghan, USGA tournament agronomist, talking about the politics involved in golf course maintenance.*

**"I was having a discussion with Houston Couch about fairy ring the other day. Well, let's be honest: It was pretty much a one-way conversation."**

— *Leon Lucas, agronomist of the Carolinas Golf Association, on talking with the notoriously opinionated professor from Virginia Tech.*

## Off The Fringe

*Continued from page 19*

turned into an upscale shopping mall.

Walter and his two brothers own the golf course, but there is little interest by the extended family, including Heather's sister and cousins, to continue operating the business, he said.

Garvin graduated from the University of Denver with a degree in psychology. Following her senior year in college, she spent her stint on the grounds crew. Although she had worked on the golf course nearly her whole life, it had been inside the pro shop.

"It was really enjoyable. I didn't realize there was that much science," she said of her stint outside.

Following college Garvin fulfilled a dream and moved to Bermuda. The only work she could find was in an office and after a month she realized the life was not for her and returned to golf course grounds crew. The following off-season, she attended her first turf classes

as part of the University of Massachusetts winter school. She continued her education through the state, regional and national associations.

Since joining the CAGCS, Garvin has been active within the organization. In 1993, she was appointed to the CAGCS Board of Directors. She continues to be re-elected.

Garvin also excels in golf, sporting a single-digit handicap. She has also donated her time in teaching the game.

With all her ties to golf, another job in the business seems the logical choice. But Garvin is unsure what her next step will be after cleaning out the pro shop and helping her parents move out of the house just off the first tee that contains a golf course's lifetime of memorabilia.

"We'll see what happens," she said. "I'm not going to rush into anything."

---

*Pioppi is a free-lance writer from Middletown, Conn.*

## D'Avino Named Group Publisher

Tony D'Avino is the new group publisher of *Golfdom* magazine and three other magazines at Advanstar Communications, including *Landscape Management*, *Pest Control* and *Landscape Design/Build*. D'Avino comes to Ad-



vanstar from Penton Media, where he served as a group publisher. He replaces John Payne, who was group publisher from 1995 until early 2003.

"We're extremely fortunate to have Tony joining our team," said Alex DeBarr, Advanstar executive vice president. "We'd also like to wish John Payne the best in his next endeavor."

D'Avino said he's excited to take on the new role. "This is a great chance to work with the most-respected and fastest-growing group of magazines in our industry."

Get The Look of a Champion

Get a free Pro-Ap® Hose-End Applicator with a qualifying purchase of Tournament Ready liquid. Visit our website for details.

Tournament-Ready® liquid or granular soil surfactant keeps greens and tees looking and performing their best in the toughest conditions. For effective control and prevention of localized dry spot, get the look of a champion with the proven performance of Tournament-Ready.



**Tournament-Ready®**  
SOIL SURFACTANT

Manufactured by KALO

[www.kalo.com](http://www.kalo.com)



**NEW!**  
Economical  
Tournament-Ready  
Granular

# 'I Missed Growing Grass'

ANTAYA LEAVES USGA GREEN SECTION; WANTS TO GO BACK TO BEING A SUPERINTENDENT

By Anthony Pioppi

**A** year and a half after becoming the first and only female regional agronomist for the USGA Green Section, Kathy Antaya has decided to return to being a superintendent. Her last day with the Northeast Region was Nov. 8.

"It was a wonderful experience," Antaya said. "I'll be grateful forever to the USGA for giving me the opportunity. It just turned out it wasn't my cup of tea. I missed growing grass."

Antaya has since returned to the

Grand Rapids, Mich., area, where she lived before moving to Pennsylvania after taking the USGA job. She has not yet found a new job.

"She'll be missed," said Dave Oatis, director of the Northeast Green Section. "She did a very good job and I was impressed with her work ethic."

According to Antaya, she enjoyed visiting golf courses and learning from, as well as helping superintendents, but the report writing aspect became tedious. "That pretty much tipped the scales for me," she said.

There was also the guilt factor of not being able to take her 4-year-old mutt Jack to work, like she did while a superintendent.

"I spent a lot of evenings promising

him he'd have a job again," she said.

Oatis said there are not plans to fill the vacancy created by Antaya's resignation.

Antaya, former superintendent of Meadows GC in Allendale, Mich., once recalled when she and another female student were the only two women in the turf program at Michigan State University. She said a respected professor and a distinguished superintendent attempted to convince her that a superintendent's job would be too difficult for her. At that point, Antaya said she felt more determined than ever to prove them wrong.

Antaya once said: "Rarely am I reminded of my minority status, but it's a fabulous advantage at large professional gatherings — there are no lines for the bathroom."



Kathy Antaya

*Pioppi is a free-lance writer from Middletown, Conn.*

## PAY LESS. CLIMB MORE.



Get the most out of your budget while out-mowing all competitors on steep hills and banks. Try the new 8400—the next generation of National.

- A lower center of gravity and hydrostatic drive make the 8400 the King of the Hill
- The 8400's 15" overhang is the best in the industry—dramatically reducing hand-mowing time
- All-new electric clutch gives you perfect reel and ground speed, allowing you to slow down to cut the tough spots while maintaining a high quality cut

**It's time to demo the next generation of National. Call 888-907-3463 today.**



SINCE 1919

[www.nationalmower.com](http://www.nationalmower.com)