

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Hunter facility struck by arson

Thankfully, no one was injured, said Jeff Carowitz, vice president of marketing for Hunter Industries, one of the golf industry's irrigation companies. But the arson fires that struck Hunter's main manufacturing facility in San Marcos, Calif., on Oct. 26 "was a terrible blow to the company and the Hunter family," Carowitz said.

Damage from the fires was estimated at \$5 million. While there was damage to the company's molding department and water damage to administrative offices, the building was structurally sound.

"Hunter is fortunate to have multiple manufacturing sites and can quickly transfer production capabilities to its auxiliary facilities in San Marcos, in addition to its company plant in Cary, N.C., and its new manufacturing center in Tijuana, Mexico," Carowitz said.

BASF sells Basamid

BASF was in the news frequently in November. The company sold its agricultural soil fumigant business to Kanesho Soil Treatment BVBA in Brussels, Belgium. The business, sold under the name Basamid, consists of the active ingredients Dazomet, 1,3-Dichloropropene and Metam-Sodium. BASF will continue to manufacture Dazomet at its German facility and supply it to Kanesho under a long-term agreement. Kanesho Soil Treatment is a subsidiary of Agro-Kanesho Co. Ltd. in Japan.

Agro-Kanesho is a medium-sized manufacturer and distributor of agrochemical products in Japan. Agro-Kanesho has been a distributor of Basamid, the BASF trademark for Dazomet-containing products, for 23 years, and has played a significant role in expanding the business.

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Superintendents Brave Wildfires

SOME SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COURSES SERVE AS FIREBREAKS

By Anthony Pioppi

With flames raging around them and destruction just a sandwedge away in some cases, golf courses throughout Southern California acted as firebreaks and safe havens during the damaging wildfires that roared through the area in late October.

At Tierra Rejada Golf Club in Moor Park, superintendent Fernando Gonzalez started driving to the course as a wildfire approached, but had to walk the last three miles to his job because a road was closed. While he was doing so, Gonzalez used his walkie-talkie to radio commands to the course.

According to General Manager Tom Szwedzinski, Gonzalez gave him instructions on how to turn on the irrigation system in an effort to combat the flames.

"I know a little about irrigation systems, but I don't know what controllers turn on what," Szwedzinski said.

Gonzalez, Szwedzinski and assistant pro Jason Tenney and course agronomist Kent Alkire spent four hours traversing the course in the dark to keep applying water,

putting down more than 2 million gallons.

The first fire came up to the course on Oct. 25 but then receded. But when all looked safe, the fire returned early the next morning and was making its way toward the clubhouse when a west wind directed it away at the last moment.

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TOM SZWEDZINSKI

"It just missed us," Szwedzinski said. "The club suffered no damage to building or equipment, but was closed for more than a week."

The club sits at the major junction of Highway 23 and Tierra Rejada road. About 100 new homes sit on the side opposite the club.

"The fire never crossed us," Szwedzinski said. "We were the end of the fire. If it jumped the freeway some of those homes were toast."



Geoff Shackelford

"It's either black or green, that's it," superintendent Jeff Hicks said of Rustic Canyon Golf Course.

At the two-year-old Rustic Canyon Golf Course, superintendent Jeff Hicks allowed five neighbors and their 16 horses to spend the night in the maintenance facility, which was made more secure by the fact that a fire engine was parked outside.

Hicks also had to walk to his course and was met by a neighbor who ran up to him and asked for help. The people Hicks helped returned the next day to help him clean up and presented Hicks with a basket of fruit, vegetables and beverages.

On Oct. 25 with the fire miles away, Hicks worked a normal shift, from 5 a.m. to noon, then came back at 4 p.m. as the fire started heading toward the course. With water pressure in the area low because of the drain of fire-fighting efforts, he was asked not to turn on his irrigation system. Native areas around the layout burned out with only a small area of rough damaged.

"It's either black or green, that's it," Hicks said of his course.

Geoff Shackelford, a *Golfdom* contributing editor and co-designer of Rustic Canyon with architect Gil Hanse, said not everything the fire did was bad. "It gives a new meaning to the word rustic," he joked.

Shackelford said although the fire did destroy large patches of native grasses, it might also help the return of some species choked off by invading varieties, a result of the area being used for cattle grazing prior to the golf course.

According to Shackelford, foxtail grass was prevalent but the fire wiped out patches of it and may help return the native stipa grass to the golf course. Stipa was hydro-seeded during construction in an effort to facilitate its return.

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

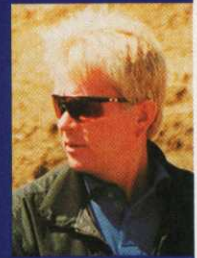
Quotable

"There's a reluctance in this industry to embrace new golfers — and that has to change."

— Ruffin Beckwith, senior vice president of the World Golf Foundation, on why the golf industry has had problems with player development

"Shapers are the prima donnas of our industry. They're crucial to us."

— Bill Kubly, CEO of Landscapes Unlimited



"You'd like to think you could be somewhere forever in this business, but I think it's almost next to impossible."

—Mark Kubns, director of grounds, Baltusrol Golf Club

Golfdom Wins National Honor

Golfdom received a top national business-to-business magazine award from *Folio*: magazine, which covers the magazine management industry, in October during the *Folio*: Show in New York.

Golfdom received a gold award in the *Folio*: Eddie Award competition for its December 2002 issue. This is the second time the magazine took home the top honor in *Folio*: magazine's editorial excellence awards competition in the past three years.

The awards are based on how well the publication articulates and adheres to its editorial mission statement. Winners are also determined by quality of its content.



Business briefs

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BASF also announced that its Insignia fungicide received registration from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Insignia gives superintendents and spray technicians broad spectrum, extended control of more than 15 major turfgrass diseases as well as dollar spot suppression. The active ingredient in Insignia is pyraclostrobin, a member of the strobilurin chemistry class.

Also, the company announced personnel changes within its turf and ornamental business. They are:

- William Strickland is senior marketing manager;
- Rich Kalik is national accounts manager;
- Greg Thompson is regional sales manager, Northern United States; and
- Bryan Brochin is marketing associate.

Witt takes Northmoor job

Tommy Witt, president of the GCSAA in 2001, is the new superintendent at Northmoor Country Club in Highland Park, Ill. Witt previously oversaw two courses at the Kiawah Island Club in South Carolina.

UHS sold

United Horticultural Supply, which distributes chemicals to the turf industry, has been sold to New York-based holding company Apollo Management as part of a larger divestiture of noncrop businesses from ConAgra Foods.

The deal, which is expected to close before Dec. 31, is not expected to affect UHS's overall corporate structure, according to company officials.

EPA grants registration for Syngenta's Monument

Syngenta Professional Products said the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has granted registration of the company's Monument herbicide for postemergence weed control use in commercial turf markets, including golf courses.

The active ingredient in Monument, trifloxysulfuron sodium, provides control of sedges and green kyllinga in the warm-season turfgrass species, including bermudagrass and zoysiagrass.

The Fine Art of Attention to Detail

IT ALL COMES DOWN TO BRINGING GOLFERS BACK

By Jim Black

I have to admit that I'm a perfectionist to a fault, which is a big source of frustration for me. I can drive around the course on any given day and get angry at things that I feel others should have known to take upon themselves.

For example, here are just a few of the things that make me crazy:

■ Hazard marker at a 72-degree angle needs to be straightened. Why doesn't anyone else see that?

■ The Styrofoam cup at the edge of No. 10 pond. How come no one else stopped to fish it out?

■ Why can't you guys see that the scatter signs need to be moved?

■ How come no one else could have picked up this fallen branch and heaved it into the woods?

■ Waddaya mean you're finished weed-eating? I can find 57 other things that need trimming! Why can't you see them?

Geez! Sometimes I just want to fire everybody and do everything myself.

I can take a wild guess that there are at least a couple of you out there that feel the same. My realization is this: No one on my staff cares the way I do. Not that they don't care; they care very much, and I am fortunate that they will do whatever I need them to do — but only in the literal sense.

When it comes to taking that extra step, seeing the little thing that makes all the difference in the world to me, well, they don't see what I see.

This is not necessarily a bad thing, and in order to keep it in perspective I have to go to their place and become them for a moment. This is not their career. They punch in, do what they're told to the best of their ability and then punch out.

Not trying to be overly dramatic, but it's not "life and death" for them as it is for me. If the golf course went to go to hell in a hand basket while I was at the helm, it would mean total devastation for me. Utter failure.

What happens when a team loses? They fire the coach. Adios. See you later. The players? They just go find another hourly "team" somewhere else. No biggie.

Then I looked at it from their points of view and realized that my thinking, "Why can't you guys see these things?" is akin to, "Why can't you guys read my mind?" I realize that it is an unfair expectation of an hourly employee.

So I can choose to change my thinking and go to a different place in my mind to try to see things from the golfer's angle. What would I want to see or not see had I come out myself and dropped \$45 for a round of golf. What would I expect to be my money's worth?

From that place, I take a spin around the course and note those things that are glaring to me and need to be taken care of by the crew. More importantly, though, and more satisfying for me is to take care of all the little things that I'm able to take care of myself.

I find that instead of doing it out of frustration because it's not getting done by someone else, I do it out of pride for what I've created — satisfied that the golf course is looking the best it can that day and hopefully invoking the golfing customers to set up other tee times.

You see, they may not know exactly which detail it was that you paid attention to, but they will notice your attention to detail. That will bring them back.

Black is superintendent of Twin Shields Golf Course in Dunkirk, Md.

With Winter in the Air, Thoughts Turn to Prepping Turf Equipment, Especially Engines, for Winter Storage

By Larry Aylward

Mark Nelson once drove a Ford Bronco II for about 230,000 miles before the vehicle died and went to the big junkyard in the sky. You're correct if you assume that Nelson knows something about running 'em forever — or close to it.

So it's no surprise that Nelson is a technical service representative for the Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power, manufacturer of consumer and commercial engines. He not only knows what it takes to keep a motor running efficiently, but he loves to talk about it.

In the spirit of the season, we asked Nelson how superintendents and technicians should prepare their equipment for winter storage. (Even if you're in Florida or Arizona and there's no such thing as winter storage, he has much to say about preventative maintenance. It's even more critical in warmer climates to be organized to do the maintenance, he says.)

It starts with a good cleaning of the equipment and its surrounding areas. Then you'll be able to see if there are any areas with leaking fluids or damaged pieces that you can address before delving into engine maintenance.

Some of the maintenance tips Nelson offers aren't groundbreaking advice. Nevertheless, they're important tips that shouldn't be overlooked. Winter is a good time to perform many preventative maintenance tasks, he says.

Take changing the engine oil, for instance. It should be performed on mowers and other equipment before they're stored for the winter. Nelson points out that when an engine is running, part of the combustion process converts fuel into water. Hence, it seeps into the oil.

"You don't want condensation and moisture in the engine if it's in storage for a few months," he says. "That only promotes rust."

Particulates and contaminants, which also should not be left in an engine bound for storage, are also removed when the oil is changed. Be sure to bring the engine oil up to operating temperature before performing the oil change. This will assist in the flushing of the contaminants.

It's also wise to replace air filters, fuel filters, spark plugs, and adjust valves on engines, Nelson notes. "The cost of these parts is relatively low, and it's much more cost-effective to replace them vs. trying to clean them."

Nelson says cooling fins on air-cooled engines and the radiator on liquid-cooled engines should be blown out with



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BRIGGS & STRATTON

compressed air to remove debris that has accumulated. "Never use water for this process," he adds. "Water will mix with the dirt and could form mud and harden like concrete if it's not removed completely."

But when winter is over and the equipment is taken out of storage, the cooling fins should be rechecked for more debris.

"Sometimes little critters, such as mice, like to make little nests in there during the winter," Nelson says, noting that a good way to prevent that is to set traps around the stored equipment.

In liquid-cooled engines, coolant should be changed annually. Nelson says it's important to make sure engines have the right amount of coolant (usually a 50-50 ratio with water). The solution needs to have the correct mixture so the engine blocks won't freeze and crack during the winter.

Checking and resetting an engine's top no-load speed is vital. "Some equipment, such as reel-type mowers, are dependent upon engine speed for a clean cut (frequency of clip)," he says.

A person checking engine speed should not check solely by ear. While the engine may sound fine, that doesn't mean it is.

If the speed is off several hundred rpm, the reel is spinning slower because the hydraulic pump is turning slower. And if a mower is moving at its normal speed, the frequency of clip will be off. Nelson suggests using a tachometer to measure the speed.

Equipment batteries should be serviced prior to storage. The inside of a battery should be filled with distilled water, its posts should be cleaned and corrosion removed. The electrical connectors on cables should also be cleaned and coated with Dielectric grease to help prevent corrosion.

"Also, use a trickle charger to bring the battery up to full power before storage," Nelson adds.

Finally, Nelson reminds the people prepping equipment for winter storage to use the proper tools and wear the proper attire when doing so. He also advises them to always use original equipment manufacturers parts.

About that Ford Bronco that Nelson kept alive for more than 230,000 ticks on the odometer: He says it was all because of preventive maintenance, which left him heavier in the wallet in the long run.

"I'd rather do preventive maintenance than make car payments," Nelson says. "My total annual maintenance costs were less than two months of car payments."

Superintendent Charged with Larceny

OTHER SUPERINTENDENTS WORRY THE ARREST WILL TAINT ENTIRE PROFESSION

By Anthony Pioppi

The former superintendent of Charles River Country Club is facing multiple larceny charges for allegedly bilking the Newton, Mass., club out of \$78,050, police said.

According to Middlesex District Attorney spokeswoman Emily LaGrassa, James Reinertson is charged with five counts of larceny in excess of \$250, a felony in Massachusetts. LaGrassa said the five counts do not stem from five incidents, but rather refer to five schemes Reinertson allegedly used to steal from his former employer. Reinertson is currently the head superintendent at Wellesley (Mass.) Country Club. He pleaded not guilty to the charges.

LaGrassa said Reinertson allegedly submitted false and inflated invoices and false rental bills to the club for reimbursement and made fraudulent equipment sales in which Reinertson allegedly had payments for the used items made payable to him. LaGrassa said the larcenies took place between April 2001 and January 2003.

LaGrassa would not comment on whether or not other arrests are expected.

Sgt. Ken D'Angelo, spokesman for the Newton Police Department, said the investigation by his department is complete. "As far as I know, this is it," he said. "The vendors were not involved."

D'Angelo said all the vendors used by Reinertson had done legitimate work for Charles River and that Reinertson acted alone in bilking the club.

Reinertson came to Charles River from nearby Dedham (Mass.) Polo and Country Club early in 2001 and began working at Wellesley Jan. 1. Prior to the Dedham job, Reinertson was head superintendent at the Orchards Golf Club in South Hadley, Mass., site of the 2004 U.S. Women's Open.

Rumors of an investigation of Reinertson had been swirling through the Massachusetts' superintendent community for months. Superintendents who requested anonymity said Reinertson called them to dispute the stories when they first surfaced.

Some superintendents worry that the arrest will taint the entire profession, but the president of the GCSA of New England said he does not think that will happen.

Jim Fitzroy, certified superintendent

at Presidents Golf Course in North Reading, Mass., said feedback from other clubs has been positive, and they realize this situation is the exception, not the rule. A member of the executive committee of the Massachusetts Golf Association, Fitzroy said he's talked to many people from clubs throughout the state. "They look at it as a single incident," he said.

Fitzroy said the incident could help the profession by allowing club members to understand the way superintendents handle their budgets.

"Most guys would welcome the opportunity to show clubs how they manage their finances," Fitzroy said. "You take a look at what superintendents are accountable for as far as running a golf course, and we have a wonderful track record. Most guys do a wonderful job."

Many superintendents praised Charles River for contacting police and not sweeping the incident aside.

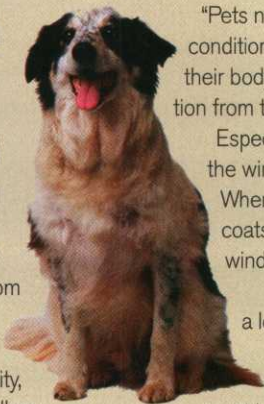
Attempts to reach Reinertson by phone at Wellesley were unsuccessful. Heather Rich, director of communications at Wellesley, said the club is not commenting at this time.

Protect Your Pooch

IF THE WEATHER IS TOO COLD FOR YOU,
IT'S PROBABLY TOO COLD FOR YOUR DOG

If your golf course maintenance staff features a trained border collie or another canine breed to chase away geese and other pesky creatures, make sure to protect your investment this winter by protecting your pooch from the cold.

Thomas A. Lenarduzzi, a member of the College of Veterinary Medicine faculty at Mississippi State University, warns that cold-weather temperatures can take their toll on dogs. Regarding his or her dog, a superintendent's rule of thumb for the season should be: If the weather is too cold for you, it's probably too cold for the dog, too.



"Pets need just as much protection from winter weather conditions as humans do," Lenarduzzi says. "To maintain their body temperature and stay healthy, they need protection from the elements."

Especially for dogs and cats, it's essential to keep dry in the winter so body temperatures can remain stable. When wet, both animals lose the insulation that their fur coats provide. If they must stay outside, shelter from wind and rain must be provided.

Small dogs and cats are better kept inside due to a lower body mass. Still, it's suitable to take them outside for brief periods of time, Lenarduzzi says.

Sweaters for dogs are a good idea, but care must be taken when worn outside without supervision, he adds. Should the garment's threads become caught on something, the pet might be unable to return quickly to the warmth of home.