

# 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

**W**ith 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."



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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.

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