

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.

Briefs continue on page 16

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.

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

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.

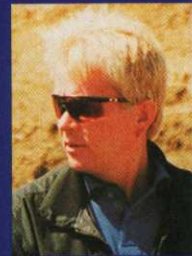
Quotable

"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.

