

# Off The Fringe

## Business briefs

### Fertilizer industry laments natural gas crisis

A new National Petroleum Council report on natural gas supplies predicts that "traditional" North American production will only be able to meet 75 percent of U.S. demand by 2025. The report recommends that the government adopt policies that would diversify and increase domestic sources of natural gas.

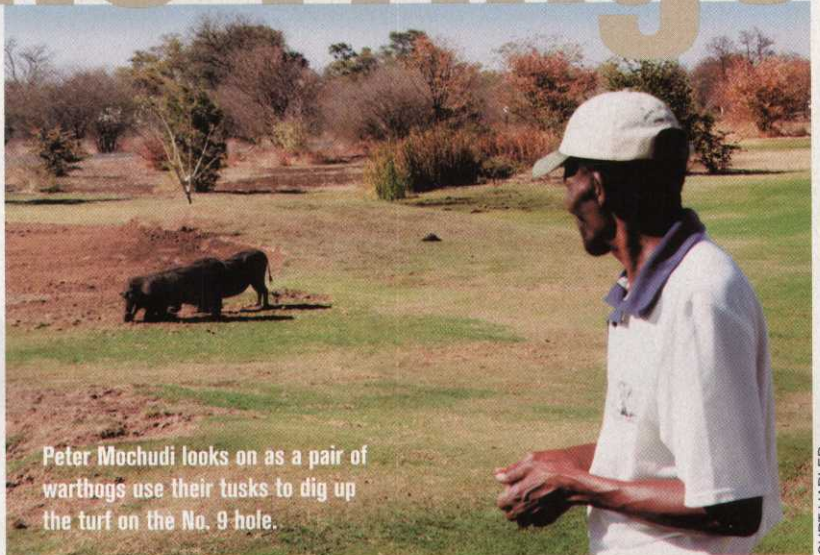
Mike Bennett, CEO of The Fertilizer Institute, warned U.S. Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham that the extreme volatility of the U.S. natural gas market is having a devastating impact on the fertilizer industry. Bennett said 11 ammonia plants have closed since mid-2000 when the natural gas crisis began. These plants represented 21 percent of domestic capacity. "U.S. producers have been at the mercy of these volatile natural gas markets," Bennett said.

### Evergreen Foundation exceeds goal

The Evergreen Foundation (EF), an alliance of Green Industry associations and companies providing products and services to the public, has exceeded its targeted goal of \$200,000 in seed money. Donors include: Bayer Environmental Science, John Deere, Dow AgroSciences, Griffin LLC ILESCO, Syngenta, The Davey Tree Expert Co., The Scotts Co. and The Toro Co.

### RISE elects officers

Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE) recently elected officers and welcomed new board members. Officers elected by the RISE governing board are: Elin Miller, Dow AgroSciences, chairman; Dan Unteidt, McLaughlin Gormley King Co., vice chairman; William J. Burke, The Scotts Co., treasurer; and Laurie Treu, Uniroyal Chemical Co., past chairman.



Peter Mochudi looks on as a pair of warthogs use their tusks to dig up the turf on the No. 9 hole.

CURT HARLER

## Out of Africa

### SUPERINTENDENT FACES BEASTLY CHALLENGES IN BOTSWANA

By Curt Harler

**B**e happy you don't have Peter Mochudi's management challenges. Mochudi points to the collars around the bunkers at the No. 9 green. Something is digging the grass out by the roots from below the surface.

Mochudi looks on as two warthogs use their tusks to flip up chunks of the turf. "It's a pity we can't get them out," he says. "But really, they belong here."

Mochudi is the assistant at the Mowana Golf Course, part of the five-star Mowana Safari Lodge near Kasane in Botswana, Africa. There they deal with management problems that the typical American superintendent can't imagine.

Warthogs are only one animal that can do serious damage on the 18-hole Mowana course. Elephants regularly take early-morning strolls across the greens, causing much the same kind of damage one would see if a human were to track on a dew-covered green. Only elephant footprints are larger. Much larger.

The grounds staff does not worry about elephants charging. "Elephants generally are not a major problem unless their testosterone is acting up," Mochudi says. "But when an elephant is not in a good mood, anything can happen."

Even players who do not see the elephants on the course are likely to see elephant manure — the size of basketballs — on the fairways and greens. Frequently, dung piles are big enough that it is more appropriate to try chipping over them rather than putting around them. (And some superintendents think Canada goose droppings are a pain.)

Other animals show up in Mowana's roughs, on the fairways and on the greens. While the course plays at 6,658 yards, a virtual menagerie of animals plays where they please.

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## Off The Fringe

### Gift of Mobility

GOLF PAYS TRIBUTE TO OLD TOM MORRIS – AND THOSE WHO MAY NEVER KNOW THE JOYS OF GOLF

By James E. Guyette

**K**eeping their promise to help others in need, a U.S. chapter of Keepers of the Green once again donated a powered wheelchair to a handicapped person at the international golf fraternity's annual fall World Invitational Championship, held last month at two golf courses in Alabama. The wheelchair is courtesy of Hurdzan/Fry Golf Course Design, which started the chapter.

"It brings tears to your eyes when you see this," says Mike Hurdzan of Hurdzan/Fry Golf Course Design in Columbus, Ohio. "It is a true fellowship of golf. It removes all the pretense of worrying about slope ratings."

Hurdzan spearheaded forming of the chapter four years ago after learning of the organization's good works. The inter-



HURDZAN/FRY GOLF COURSE DESIGN

**Mike Hurdzan (right) spearheaded the forming of Keepers of the Green. The group presents a powered wheelchair to a handicapped person during its annual championship.**

national membership "has presented hundreds of wheelchairs to deserving people who may never know the joys of golf, but will know the joy of mobility," Hurdzan says.

The organization, headquartered in St. Andrews, Scotland, promotes the traditions of golf while paying tribute to Old Tom Morris, known as "the father of greenkeeping."

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Superintendents in Florida and the Carolinas, where alligators are common, will feel some empathy with Mochudi's crocodile problem. Actually, the crocs are not much of an agronomic problem. But they can be a problem for players. Posted signs warn golfers about the presence of crocs in ponds and other water features. Any duffer who wants to bet a leg or hand against a dollar golf ball can feel free to do so.

However, it is the mammals that are more trouble on the turf.

"I'm not worried about the fairways," Mochudi says. "It's the greens where they cause the problems."

The greens are full of tender, luscious grass. It's like Mochudi is one of the resort's chefs, putting out a feast for the visitors.

The warthogs are especially persistent. There is a group of about a dozen warthogs that make Mochudi's life interesting. "We can't cull them," he says, noting that the nearby game reserves and national parks are the main reason visitors come to that corner of Botswana. "In some ways, they are almost tame," he continues.

That shows up in the boldness with which they dig at the No. 9 green, just a short putt from the clubhouse. However, it is on the more remote No. 4 (a 375-yard par 4) and No. 5 (a huge 519-yard par 5) holes that the warthogs are all but permanent residents. In fact, a mother and two youngsters seem to call No. 5 home.



CURT HARLER

**Elephants regularly take early-morning strolls across the greens, causing much the same kind of damage one would see if a human were to track on a dew-covered green. But bigger.**

Most other management practices in this area of Southern Africa would be familiar to any superintendent working in a subtropical setting. Grass on greens is cut between one-quarter inch and one-eighth inch through the warm season. Greens consist of semidwarf bermudagrass and bentgrass and are cut daily. They also receive 20 minutes to 25 minutes of irrigation water.

Buffalograss is planted on the semirough areas. The fairways are a local grass which stands up well to the heat, seasonal rainfall and grazing by wild animals. In the winter (the warm season), fairways are mowed twice a week. They also are irrigated twice weekly.

Fertilizer is applied regularly. A local complete blend, called LA-3, is sprayed with the irrigation water.

Mochudi walks out into the sunshine and waves his arms at the warthogs, which have moved on to ripping up the collar on the No. 9 green. The warthogs look up. An observer could almost swear that the warthogs wave back. Then they go on eating the sweet grass.

"Aaah, I've got other things to do," Mochudi says, frustration in his voice.

"Hey, do you have problems with snow mold?" his visitor asks.

"Huh?" Mochudi says puzzledly.

That's one concern superintendents don't have in Botswana.

## Off The Fringe

# Ramsay Says Yea to Yale

BUT HIS MOVE COMES AS A SURPRISE

By Anthony Pioppi

**T**he Course at Yale has hired a superintendent and again not without raising a few eyebrows.

Scott Ramsay, the former certified superintendent at the Orchards Golf Club in South Hadley, Mass., has accepted the position. But Ramsay's move came as a surprise considering the Orchards is hosting the 2004 U.S. Women's Open. Ramsay had been at the Orchards for about 18 months.

Late last year, Yale University in New Haven, Conn., ended its national search after a two-year vacancy with the naming of acting superintendent Mike Moran to the position. Earlier this year, Moran returned to his previous post of assistant superintendent because he said he missed being on the golf course. Union rules forbid the superintendent from working on the layout.

Ramsay was one of the finalists in the previous search and was contacted by Yale director of golf Peter Polaski when Moran stepped down.

According to Ramsay, the school came to him with a tantalizing offer.

"They just made it a dream come true," he said.

Ramsay's first day coincided with a university-wide strike by Yale employees, including course workers. He had a four-hour briefing from Moran on his first day before the walkout.

"He said, 'There's your phone. That's your desk. Good luck, sucker. You are on your own,'" Ramsay said, chuckling.

During the three-week strike, nonunion members staffed the golf course.

It is the union situation at the school and golf course that kept many superintendents from applying for the Yale position.

Strict union rules forbid the superintendent from operating machinery other than for demonstration or teaching purposes. Also, the superintendent cannot hire his own staff. The school through the athletic department does the hiring.

Ramsay said three factors led him to take the job: the school offered a

good salary package, upped the maintenance budget and decided to out-source some work.

Since Ramsay's arrival in early September, the course has been aerified, seeded and fertilized by outside companies which complemented a talented and hardworking staff, he said.

"The university has made a huge investment in the golf course," Ramsay said. "A rising tide raises all boats, and this is one tide I intend to ride."

According to Ramsay, he left the Orchards on good terms. Arnold Palmer Golf Management, which runs the course, named Matt Manzi to fill the void.

"The last line of my letter of resignation said I'd be happy to volunteer for the Open," Ramsay said.

According to Tim Moraghan, USGA championship agronomist, the Orchards will be ready for the Women's Open next July. He also said Ramsay's move did not come as a shock.

"After all these years, I'm not surprised by anything," Moraghan said.



## Quotable

**"I used to go to all the superintendent meetings, and I'd look around the room and say, 'Look at all of these old guys.' I went to a meeting not long ago and I said, 'Look at all of these young guys.'"**

— Tom Alex, superintendent of Grand Cypress Golf Club in Orlando, on getting older. Alex celebrated 20 years at Grand Cypress earlier this year

**"As soon as you put 'golf' in front of anything, you can immediately double the price."**

— Craig Cassaday, turf equipment manager for Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, Pa., remarking on the disparity of pricing for shop tools that are nothing more than modified automotive tools.

**"Trees are wonderful. Where else would we get furniture?"**

— Dave Oatis, director of the USGA Green Section's Northeast Region