

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Core golfers on the rise

A new National Golf Foundation (NGF) study shows a 5 percent increase in the number of "core golfers," defined as golfers more than 18 years old who play at least eight rounds of golf per year.

The organization's *Golf Participation in the U.S., 2004* report indicates that the number of core golfers grew from 12.6 million in 2002 to 13.2 million in 2003.

The news was also positive for overall golf participation, which rose 3.3 percent to 37.9 million golf participants in 2003, the NGF reports. Women and children comprise the two groups showing the largest increases in participation in recent years, and the NGF says both groups still have room to expand.

But the core golfer numbers are the most important ones to look at to gauge the health of the industry, says Joe Beditz, president and CEO of the NGF.

"We track all golf participation segments, but it's the core golfers that we keep the closest eye on," Beditz says. "Core golfers are the bedrock of golf demand."

Fake course shelved

Remember the story out of Colorado last year about the golf course that was to be the nation's first artificial-surface, 18-hole championship course? Depending on your view, the course either sounded real cool or real dumb.

Well, it's neither right now. That's because the brakes have been put on the Echo Basin Golf Club because of a lack of money, according to a news report. The planned housing subdivision, needed for construction for the course, has not been approved. Therefore, the first phase of the subdivision can't proceed as planned, the *Cortez Journal* recently reported.

TourTurf, the popular cryogenic fiber turf,

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The Fictitious Life of a Superintendent

SCOTT SIMPSON SAYS HIS BOOK, *BEHIND THE #\$\$%* & GREEN*, IS A REFLECTION ON HIM AND OTHERS IN THE INDUSTRY

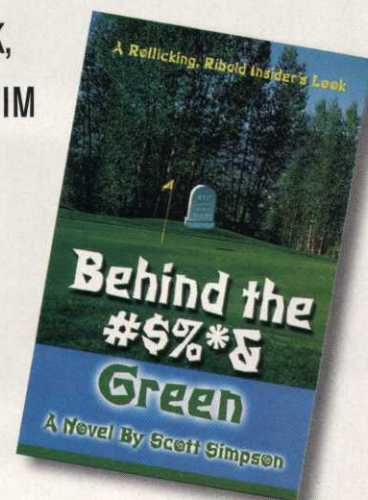
By Robin Suttell

Steve Hunter's story is one of life, loss and love and the affect the profession known as golf course management has on all of the above.

Jaded and battled-scarred, thrice married and divorced, this veteran superintendent knows the ropes and isn't afraid to tell it like it is. Or rather, Hunter's creator, first-time author and golf course industry consultant Scott Simpson, isn't bashful about baring the naked truth about life behind the greens.

Simpson, founder of Sunlinx, a Colorado Springs-based golf course management and consulting firm, realized that most golf lovers, who typically believe they would find a personal Nirvana by working at a golf course and playing free golf, have no clue what life in the golf industry is really like.

"Over the years, I have been inundated with questions from folks interested in getting into the business," Simpson says, adding that he wanted to provide folks with a genuine, behind-the-scenes view of life in the golf course management industry



without sounding like a text book. "Outsiders not in the industry don't have the feel for the pitfalls. It's a noble profession, but it isn't for everyone. The prevailing number of golfers and their spouses think, 'What a great environment. What a great career.'"

Simpson, who has managed golf courses since 1987, embarked upon educating the golf-loving public about the hazards of working in the industry. In doing so, he strived to address some basic underlying truths in a humorous manner. His novel, *Behind the #\$\$%* & Green*, and its protagonist, Steve Hunter, were born.

"Golf is an awful lot of fun, but being in the business side isn't always fun. It's work, and work isn't fun," Simpson says. "That's why they call it work."

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was to be used for the course. Reportedly, the course was to cost between \$9 million and \$14 million.

NGCOA, AAGMC merge

The American Association of Golf Course Management Companies (AAGMC) and the National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) have merged to establish a single program of products and services for owners and operators of multiple golf courses.

"We both realize that by consolidating our resources, we can better serve the interests of our members," says Mike Hughes, NGCOA executive director. "The AAGMC represents some of the most progressive management companies in our business, and we look forward to working with them to make the golf industry stronger."

Jacobsen awarded for safety

Jacobsen earned another Textron Award of Merit for safety at its Charlotte, N.C., plant, which recently exceeded 1 million hours of operation without a lost-time accident.

"Manufacturing high-speed turf-cutting aeration equipment and accessories parts can be very dangerous," said Jon Carlson, Jacobsen's president and CEO. "The [award] recognizes that our employees are dedicated to their co-workers and their own safety."

Merion gets Walker Cup

The USGA announced that the East Course at Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, Pa., was selected to host the 2009 Walker Cup Match, a biennial international amateur team competition. The club, maintained by superintendent Matt Shaffer and his crew, will also host the U.S. Amateur Championship in 2005.

The Walker Cup pits two 10-man teams from the United States and a combined team from Great Britain and Ireland.

ASIC elects president

The American Society of Irrigation Consultants (ASIC) elected Daniel Brenner as its new president at its recent conference. Brenner, who is also president of Hydro Environmental, has designed or been involved with 2,650 irrigation projects.

The Weather Will Get Wacky, But Not That Wacky

And you thought the weather has been wild the past few years, what with buckets of rain, the driest of droughts, and stifling heat and humidity. Last month, thanks to the release of *The Day After Tomorrow*, the latest disaster movie (speaking of which, it didn't get very good reviews) that depicts giant storms and plummeting temperatures on earth, people started talking about the weather more than they already do. They wanted to know if the wild weather that happened in the film could happen on earth.

The good news is the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) says it's impossible for an ice age to strike within days, as happens in the movie. The bad news is NCAR warns that climate change may have significant consequences for society in coming decades. Here's why:

- Humans affect global climate through emissions of carbon dioxide, methane and other gases that trap sunlight in the atmosphere and warm the planet.
- Many greenhouse gases emitted from the burning of fossil fuels and other sources remain in the atmosphere for decades or even centuries.
- Researchers at NCAR and other institutions have found that global temperatures are likely to rise by 3.1 to 8.9 degrees Fahrenheit between 1990 and 2100. Such an increase in temperatures may spur droughts, extreme storms and related events, including wildfires, vegetation changes and a rise in sea levels.

However, as dramatic as real-world climate change is likely to be, it would differ from the climate change depicted in *The Day After Tomorrow* in several important ways. For example, temperatures in New York City plummet from sweltering to freezing in a matter of hours in the film. (Think the green committee would blame that on you?) In reality, scientists say that temperatures in parts of the world could drop, but not nearly as rapidly or dramatically as portrayed in the movie. — **Newswise and Larry Aylward**



PHOTODISC

Quotable

"I think there's a lot of internal strife in the USGA. One person wants one thing, another person wants another. They duck and hide until they go on TV, when they say everything is fine."

— *Frank Hannigan, former USGA executive director, on the controversy surrounding the course setup at last month's U.S. Open, held at Shinnecock Hills Golf Club (Newsday).*

"Unless you live the business for a time, I don't think you really understand it."

— *John Burns, certified superintendent of The Gauntlet at Curtis Park in Fredricksburg, Va., on comprehending the nuances of the profession.*