

# Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

## Business briefs

### Audubon campaign gets a boost

Audubon International's ambitious "Fifty in Five" campaign — to have 50 percent of all golf courses in the United States enrolled and active in one of its environmental programs by 2007 — got a boost from two pesticide manufacturers, Syngenta Professional Products and Bayer Environmental Science. Superintendents can now use their Syngenta GreenPartners rewards points or their Bayer Environmental Science Accolades points to purchase one-year memberships or renewals in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses.

"Making membership in our program an option will go a long way to support our efforts to promote environmental stewardship throughout the entire golf industry," says Kevin Fletcher, director of programs and administration for Audubon International. "It's this type of industrywide support and leadership from both Syngenta and Bayer that we need, and will continue to ask for to help make good environmental performance the norm in the golf industry."

For more information about these respective programs or to apply your reward points towards Audubon International program membership or donation, visit the Syngenta Green Partner Web site or the Bayer Environmental Science Accolades Web site.

### ProLink, ParView merge

ProLink and ParView, players in the global position satellite golf course management industry with more than 500 combined course installations, merged in January. The new entity, ProLink/ParView LLC, announced its management team, featuring the appointments of William Fugazy Jr. (chairman of the board of directors),

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## Growing Up

NGCOA TURNS 25, BUT "WE'RE STILL IN OUR INFANCY," EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DECLARES

By Larry Aylward, Editor

**T**he National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) turns 25 years old this year. But in the eyes of Mike Hughes, the association's executive director, the NGCOA is still a babe.

"We're still in our infancy," Hughes told members of the association during a speech at the NGCOA's annual Conference & Trade Show in Tampa in January.

Under the watch of Hughes, who has been with the NGCOA for 14 years, membership has grown from about 250 members in 1990 to more than 6,000 members now. But there are still plenty of seats for new members, Hughes says.

"The progress over the next 10 years is going to be as substantial as the last 10 years," Hughes predicted. "In my view, we can't even see the midpoint of the association. We're really just getting started."

Progress, of course, goes hand in hand with the economy. During the speech, Hughes acknowledged that it's been a difficult past three years in the golf industry. Rounds have been



down because of economics and the weather, and owners' wallets have been left thin.

It wasn't just a glut of golf courses that contributed to the downturn, Hughes said. It was also the fact that corporate spending had fallen to substantial lows. There were fewer corporate outings, and there were fewer corporate players because many of them had lost their jobs. The ones that remained were working longer hours and didn't want to be seen playing golf during such dire economic times.

But Hughes, not known as one to spin, predicts that more money will flow this year. "I'm absolutely certain that 2004 will be a better year," he affirms.

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Lawrence Bain (president) and David Rivers (vice chairman of sales and marketing).

### Milliken on FORTUNE'S list

Spartanburg-based Milliken & Co. ranked as the 16th best company in FORTUNE Magazine's annual "100 Best Companies to Work For" listing which was announced in January.

"We are pleased that those who have made this company great, our associates, are receiving this public recognition," said Ashley Allen, president and COO of Milliken. "It really is an affirmation of what they have known all along, but it is nice for them to be able to see it in print"

Milliken says it has long been a fierce advocate for preserving American jobs.

### Pinehurst CEO resigns

Patrick A. Corso, who was president and CEO of Pinehurst Resort for the past 17 years, resigned Feb. 6.

"I have had the honor and privilege of leading Pinehurst for the past 17 years," Corso said. "We raised our family here and have deep roots in the community. This is an opportunity for me to pursue a new career direction, and for Pinehurst to move into the next chapter of its history."

Corso joined Pinehurst in 1986 and became president in 1987.

### Method approved to test fertilizer

The International Association of Official Analytical Chemists says it has approved a new official method for more accurately analyzing the nitrogen content of urea-based liquid fertilizer products, especially those containing slow-release nitrogen (SRN) found in triazone products. The new analytical process, called Determination by Liquid Chromatography of Urea in Liquid Fertilizers, was developed by Tessenderlo Kerley Inc. (TKI).

Michael M. Hojjatie, director of research and development for TKI, said the new method was developed over the last 15 years and has been validated by thousands of tests conducted by TKI and different laboratories. The AOACI is the internationally recognized scientific organization that validates analytical methods used in industry.

## Quotable

**"I tell people, 'The best thing about this business is the quality of the people.' It's outstanding."**

— Terry Bonar, certified superintendent of Canterbury Golf Club in Cleveland, on his peers.

**"It's indescribable to win this award. I feel like I could die now since there's nothing in my profession better than this."**

— Monroe S. Miller, superintendent at Blackhawk Country Club in Madison, Wis., reacting to receiving the USGA Green Section Award.

**"What Mr. Brewer wanted was for the elite player to have to hit driver more often."**

— Charles Raudenbush, the pro at Pine Valley, on club president O. Gordon Brewer's decision to lengthen the heralded course. (GolfWorld)

## Growing Up

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Hughes makes the prediction because he's already seeing a turnaround. "Several things that were weighing us down are leaving."

Corporate spending is coming back, said Hughes, who also expects memberships to rise at private clubs and guest play to increase. "We definitely hit the bottom, and the curve is going to start sloping up."

But an improving economy doesn't mean that owners can sit back and let more rounds come to them. Hughes stressed that they must create more business as well. Not surprisingly, player development should be high on their lists to trigger more business.

Hughes also noted the importance that owners must place in ser-

vicing the 300 to 500 key customers at their respective golf courses.

"Most of the reduction in the past few years has come from the fact that golfers are playing fewer rounds,"

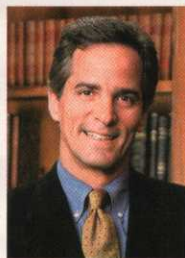
Hughes said. "They're not leaving the game totally, but they're playing less golf. We need to be tuned into them."

If they're playing less golf, owners need to find out why. And then owners need to offer them incentives to come back and play more golf.

"We absolutely have to know what their patterns of play are," Hughes said.

It seems that Hughes, who worked as a lawyer for 10 years before joining the NGCOA, wants owners to apply his "you-can-always-be-better" attitude toward business.

"Like any business, if you think you've arrived, you're on a downhill slope," Hughes said. ■



Mike Hughes