

Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

Business briefs

USCIS announces cap on workers

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced it has received enough H-2B petitions to meet this year's congressionally mandated cap of 66,000 new workers. Consequently, USCIS will return all petitions subject to the annual cap filed after March 9. At press time, USCIS denied a report which claimed President George W. Bush was going to add 12,000 more workers to H-2B.

Avid golfers optimistic

Golf's best customers — those who played more than 25 rounds per year and spent more than \$1,000 on the game — averaged 52 rounds last year and expect to play 61 rounds in 2004, according to the National Golf Foundation's (NGF) *Pre-Season Consumer Report*.

The 18 percent increase represents a positive step for the golf industry, which has suffered through a downturn over the past three years in the wake of Sept. 11 and a significant economic downturn. "While this [desire to play more rounds] may be partly wishful thinking, it's certainly a positive sign," said Jim Kass, director of research for NGF.

Half the respondents took two or more golf trips in 2003. Most importantly, golf travelers at every level said they plan to do more golf travel this year.

East Lake GC's Cousins honored

Thomas G. Cousins, who spearheaded the renovation of East Lake Golf Club and its surrounding neighborhood, is the recipient of the 2004 Donald Ross Award presented by the American Society of Golf Course Architects. Cousins received the award during the ASGCA's annual meeting at Hilton Head, S.C. in April.

Adams Will Miss the Great St. Andrews — And Vice Versa

LEGENDARY GREENKEEPER TAKES JOB WITH EUROPEAN PGA TOUR

By Anthony Pioppi

Eddie Adams is a true St. Andrewin, born and raised in this legendary Scottish town where his family has lived for generations.

He went on to become one of its most famous citizens through his job as head greenkeeper of the Old Course — at the age of 24.

So it comes as somewhat of a surprise that Adams, at the ripe old age of 35, has resigned to become the first full-time agronomic consultant for the European PGA Tour. He will go from spending most of his days in St. Andrews to being on the road nearly two-thirds of the year.

"It's a different challenge. I'm moving on to some different pastures," he said recently from his home.

Adams and I go back a little ways. In 2000, he was kind enough to let

me work for two weeks on his course during the Open Championship so I could write about it for a magazine. We became friends quickly and have remained that way since.

When he finishes his well-rehearsed response to my question, a variation of the one he has given most every other reporter who called him, I commend him on his cliché. Then he continues for real.

"I'm going to miss the golf course. I love the golf course, ya know?" he says.

I know. I knew that 10 minutes after I met him.

"It's something that's very dear to me and a part of me and will always be a part of me because I'm from St. Andrews," Adams says.

Adams knows, as much as anyone, that the course belongs to the residents of the town. It is theirs, along with the other five layouts run by the Links Trust, that are the most famous municipal golf courses in the world.

He has done his bit to maintain the Old Course in the most traditional of ways. He never used pesticides or fungicides during his tenure,

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Eddie Adams

ST. ANDREWS LINKS TRUST

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preferring to maintain healthy turf through minimal irrigation and well-timed aeration.

Adams also believes that performing some maintenance practices in the time-honored way helps keep him and his crew in touch with the turf. That's why he occasionally top-dresses or fertilizes putting surfaces by hand. The greens are swept by hand. Bunker sand is packed down the traditional way — by workers with hands clasped behind their backs as they walk around the bunker floor in small sideways steps.

"I think you get connected with it in some sort of way, eh? If the grass is not looking good you don't feel so well, but if it is looking good you feel great," Adams says.

Euan Grant, the head greenkeeper at the New Course, is Adams' replacement, a person Adams says is ideally suited for the job. Adams spent the last two weeks of his tenure being shadowed by Grant so he could absorb as much knowledge as possible.

"I never wrote anything down," Adams says. "It's all in my head."

There are other things in his head this day. It's not just the course that tugs at him.

"I'll miss the relationship you have with the town," he says. "Over a period of time, they begin to respect you."

It was well-known throughout St. Andrews that Adams could be approached by residents to talk about the golf course. Adams would listen, whether it was a question about the greens or problems people were having with their lawns. He has also lent his expertise to other superintendents.

Iain Richie, links superintendent at Portmarnock Golf Club in Ireland, has counted Adams as a friend for more than 15 years.

"He was a great help to me last year at the Irish Open when he came over for the tournament and was on the course at six each morning giving us a dig out," Richie says. "He's quite well known here in Ireland. He has given a number of talks on The Old Course for The Golf Course Superintendents Association of Ireland. A top-class superintendent and a true professional — if only he could play golf."

Ah yes — Adams' legendary golf game. But now is not the time to touch upon such sensitive subjects.

Adams and I talk some more and the conversation turns to what he will miss the most. He gives one last serious answer, "I'll miss the staff," he says without hesitation.

What won't he miss?

Adams pauses, then delivers a rapid-fire response, his Scottish accent thickening as he goes.

"I won't miss the Siberian winds at 65 mile per hour. I won't miss the rain coming, hitting your face horizontally with the Siberian winds behind it. I won't miss the local students playing Hunt the Flag. I won't miss the German

Quotable

"If I watch the old Masters from the 1960s and '70s, I almost start laughing. You see guys on the ninth green at Augusta actually hitting the putt down the hill and the ball stops short."

—Bill Kernan, senior project designer for Hurdzan/Fry Golf Course Design in Columbus, Ohio, on the evolution of green speed.

"I'm about to slip into Dr. Phil territory here — I can feel it."



—Milt Engelke, turfgrass professor from Texas A&M, when a spirited discussion broke out during his Bentgrass Management and Root Zone Maintenance Seminar at the GCSAA Conference & Show.

"I don't feel like we won anything, ma'am. I think it's over, but it will never be over. But I don't think we've won anything."

—Hootie Johnson, chairman of Augusta National, when asked if he felt like he won the battle in regard to Augusta not allowing female members. (*The Wire*)

tourists camping out on the 1st and 18th fairways. I won't miss ..."

Wait. What?

"Yeah, during the week of the '95 Open, I came to work and found a tent right in the middle of the 1st and 18th. I knocked on the tent and told them if they didn't move in five minutes, I'd mow them down to seven-sixteenths of an inch."

Adams laughs. He's had a lot of laughs over the years.

I'm willing to bet Adams will miss the Old Course more than he realizes. And I'll double that bet and say the Old Course will miss him, too.

Pioppi is a contributing editor to Golfdom.