

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Hoffman takes over at Toro

Michael J. Hoffman officially took over as CEO for The Toro Co. on March 15, succeeding Kendrick B. Melrose, who will assume the role of executive chairman for Toro's board of directors. Hoffman, 49, is a 27-year veteran with the company. He was elected president and chief operating officer in 1994 and has been responsible for all the company's businesses and operations. Melrose joined Toro in 1970 as director of marketing for the consumer products division. He was named CEO in 1983 and chairman of the board in 1987.

LESCO'S new fleet

You could say LESCO is keepin' on truckin' — and in a big way. At the Golf Industry Show in February, the Cleveland-based company unveiled its new Store-on-Wheels vehicle, a 20-foot-long truck that will carry about 180 products at all times. The company said it will replace all of its current vehicles this spring and summer and expand its fleet from 72 at the start of 2005 to 110 by the end of the year.

Michael DiMino, LESCO's president and CEO, said the new truck "strengthens" LESCO's commitment to its customers. "The golf course market is at the core of LESCO's business, just as it has been since LESCO's founding in 1962," he added.

The company's original Store-on-Wheels concept was born out of a focus meeting with superintendents. The concept was introduced in Florida in 1976.

ITODA establishes training institute

The Independent Turf and Ornamental Distributors Association (ITODA) has established the ITODA Training Institute to support

Briefs continue on page 16

What's Up These Days?

ROUNDS ARE, ACCORDING TO TWO TRADE ASSOCIATIONS.

AND EVEN THOUGH IT'S ONLY A SLIGHT INCREASE, IT'S GOOD NEWS

You can call this a classic case of up and down.

What's up? Well, the National Golf Foundation (NGF) and the National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) recently reported that rounds increased — albeit slightly — for the first time in three years.

What's down? Well, the NGF also announced that the number of golf course openings continued to slow in 2004. There were 150.5 course openings and 62.5 verified closures (in 18-hole equivalents) for a net gain of 88 courses.

"The data show that the number of new courses being built has decreased every year since 2000," the NGF said, noting that the 2005 forecast is for 150 to 160 18-hole equivalent course openings. About 400 18-hole equivalents opened in 2000.

"To many golf course owners and operators, the slowdown is a welcome relief because it indicates that golf course development has adjusted to the lack of growth in demand," the NGF reported. "However, the decrease in new courses does not come as good news for the golf course design and construction business."

Back to the increase in rounds, which was a very modest 0.7 percent nationally. The NGF welcomed the



PHOTO BY: DYNAMIC GRAPHICS

increase in light of declines the past two years.

"As usual, results vary remarkably by region, with some areas experiencing a 5-percent decline and others increasing by as much as 9 percent," says Joe Beditz, president and CEO of NGF. "Variations across regions, due in large part to weather patterns, show a continuing tendency to balance themselves out."

Mike Hughes, executive director of NGCOA, said the numbers reflect

Switcheroo

BASF'S MILLER SAYS SUPERINTENDENTS SHOULD
CHANGE OUT NOZZLES FOR PARTICULAR PESTICIDES

Tis the season for ... spraying pesticides. With that in mind, we turn to Kyle Miller, senior technical specialist for BASF Turf & Ornamental, to garner a few tips for proper spraying.

Miller says many sprayers these days are fitted with nozzles that deliver a medium/coarse spray. "You can use these nozzles for different products. [They have] a coarser spray so if the wind kicks up the spray will stay uniform without a lot of drift."

But Miller stresses that superintendents should consider switching nozzles for each pesticide they're spraying, whether it's an herbicide, fungicide or insecticide. For instance, a nozzle that emits a coarse spray is not effective for a fungicide program.

"It may not be as important if you're spraying a soil insecticide to have real fine droplets hitting the soil," Miller says. "You can probably get away with a coarser spray. But in the case of a contact fungicide, you want to maximize that product on the leaf. So you want to have a nozzle that can do that for you. If we have a real coarse spray, then you're probably not going to do a very good job of getting it on the foliage because there are a lot of big particles that will roll off the leaf and fall down into the turf canopy. So they won't be effective."

Miller points out that nozzles are inexpensive. "You can buy a whole set for \$100," he adds.

— Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief



Kyle Miller

what we've heard from many members. "Overall golf spending is rising a bit as the overall economy continues to improve," he said.

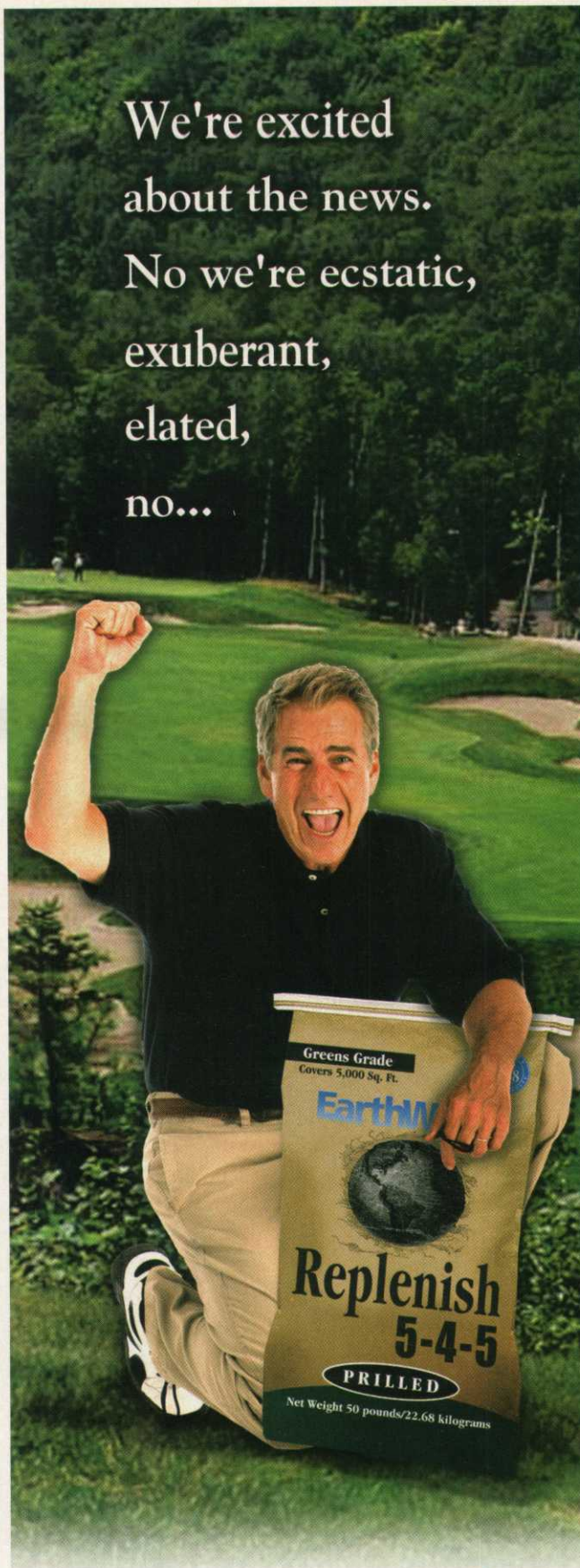
Private club rounds were flat for the year while public courses had slight increases. "Premium" public courses had the best showing with nearly a 2-percent gain, followed by "value" public with about a 1-percent increase.

The report is based on information reported by a

panel of nearly 2,600 golf facilities across the United States. Response rates to monthly surveys vary from 60 percent to 70 percent.

Including the 2004 openings, the total number of U.S. golf facilities stands at 16,057, thus breaking the 16,000 mark for the first time. Adjusting for 9-hole and 18-hole-plus facilities, there were 14,988 18-hole equivalents at year's end.

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Off The Fringe

Business briefs

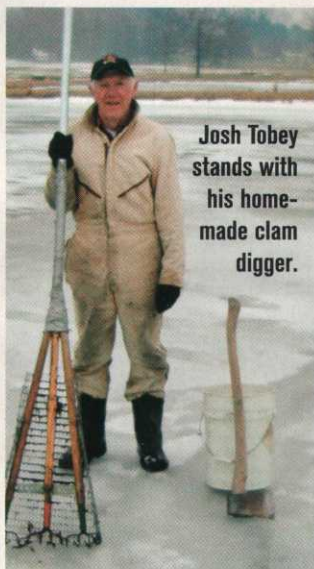
Briefs continued from page 14
independent distributors through training and education.

"In establishing the training institute, ITODA is assuming a new role as the primary educational resource for independent distributors, with the support of other groups in the industry," ITODA President Chris Petersen said.

Singleton honored by ASGCA

The American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) will present its Donald Ross Award to golf course irrigation pioneer John Singleton at its annual meeting April 18 in Pebble Beach, Calif. Singleton will be the 30th recipient of the award, which is given annually to a person who has made significant contributions to the game of golf and golf course architecture.

Digging for Clams ...Err... Golf Balls

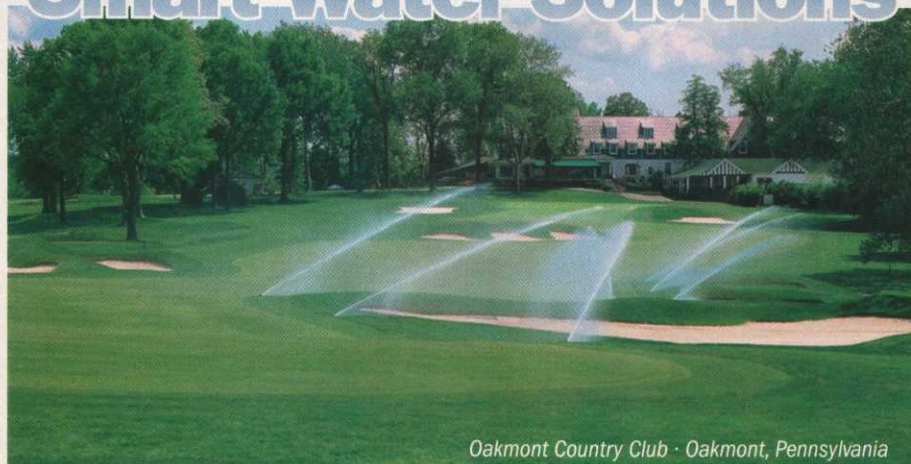


Josh Tobey stands with his home-made clam digger.

For the past four winters, Josh Tobey, a 78-year-old member of the Elks Club of State College (Pa.), gets his exercise in a unique way on the frozen golf course ponds. Tobey grew up in the New England area and was exposed to clam digging early in his teens. That practice has come in handy for his winter activity. He can be found almost daily, chopping holes through the ice-digging for golf balls with his homemade "clam digger." This past winter he found nearly 3,000 golf balls.

On good days Tobey will usually fill a 5-gallon bucket with balls, about 300 of them, that he has dug out of the muddy pond bottoms. Tobey says it's great exercise. The only negative is cleaning each of the

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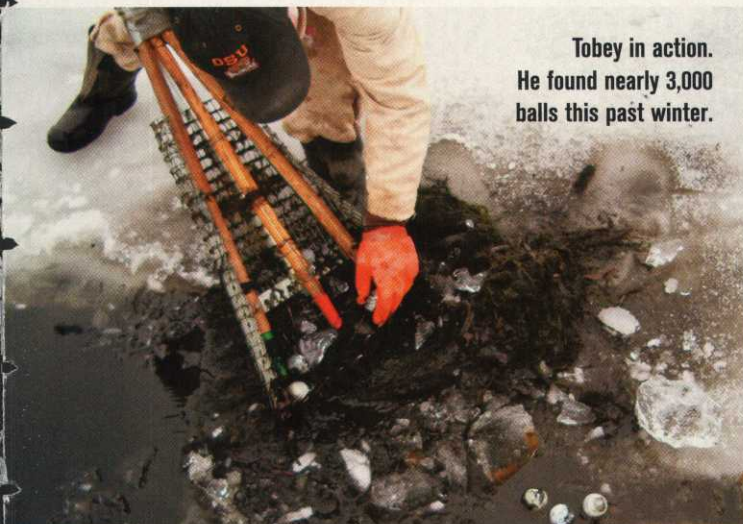


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Tobey in action.
He found nearly 3,000
balls this past winter.

balls before storing them. He tried washing them in his washing machine once at home, but his wife quickly put a stop to that practice.

What does Tobey do with thousands of golf balls? He has given many to local high school golf teams, sold them to raise money for his church and library and given them to the course pro for range balls.

(Editor's note: David Williams, certified superintendent of the Elks Club of State College, sent us this information about Tobey and took the photographs of him in action.)

Quotable

"I don't want to be out there mowing tomorrow and run over a mine."

— Anonymous staff member with the Tea Tree Golf Club on the island of Tasmania, Australia, after a mortar shell — "quite old," according to police — was inexplicably found on the course. (Knight Ridder)

"We've had rains before where we shut off the water for two or three days, but not 10. I mean, over 15 days already."

— Carlos Federico, superintendent at The Pines Golf Club of Marana in Tucson, Ariz., quoted by KOLD News 13 on the abundance of rain throughout the southwest in February.

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Movie Site Turns California Golf Course 'Sideways'

By Thomas Skernivitz, Managing Editor

Asked to pick his favorite flick of 2004, David Rosenstrauch gives two thumbs up to the only movie that really "hit home."

Certainly, then, the certified superintendent at River Course at the Alisal has to be heralding "Sideways." After all, the movie literally hit home — in this case Solvang, Calif., in the heart of Santa Barbara wine country. Two scenes were filmed at River Course, including one gut-buster that occurs on one of Rosenstrauch's fairways. The lead characters, played by Paul Giamatti and Thomas Hayden Church, having just had a group chip into them, return the favor and fire a few balls (and expletives) right back at 'em.

"The scene on the golf course was

pretty cool," Rosenstrauch says. "Those were some of the members from our private course that they used (as extras)."

Nevertheless, it's "Finding Neverland" over "Sideways" when Rosenstrauch is pressed to name his No. 1 movie. So much for any home-course advantage, which, in this case, included some terrific on-location food spreads and a set of free tickets to the premier.

"Personally, I thought 'Finding Neverland' was one of the best movies I've seen in the last 15 or 20 years," he says of the Johnny Depp film that details the origination of the fairy tale character Peter Pan. "I loved 'Neverland.' It hit home. The end got me right between my heart. When that little kid is looking at (Depp's character) with tears in his eyes, it struck me. Loved that movie. It was fantastic."

Not that "Sideways" was bad.

"I'd give it a B," Rosenstrauch, 52, says. "I thought it was pretty funny."

Things weren't so amusing at the time of the filming last May. The two golf scenes, which lasted less than five minutes combined on film, closed the course for the four days it took to shoot.

"Man, I could never be an actor. I'd be going out of my brain," Rosenstrauch says.

The good news is that tourism in the valley is booming. Not bad for a movie that Rosenstrauch says was considered "B-grade from the get-go."

"The River Course is just packed. A 5-hour round, 6-hour round is not uncommon now," Rosenstrauch says. "It's going to be a good year."

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