

# Full of Firsts

GRANT, REHR AND GIORDANO MAKE HISTORY AT ST. ANDREWS

By Anthony Pioppi, Contributing Editor

**I**t was the 134th playing of the Open Championship and the 27th time that the Old Course in St. Andrews, Scotland, was hosting it. But this year's event in July, at least on the maintenance side, was also full of firsts.

Old Course Head Greenskeeper Euan Grant was on the job for his first Open and is believed to be the first non-St. Andrewsian to hold the title.

Lauren Giordano, who in 2003 interned at the Old Course and became the first woman ever to work on the crew there, was back, becoming the first woman ever to volunteer for an Open Championship. She has since earned a degree from Rutgers University.



Jay Rehr

And maybe most impressive was Jay Rehr, who undoubtedly became the first golf course turf technician to chalk up a career Grand Slam. Rehr spent 16 years turning wrenches at Augusta National, worked at the 1997 and 2002 U.S. Opens as well as the 2003 PGA before completing the slam at the most hallowed golf course in the world. He also has two U.S. Senior Opens, a U.S. Women's Open and a pair of Memorial Tournaments in his toolbox.

"Who wouldn't want to do a British Open?" the jocular Rehr asked rhetorically. Since 2004 he has been on his own as the sole employee of Turf Equipment Consulting based in Grovertown, Ga., but it was his old boss at Augusta, Marsh Benson, that advised Rehr to complete the Slam at the Old Course.

"He told me, 'If you're going to do it, do it right,'" Rehr says. What impressed Rehr most about the entire Old Course maintenance operation and what set it apart from all other major tournaments he's worked was the laid-back attitude. Starting with Grant on down to the guys who raked bunkers, tournament week was approached with a supreme air of confidence but without the manic pace and the world-could-end-at-any-moment attitude found in the maintenance facilities at many U.S. Majors.

Grant usually had a song on his lips when he made his first appearance at about 4 a.m. each day even though he was often working on less than three hours sleep. His boundless enthusiasm was at once amazing and frustrating to those in his presence. Grant's demeanor established the tone for the entire tournament. "You're not under pressure. You're not under the gun. It's not like everything has to be done immediately," Rehr said.

Instead of 18-hour days common for mechanics at U.S. Majors, the Old Course techs were broken down into two nine-hour shifts. Another difference in the work atmosphere that Rehr said was readily apparent was that the golf course and the tournament were the focal points, not the head greenskeeper. Grant had no desire to put his individual stamp on the event other than to have the Old Course in the best condition possible.

With course conditions the focus, the results were universally praised. Some players, including Greg Norman, said the Old Course was in the best condition they had ever seen.

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## Business briefs

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tration data development by the 2,4-D Task Force and review by EPA began in 1988.

### Andersons restructures group

The Andersons has restructured its Processing Group and named Tom Waggoner president of the group. Waggoner had previously been vice president of sales and marketing for the group.

### Arysta secures marketing rights

Arysta LifeScience North America announced it has secured exclusive domestic marketing rights for fluoxastrobin, a strobilurin fungicide in development for disease control alone and in combination products.

"We view this investment as a demonstration of our continuing commitment to supply highly effective plant disease control chemistry for turfgrass management and ornamental production," said Elin Miller, Arysta LifeScience North America president and CEO.

Fluoxastrobin is being tested extensively in university trials, according to the company.

### Ex-ClubCorp head begins company

Former ClubCorp president Jim Hinckley has formed Century Golf Partners, a golf investment company created for the purpose of acquiring and managing country clubs and daily-fee golf courses throughout the country.

In addition, Century Golf Partners has created a golf investment partnership with Walton Street Capital, a private real estate investment company based in Chicago.

### Hetrick leaves GCBAA

Lee Hetrick has left the Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBAA) as its executive director after six years. Hetrick, based in Lincoln, Neb., announced his departure at the end of the association's summer meeting in New Jersey, adding that he wants to pursue other career goals. Hetrick will serve as a consultant to the GCBAA Executive Committee until the end of the year. Hetrick was instrumental in the growth and stability of the organization. GCBAA membership grew by 30 percent under his reign.

## Off The Fringe

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180 members are from the region.

"We've heard reports that range from people who came through the fury of the storm OK to stories where golf courses that some of our members worked at — and I have to use the past tense — are basically unrecognizable now."

Mona said he hadn't heard of any members and their kin who had been killed. "We've heard of people who can't get back to their homes, so they're living in different places," he added.

Mike Tinkey, the NGCOA's deputy director, said golf course owners have stepped up to help their fellow owners whose courses were battered by the storm. Tinkey said many phone calls came from Florida owners who had endured the rash of hurricanes that ripped through that state last year. They empathized with what owners on the Gulf coast had gone through and wanted to help them, even though their courses hadn't recovered fully from the Florida hurri-

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Steve Mona



canes. "I thought that was very moving," Tinkey said.

It's not certain how many jobs in the golf industry will be lost because of the hurricane. Typically, insurance doesn't cover lost employee income, Tinkey said, so employees could be out of work if courses shut down for a long period.

Spence said he's worried that golf course workers won't be able to make a living. "That's the main concern we have is how these people are going to live," Spence says, noting that U.S. superintendents who want to help dis-

placed workers can contact him at 985-851-1376 or [csecc@bellsouth.net](mailto:csecc@bellsouth.net).

This is the first time GCSAA has been forced to move its show so close to its date. Mona says it will take extra work, effort and money to do. "We're attempting something that's never been done, but we're very confident we can do it," he added.

The GCSAA and other golf organizations have established a relief program to assist the public and its members effected by the hurricane. For more information, contact the GCSAA at 800-472-7878.

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The Old Course was being prepared for the Championship well before Grant came on board in 2004. But under his guidance the majority of the 112 bunkers were rebuilt in the last year, many of them restored to their former configurations.

The famed Road Hole Bunker was completely done over with the foreknowledge that the golfing world would be scrutinizing the efforts. The fact that no players complained about the alteration may be the highest praise.

Giordano, who's now on the crew at Bam Hollow Country Club in Tifton Falls, N.J., was ecstatic about her return to the Old Course. With her mother along to enjoy the experience, she was glad to be back to the epitome of minimal maintenance.

"I don't agree with what we do in America — lush, high input," she said. "You look at the conditions and ask, 'Is this necessary?'"

Giordano's goal is to become superintendent at a low-input layout. And for a week she was back mowing fairways and syringing greens on such a course, which is also her favorite course.

"It's dreamland," Giordano said, probably not the first time that has been said about the Old Course.

## Quotable

**"Reality is reality, and Mother Nature wins all battles. Just like today, I wanted rain . . . but not an inch and a half."**

— Paul Galligan, superintendent of Grand Traverse Resort in Traverse City, Mich., on dealing with the weather

**"Never have so many poorly skilled people spent more money on an activity that makes them swear and hate themselves."**

— Comedian and writer Jay Mohr on the great game of golf (*Sports Illustrated*)