

Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

Business briefs

Course openings decline

They don't make 'em like they used to.

According to the National Golf Foundation, only 124.5 golf courses (in 18-hole equivalents) opened in 2005, less than the 150.5 that opened in 2004. The number is substantially down from the all-time-high golf course opening number of 398.5 that occurred in 2000, according to NGF.

The last time so few golf courses opened as did in 2005 was in the mid-1980s, the association says.

The NGF also said there were 98 closures (in 18-hole equivalents) in 2005. That means the net addition the industry was only 26.5 18-hole courses. Several of those closings have occurred in Michigan, once the hot bed of golf course openings.

Foley takes over at GCBAA

Paul Foley, the new executive director of the Golf Course Builders Association of America, may not know the inner workings of the golf course building industry — yet — but he knows plenty about association management. Foley, who replaces Lee Hetrick, comes to the GCBAA from the Motor Equipment Manufacturers Association (MEMA) and the Automotive Aftermarket Suppliers Association (AASA), where he served as vice president for the past five years. Foley previously worked for the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. for 34 years.

Foley says he'll be able to utilize his business and association experience to help the GCBAA grow. "Associations must be member driven, and I look forward to working with the membership to determine their needs and translate that into services the GCBAA will provide," he said.

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Hughes Not Thrilled About Gulf Bill

NGCOA LEADER SAYS LAW, WHICH EXCLUDES GOLF COURSES AND CLUBS FROM TAX BENEFITS, IS OUTRAGEOUS

Mike Hughes is not happy that golf facilities have been grouped with booze, bets and backrubs by U.S. lawmakers. Hughes, the CEO of the National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA), is even angrier that lawmakers have excluded golf courses and clubs from tax benefits created by the Gulf Opportunity Zone Act of 2005.

In December, lawmakers passed a bill that creates about \$8 billion in tax benefits and relief to Gulf Coast businesses affected by recent hurricanes. However, golf courses and clubs are excluded from those benefits. The law states that "provisions do not apply with respect to any private or commercial golf course, country club, massage parlor, hot tub facility, suntan facility or any store the principal business of which is the sale of alcoholic beverages for consumption off premises."

Hughes said lawmakers do not understand the golf industry and the contributions golf course owners and operators make to local communities. The NGCOA contends the bill was intended to satisfy House conservatives.



"To be singled out like this — as though the owners and operators of golf courses in this region are not part of the mainstream business community and do not make significant contributions to local economies — is outrageous," he said.

The bill, which President Bush said was introduced to help small businesses, provides access to tax breaks that includes accelerated depreciation, deduction of demolition and clean-up costs, operating loss carryback, and an employee retention tax credit for employers in the disaster zones.

Hughes said golf is a centerpiece for the tourism industry in the Gulf Coast region and is responsible for generating millions of dollars in revenues and thousands of jobs. "A golf course is no different than a restaurant or movie theater when it comes to hurricane relief," Hughes added.

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"I know that Mr. Foley will bring a different perspective that will have a positive impact on the growth and success of the association," said Tommy Sasser, GCBA president.

Four new grasses in spotlight at Turf Field Day

Five University of Florida researchers highlighted Environmental Turf's "New Grasses Field Day" in Avon Park, Fla., delivering reports on some of the newest grasses available for use in warm-season climates.

Brian Scully spoke of four new grasses developed by the University of Florida that are available through Environmental Turf's network of licensed growers:

- UltimateFlora Zoysia, a medium-textured Zoysia japonica grass.
- PristineFlora Zoysia, a fine-textured Zoysia japonica.
- Aloha Seashore Paspalum.
- Hammock Centipede, Eremochloa ophiuroides (Munro) Hack.

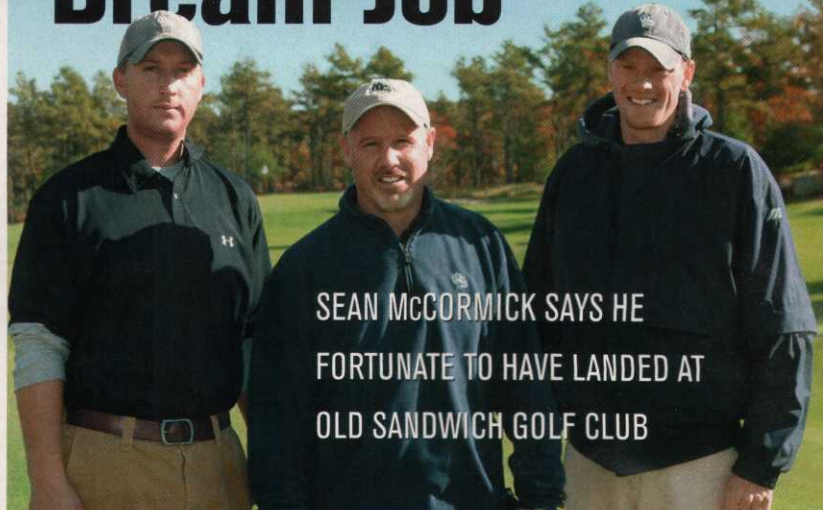
Patent application published, Aquatrols says

A collaborative agreement between Aquatrols Corp. of America and the performance products division of a surfactant development company has resulted in a patent application that was recently published.

The patent application covers the process of improving a rootzone growing environment and enhancing plant productivity through the application of methyl-capped block copolymer surfactants — alone or mixed with other soil targeted materials. The patent also covers the preparation of these surfactants. Aquatrols has exclusive rights to the use of the technology in the markets it serves and has brought it to market to date as Revolution.

"Being in a position to collaborate with experts worldwide increases our opportunities to discover or create innovative solutions for our customers," said Stanley J. Kostka, director of technology and innovation for Aquatrols, who was named as one of the inventors on the patent.

Dream Job



SEAN MCCORMICK SAYS HE
FORTUNATE TO HAVE LANDED AT
OLD SANDWICH GOLF CLUB

By Anthony Pioppi, Contributing Editor

Sean McCormick (center),
with assistants Mike Cunniff and Erik MacPherson.

Sean McCormick had a goal. From his days on the crew at The Country Club in Brookline, Mass., to his time at Albuquerque Country Club, where he landed his first job as a superintendent, to his stint as the top man at the highly regarded Valley Club of Montecito in Santa Barbara, Calif., McCormick kept his eyes on the prize.

Ever since seeing the pictures of Prairie Dunes Golf Club shortly after it opened in 1995, the 45-year-old McCormick wanted to be part of a Bill Coore-Ben Crenshaw design. He received his wish nearly a decade after the dream began, returning to his home state of Massachusetts in 2002 to build and grow in their design, Old Sandwich Golf Club, which opened at the end of 2004.

McCormick considers himself fortunate to have been chosen for the project that stands apart from nearly every other course in New England, situated on rolling, sandy soil, carved out from forest and farmland.

It is Coore that insists he and Crenshaw are the fortunate ones.

"We could not have possibly had anybody better," Coore says, emphasizing his respect and admiration for McCormick as a person and a superintendent. "He's fun to be around and he's so talented at what he does."

Coore, Crenshaw and the rest of their tight-knit organization forged a friendship with McCormick during his seven years at Valley Club. The membership was remodeling the Alister MacKenzie design under the guidance of Tom Doak while Coore and Crenshaw were going through the permitting process for a nearby project that was never built.

"We relied on him from a friendship and a consulting standpoint," Coore says.

McCormick's life came full circle when his first superintendent, Bill Spence from The Country Club, called to tell him about the Old Sandwich project. McCormick was Spence's top assistant for four years.

According to McCormick, he was happy where he was, but this was an opportunity he could not miss.

"The only reason I left the Valley Club was for this," he says, sitting in his

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Off The Fringe Full Force

ARCHITECT GAINS REPUTATION
FOR RESTORING USGA COURSES

By Mark Leslie

When restoration of an old, classic golf course coincides with a United States Golf Association (USGA) event, golf course architect Ron Forse is often the person called in to make it work.

While Rees Jones is known as the "Open Doctor" for renovating several golf courses to host the men's U.S. Open, Forse could hang a shingle declaring himself as the "Director of Design Protocol/The Other Championships" or "Course Surgeon, Championships."

Since the early 1990s, the young Pennsylvanian has built a reputation for mastering the restoration of golf courses designed by the likes of Donald Ross, A.W. Tillinghast, Willie Park Jr. and William Flynn — but especially Ross. Like notches in a belt, Forse and his senior designer, Jim Nagle, have worked on 35 courses designed by



Ross, the dean of the Golden Era of golf design in the early 1900s.

Forse's track record on USGA championship courses, by the years they held events, is impressive. It includes:

1998 — Forse built an alternate 10th green and rebuilt the famous par-3 sixth green sporting a bunker in the middle at the George Thomas-designed Riviera Country Club in Pacific Palisades, Calif., host of the U.S. Senior Open as well as the Nissan Open.

2001 — Forse created a master plan, restored bunkers, tees and greens, and designed a short-game practice area and cart paths at Ross-designed Salem Country Club in Peabody, Mass., host of the U.S. Senior Open.

2004 — Forse restored the entire golf course, to Ross's original intent, at the Kalkwa Club in Erie, Pa., host of the U.S. Women's Amateur.

2006 — Forse recently completed implementing his long-range master plan of the famous Tillinghast-designed Newport (R.I.) Country Club, one of the five founding clubs of the USGA and host of the U.S. Women's Open. He restored the entire course to Tillinghast's "design intent."

"It's a thrill to restore these classic courses, especially when it happens to correlate with a major tournament," Forse says. "It's also a challenge because many of them are becoming compromised by today's equipment, which is making an inadvertent assault on their integrity. Anything we can do to keep the design intent a reality for the golfer is an honor and a privilege."

Mark Leslie, a freelance writer from Monmouth, Maine, represents Forse.

Quotable

"People think in terms of the instant mature look. We're in an era of instant gratification."

— Bill Coore, golf course architect, on people who golf courses grown in now.

"A plague invented by the Calvinistic Scots as a punishment for man's sins."

— Journalist James Reston on the frustrating game of golf.

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spacious office that is part of the state-of-the-art maintenance facility.

It was during his stint at the Brookline layout that McCormick caught the Coore-Crenshaw bug. The duo touched up Brookline prior to the 1996 Ryder Cup, and Crenshaw captained the winning American side.

McCormick was at the Valley Cup during the Ryder Cup matches but was given permission by the membership to return to Brookline and help out for the event. "He kept me sane during the Ryder Cup," Spence recalls.

Coore says McCormick and his calm demeanor also helped him and others remain sane during the always-stressful grow-in at Old Sandwich. Everyone was on the same page for the grow-in, which helped the situation immensely.

Coore and Crenshaw wanted to seed the entire course and not use any sod. They realized their way would take longer, but knew the product would be better in the future.

Backed by the ownership group that includes Pete Bailey Jr., who developed the Coore-Crenshaw-designed The Golf Club at Cuscowilla in Georgia, the course was seeded and grown in to play firm. There are less than a thousand irrigation heads on the course, and the fescue areas are not wa-

tered. In keeping with the minimalist theme, ball washers or benches are nowhere to be found. "We all were on the same page as to how we saw the golf course being grown in and played," Coore says. "Sean made it very, very easy."

Also easy on all parties involved was the site chosen for the project. Originally part of the nearby two-course Pinehills Golf Club project, Old Sandwich was already permitted when Coore-Crenshaw and McCormick became involved. There was no wetland mitigation involved and the only area where the course gets near a sensitive area is the pond behind the first tee.

Greens are not built to USGA specifications but are constructed from material found on site. In fact, all sand used on the project is mined from a 5-acre pit found on the property.

McCormick grew up in Northampton, Mass. in the western part of the Bay State. He graduated with a two-year degree from the University of Massachusetts-Stockbridge in 1982 and went to work installing irrigation systems. An accomplished player, McCormick decided he wanted to work at The Country Club and, in his words, "just made a pest of myself," until he was hired onto the crew, eventually becoming the top assistant.

It was that job that years later opened the door to his current job, bringing him back home and fulfilling his dream.

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