

Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

Business briefs

Can you say, 'Correction'

They don't make 'em like they used to. We're talking about golf courses. They're just not building so many of them these days. 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.

NGCOA recognizes courses

The National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) awarded its Jemsek Award for Golf Course Excellence to the three courses at Bandon Dunes Golf Resort in Bandon, Ore. — Bandon Dunes, Pacific Dunes and Bandon Trails.

The NGCOA also recognized Poppy Hills Golf Course in Pebble Beach, Calif., as its Golf Course of the Year.

Among individuals, Walt Lankau, the owner of Stow Acres Country Club in Stow, Mass., was named the winner of the Don Rossi Award for significant and long-lasting service to the NGCOA. Lankau, 63, has been an advocate for golf course owners and operators for more than a decade and has served on the NGCOA board of directors for a number of years, including two years as president.

The High Hurdles

SUPERINTENDENTS SOUND OFF ABOUT THE DEMANDS THEY'RE FACING IN THEIR JOBS

Recently, we asked golf course superintendents to list the challenges they have been encountering. Here are their responses:

"2005 was the toughest golf season I have experienced in 23 years as a superintendent. If 2006 resembles this season, I will consider a career change." Paul Diegnau, certified superintendent, Keller Golf Course, St. Paul, Minn.

"As of now, we are keeping up. The future is not looking that good. People are spending their free time on other things." Kenneth Pester, owner, Pike Run Golf Club, Ottawa, Ohio

"There needs to be a huge effort in educating people that it is not possible or feasible to maintain a golf course at the level people see on television for the pro events." Brian Mohr, Spencer (Iowa) Municipal Golf Course

"Gas prices are a concern. Heating the shop for the winter is modified. We will work at 49 degrees instead of 55 degrees for this year. It should not be a big deal. (We'll) just add another layer." Tom Small, superintendent, Abenakee Club, Biddeford Pool, Maine

"With the tough economy, rising prices and intense competition for an apparent limited number of golfers, golf course management is quite a challenge. How-

ever, I'm always up for a challenge. If it was easy, anybody could be successful." Steven Storz, certified superintendent of PrairieView Golf Club, Byron, Ill.

"Golfers are ignorant to what we as professionals do on a daily basis to give them the playing conditions they so desire." Brian Ciotta, Seven Hills Country Club, Cleveland

"Old equipment, no mechanic, grubs and skunks." Tim O'Linn, superintendent, Cedar Glen Golf Club, New Baltimore, Mich.

"Demanding members that want dollar greens on a dime budget. Also, trying to stay focused on the health of the turf and not just the speed of the greens." Robert Stringer, certified superintendent, Germantown (Tenn.) Country Club

"A lot of times I feel out of touch with the crew because I have to do so much non-golf course stuff." Chad Morris, superintendent, Running Y Resort, Klamath Falls, Ore.

"Finding good employees who take pride in what they do. Very few employees take ownership in their jobs. They just punch that clock and talk about football and Tiger." Dean Wilson, general manager and co-owner of Beacon Lakes Golf Club and Hillcrest Golf Club in Texas



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