

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Rounds rise in February, thanks to warm weather

It was an early spring for the golf industry as favorable weather, along with an extra day in February for leap year, bolstered rounds in February 10.4 percent compared to same-store rounds last February, according to the National Golf Foundation.

The increase was enough to offset January's doldrums and carry year-to-date rounds into positive territory — up 3.4 percent.

February numbers skyrocketed in areas where unusually warm weather drove golfers to dust off the clubs, including in the Upper Midwest (up 360 percent), the Northeast (up 134 percent), and the Mid-Atlantic, which was up 63 percent.

Also reassuring for the industry, areas where winter golf thrives did well, including in the Southeast (up 23 percent), the South Central (up 16 percent) and central and south Florida, which were up more than 7 percent for the month.

Marriott mandates Audubon

Marriott International is requiring its 34 golf courses at 25 locations throughout the United States, Canada and the Caribbean to become Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries by the end of the year.

The management company's Doral Golf Resort & Spa in Miami, host of the 2008 WGC-CA Championship in March, became the first-ever Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary in North America to host a World Golf Championships event. About 650 golf courses have gone through the Audubon certification program.

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From One Dream Job to Another

WOODWARD MOVES FROM TORREY PINES TO CEO OF GCSAA

By David Frabotta, Senior Editor

Only a pretty sweet job could have taken Mark Woodward away from San Diego. The past president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America will host his first U.S. Open in June at Torrey Pines Golf Course, the first municipal facility to host a U.S. Open.

He pursued the position from a hospital bed three years ago during a bout with colitis. "I've been at the Majors, and I knew I'd never have the opportunity to host one unless I moved," Woodward said in March during a *Golfdom* visit to Torrey Pines.

Woodward spent 31 years working in various capacities for the city of Mesa, Ariz. He became the director of golf operations for the city of San Diego in 2005. "I knew it was going to be a very interesting job for me, and it would be a once in a lifetime experience for me being inside



Mark Woodward

the ropes at a Major."

But Woodward won't be inside the ropes for long. After the Open, he'll begin his tenure as CEO of the GCSAA. It's an organization he's known for 30 years, and he earned his certification more than 20 years ago. When he takes the helm July 1, he'll be the

first superintendent to lead the GCSAA.

"I've been working pretty hard my entire career to set myself up for an opportunity like this, so I'm proud to be the first superintendent to lead the organization," Woodward said via phone after the announcement. "I've been a member for 30 years, so I think I have a pretty good idea of what our members are about and what they want from the association — the value of education, programs and services that we offer."

Woodward, who has a master's degree in business administration from the University of Phoenix, says he's always been interested in leading the organization, but he didn't think he would ever have the opportunity

**See our June issue for a complete
U.S. Open preview.**

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Business briefs

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Lee appointed CEO of Sipcam Agro and ADVAN

The board of directors of agrochemical companies Sipcam Agro USA and ADVAN LLC appointed Andy D. Lee as CEO of the two companies. Lee has extensive experience within the agrochemical industry, having held senior leadership roles with BASF Corp. and other chemical companies in the United States and Europe.

Prior to his appointment as CEO of Sipcam and ADVAN, Lee was director of the U.S. Crop Protection Business for BASF Corp. Earlier in his career, Lee held positions in global marketing for BASF and for American Home Products. Lee also worked in Brussels, Belgium, with American Cyanamid where he served as technical director and then commercial director for Europe.

Lebanon joins Project Evergreen

Lebanon Turf announced it's supporting Project Evergreen, a national non-profit organization representing green industry service providers, associations, suppliers/distributors, media companies and other organizations. Project EverGreen's mission is to raise the awareness of the environmental, economic and lifestyle benefits of landscapes and to promote the significance of those who preserve and enhance green spaces at home, work and play.

"Project Evergreen is an organization every member of the green industry should stand behind," said Mike Sisti, marketing manager at Lebanon Turf.

Duich honored with Funk Award

Longtime Penn State University professor Joe Duich earned the Turfgrass Breeders Association's C. Reed Funk award, which honors individuals for their dedication to turfgrass breeding and their impact on education. Duich spent almost 40 years at Penn State University.

"Dr. Joe has dedicated his entire life to improving the state of the turfgrass industry," said Crystal Fricker, board member of the Turfgrass Breeders Association. ■

Nice Shot

SHETLAR, MARTIN SCORE BIG
IN VALENT BASKETBALL-THEMED
TURF MADNESS CONFERENCE

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

While his company's conference embraced a basketball theme, Trevor Thorley, president of Valent U.S.A., didn't slam-dunk on anybody. But you could say Thorley was one of the go-to guys for any questions at the recent conference, dubbed Turf Madness, which the pesticide manufacturer and marketer hosted in Las Vegas for superintendents, its distributors and others.

The Valent folks used the famed NCAA basketball tournament, known as March Madness, as the backdrop for their turf science event, which focused on turf pesticide practices, among other things. The speaker stage at the Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino was decorated like a locker-room and included a scoreboard that read: Valent 99, Pests 0.

Dave Shetlar, associate professor of entomology at The Ohio State University, was one of the star speakers of the conference. In his talk, Shetlar noted the increased safeness of some of the new insecticides on the market.

"If you would have told me 15 years ago that we would have a whole new slate of insecticides that would be less toxic, I would have said you're crazy," Shetlar said. "But here we are."

Shetlar pointed out the turf industry has divested itself of most of the organophosphates because of the Environmental Protection Agency's actions to phase out the products. Shetlar also mentioned that the EPA is currently reviewing pyrethroids.

"The EPA has already sent out notes that say the risk cup on pyrethroids



Valent's Jason Fausey makes a point during a presentation he gave at Turf Madness.

is already overflowing," Shetlar said. "That's beltway speak for we think we're going to have to ban or restrict a lot of these pyrethroids."

Shetlar specifically cited the neonicotinoids family of insecticides, including Valent's Arena insecticide, when speaking about the safer insecticides. Arena's active ingredient is clothianidin, which is a category four in EPA's toxicity rating.

"The terminology for category four is practically nontoxic," Shetlar added.

But Shetlar stated that surfactants added to some formulated products have made them more toxic despite their near non-toxic active ingredients.

"When's the last time an insecticide was made more toxic by adding these inerts to it?" Shetlar asked. "But the bottom line is the active ingredient in that formulation is practically nontoxic."

The problem with the neonicotinoids — and it's not really a problem — is that when end-users use a pesticide from that family, "they want to spray that bug and they want to have that bug hit the ground screaming."

Organophosphate and carbamate pesticides had that effect on bugs, but the neonicotinoids don't because they don't impact a bug's receiving nerve,

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BIG Is Not Always Best

SLOWER-PACED NEW ENGLAND TURF SHOW

IS GIGANTIC PROOF OF THAT

By Anthony Pioppi, Contributing Editor

There is something about seeing a rock band in a big venue like an arena or a stadium — the pre-show vibe, the throng of humanity united by a common sound and the massive stage production. It's truly a spectacle.

From a musical standpoint, however, for both the musicians and the audience, it's not an optimal situation. The acoustics can be abysmal and there is no real connection between performer and audience.

A smaller, more intimate venue may not have the same energy of the big show, but it is by far the best way to hear the music and connect with a performer. This is not to say an unforgettable experience can't be found at a big concert. I, and about 80,000 others, attended Live Aid at Philadelphia's Veterans Memorial Stadium in 1985. My friends and I sat so far back from the stage that the people in the row behind us were in Delaware. It was a blistering day and the performers, hundreds of yards away, looked to be the size of nematodes. The sound was atrocious. But as an event, it was spectacular and at times jaw dropping.

If I had to attend it all over again, I would attend it all over again.

There is correlation, for me, to golf industry trade shows. There is much to be said about the national event with its flash and glitter, and manufacturers showing off *all* their wares, with enough free items handed out to stock a good-sized yard sale. The important researchers are there as are the biggest names in the turf maintenance profession. From North America and the British Isles, they're walking the show floor, teaching or attending classes.

Yet, there is impersonality to the national show where in fact the size can be nothing short of overwhelming, daunting and maddening.

In early March, the New England Turfgrass Foundation held its annual conference and show at the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence. The event has been steadily growing in attendance as have the number of manufacturers and distributors who ply their goods and services on the floor. It has become a must-attend event for those in any segment of the New England turf industry.

Over four days, classes are offered not just for superintendents, but also for equipment technicians and those in sports turf and lawn care. Because Golf Course Superintendents Association of America credits can be gained, there are always attendees from Long Island and Westchester County, N.Y.

Quotable

"We've always cut greens in March. I'm looking out the window right now and there's snow on the ground. ... That's global warming for you. Where's Al Gore when you need him?"

— Michael Bavier, certified superintendent of Inverness (Ill.) Golf Club, on the long 2007-2008 winter that stretched well into March

"If you keep your people well informed and you get them to use their brains, you'll be amazed at how much they can help manage costs."

— Certified superintendent John Miller, tournament agronomist for the LPGA Tour, on how a properly managed staff is good for the business.

The New England show has an intimate vibe. The pace is not as harried as the national.

Pennsylvania-based golf course architect Kelly Blake Moran was in Providence for the first time after hearing about the quality of classes offered. He found much more.

"It seemed easier to understand certain products in this environment rather than over the phone or brochures," he said.

He was also surprised by the variation of businesses that were there from regionally focused companies like the Chas. C. Hart Seed Co., a Wethersfield, Conn.-based company that supplies products to the golf and lawn care segments throughout the Northeast, to BLEC USA, a South Carolina company that manufactures equipment for landscapers.

Of course, the major national and international players in the iron, irrigation and chemical segments were there as well.

"There were a few contacts whose business is not solely confined to the New England area which is a testament to the drawing power of the show," Moran said. "I think that one of the biggest benefits is the possibility of meeting not only new contacts in New England, but also people who do business outside this area, some who are worldwide."

I couldn't agree more.

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Off The Fringe



Water Hazard

There wasn't much to chirp about on the first day of spring in parts of the Midwest and South, where severe flooding occurred. The Wilshire Golf Course in Bolivar, Ohio, wasn't spared and was turned into a river... or a lake, depending on how you look at this photograph.

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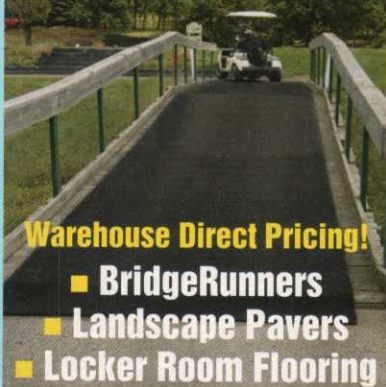
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"Nice Shot" — *Continued from page 18*
Shetlar pointed out. After a bug is sprayed with a neonicotinoid pesticide, it's fully aware of what's going on, but it doesn't react to what's going on.

"It's in la-la land," Shetlar says.

"The neonicotinoids are mood-altering drugs for bugs."

Because the bugs are rendered useless, they don't feel like eating. "And if they don't feed within hours, they will die," Shetlar said.

Bruce Martin, the professor of plant pathology and physiology from Clemson University, was another star speaker at the Valent event. Martin spoke about fungicide practices. He reminded those in attendance that dollar spot is the No. 1 turf disease.

"It's persistent and can spread easily," Martin said of dollar spot. "And if there's any one disease where we've had serious problems with fungicide resistance, it's dollar spot."

Martin also said dollar spot

— caused by the fungus *Sclerotinia homoeocarpa* — has developed into more of a challenge to control in recent years. That might have something to do with global warming, he added.

"I reviewed a paper recently that showed evidence that climate change — it's a little warmer and more humid in certain areas — is making it more conducive for dollar spot," Martin said.

But the major cause of dollar spot on golf course greens is cultural practices. You guessed it — low mowing heights, low nitrogen levels and anything else to keep the golf ball rolling fast and smooth.

What to do? Raise the cutting heights and increase the nitrogen for starters, Martin says. And explain to golfers that you're doing this to offset dollar spot, which could make their beloved greens more awful to putt on than they realize. Of course, removing dew and a sound fungicide program can also help. ■

Got a Beautifully Brutal Golf Hole?

If your golf course includes a hole where players boast after carding a bogey or finishing with the same ball they hit from the tee, John Deere Credit wants to showcase it

in a search for the Most Beautifully Brutal Golf Holes in North America.

"The Most Beautifully Brutal Golf Holes is an effort by John Deere Credit to salute the outstanding efforts of course owners, managers and superintendents for creating memorable experiences for players," says Steve Knutson, director of golf and turf leasing for John Deere Credit.

Golf course superintendents, architects, owners and builders can nominate the most Beautifully Brutal Par 4 holes on their courses until May 15 and Par 3 holes until July 15. A Web site, www.JohnDeereCredit.com/BrutalGolfHoles, complete with contest rules and details, has been created to accept nominations. Simply upload a photo of the nominated hole explaining what makes it beautifully brutal.

Nominations will be collected from five regions in the United States and one region in Canada (excluding Quebec). ■



"Woodward" — *Continued from page 16*
because outgoing CEO Steve Mona was doing such a good job. He inquired about the position the same week Mona announced he'd be moving on to lead the World Golf Foundation.

"It's the next progression in my career," Woodward says. "I like challenges, and it's going to be a great experience."

The appointment might come as a surprise to many who have witnessed Woodward's satisfaction in working at Torrey Pines. After spending a day with Woodward in late March, he appeared to be a guy who found his niche. In just three years, Woodward became a pillar in the community. He sat on the board of The Friends of Torrey Pines, a business task force that raised \$3 million for renovations that helped bring the Open to the historic golf course. He revamped the fee structures for the Balboa Park and Mission Bay golf courses to make them more profitable — to the tune of \$3 million more in revenue — in spite of death threats from residents who feared their beloved community treasure would become unaffordable. But Woodward didn't blink.

All the while, he led negotiations

to bring high-profile golf tournaments to the city. He's currently talking to the Ladies Professional Golf Association and IMG to bring the Samsung World Championship to Torrey Pines in 2009 and 2010. If he succeeds, Torrey will host its usual PGA Tour event (Buick Invitational), a USGA event (U.S. Open), the Callaway Junior World Championship and the Samsung LPGA event in a 17-month span.

Now Woodward is gearing up for the two largest professional events of his life: hosting a U.S. Open and transitioning power to lead the professional association that has guided his career.

Good thing he knows how to multitask. The GCSAA knows it, too. It also knows how to support its own message. Mona dedicated his tenure to raising the professional status of superintendents. He also said that his successor should come from the golf industry. The board of directors couldn't have supported that message any stronger than appointing one of its own to lead the GCSAA.

Woodward will still get a U.S. Open under his belt, and something tells me it won't be the last time that you'll find him behind the ropes. ■



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