

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Golf Consumer Confidence Stabilizes

Golf consumer confidence tanked in 2008, but it has stabilized in 2009, according to the National Golf Foundation.

Golf consumer confidence was around 100 in March 2008 before dropping to about 87 in December 2008. It rose slightly in early 2009, before dropping slightly again in June. The number has stabilized at 87 for the past several months, and the NGF hopes confidence has bottomed out. The NGF says golf consumer confidence is a combination of sentiment for playing golf, buying equipment and going on golf trips.

Big Three Join Virtual Trade Show

In October, the Toro Co. became the first major partner of the golf industry's first Virtual Trade Show (VTS) to be staged by the International Golf Course Equipment Managers Association (IGCEMA) in March. In November, John Deere became the second partner. Later in November, Jacobsen became the third major partner.

"This commitment demonstrates The Toro Co.'s leadership and continued support of the IGCEMA and its initiatives," said Stephen Tucker, the association's founder and virtual trade show developer. "John Deere has been a partner of the IGCEMA since our inception and has supported us in many different ways. We've been working with Jacobsen and Ransomes Jacobsen in the UK for many years now and they have supported us every step of the way. Partnering with us on the Virtual Trade Show really shows [the companies'] commitment to embracing new ideas and innovations and their willingness to continue supporting our efforts and it is much appreciated." ■



Currier Leaving Bethpage

Craig Currier is heading to the Glen Oaks Club.

POPULAR SUPERINTENDENT TAKES JOB AT PRIVATE CLUB ON LONG ISLAND

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

Craig Currier is leaving Bethpage State Park, whose esteemed Black Course in Farmingdale, N.Y., was the site of this year's U.S. Open, for the Glen Oaks Club, a private course on Long Island. Currier told *Golfdom* on Nov. 13 that he accepted the job, which he's expected to begin this month.

Currier, one of the most recognized superintendents in the business, joined Bethpage in 1997 when he was 26. Currier made a name for himself and received much mainstream media attention when the restored Black Course hosted the 2002 U.S. Open. Currier and his crew

were also heralded for their work during the rain-soaked U.S. Open on Bethpage Black last June.

The 27-hole Glen Oaks Club, established in 2000, is located in Old Westbury, N.Y.

Currier was well-liked at Bethpage. Dave Catalano, director of Bethpage State Park, said Currier is one of a handful of prominent people who has contributed to "the involvement, success and reputation" of Bethpage during its history. "I feel that strongly about Craig," Catalano said.

At press time, Currier didn't want to comment at length about his new position until some loose ends had been tied up. ■

Mixed Bag

GCSAA'S LYMAN SAYS NGF NUMBERS TELL A SORDID TALE OF THE GOLF MARKET

By Marty Whitford, Contributing Editor

Which do you want first — the good news or bad? Given the state of the economy, perhaps it's best to tee off with a few positive signs.

The good news is the number of rounds played on U.S. courses increased 0.5 percent from January through September 2009 compared to the same time last year. Rounds played at public-access courses led the way with a 0.8 percent climb.

Another sweet spot: Four times as many golf courses opened in the United States in 2008 than did in 2007. That's pretty much the best of the good stuff that Greg Lyman, environmental programs director for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), told members of RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment) at the organization's recent meeting in Or-



lando. RISE's more than 200 members represent major pesticide, fungicide, herbicide and fertilizer manufacturers, formulators and distributors.

Now for the golf market's nasty slice, according to Lyman, who sourced the National Golf Foundation as the generator of the statistics used in his presentation:

- Rounds played at private golf courses in the United States declined 0.7 percent in the first nine months of 2009.
- Although new course openings quadrupled last year, that statistic is skewed by the meager 8.5 recorded course openings in 2007 — 243.5 less golf courses than opened in 2001.
- Private facilities' membership, on average, fell 13 percent and rounds played at such clubs dropped 17 percent last year.
- An estimated 10 percent to 20 percent of the nation's about 4,400 private golf facilities are "at risk" with this group, averaging a 29 percent drop in members and 22 percent decline in rounds played last year.
- 57 percent of these "at risk" private golf courses operated at a loss in 2008.

"It has been a little rough the past few years, but the golf market appears to have stabilized for the most part — except for, perhaps, a few more corrections looming on the private side," Lyman concluded. "I think we'll see more private clubs converting to public courses, in the short term, to facilitate matters." ■

Whitford is Editor-in-Chief of Landscape Management, Golfdom's sister publication.



December
THIS MONTH'S HEALTH TIP

More guests visit around the holidays, and they add to the noise, confusion and stress to your dog and take him out of his routine. Dogs can be stepped on, and unsupervised children can injure them. Dogs can escape when visitors come and go, too. Guests are more likely to feed your dog and "just a little bite" can add up to a lot of food. Always advise your guests not to feed your dog. Your dog should also try to sleep in his regular spot. If he's in a spot where he might feel distressed, move him to a quiet place where he will be comfortable.

Berkley. His owner is David Callahan, assistant superintendent at Hidden Valley Country Club in Salem, Va. (Photo by: David Callahan)



Improving the Way Professionals Care for Turf