

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Rounds down 3 percent for the year

Golf rounds were down 2.9 percent in May compared to the same month in 2009, according to a survey of 3,870 courses by Golf Datatech. Rounds are down 3 percent for the year.

Rounds were down substantially in the West, up to 17.5 percent in Idaho, Wyoming and Montana. Rounds were up 8.2 percent in the New England area in May, and they're up 10.1 percent in that region for the year.

Green shoot for the golf economy

Golf may be slow in much of the country but industry vendors remain committed to the game in North Carolina and South Carolina. Commercial suppliers have come out early and strong in support of this year's Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association Conference and Trade Show in November in Myrtle Beach, S.C., according to a Carolinas GCSA news release.

Nearly 250 exhibit booths, or more than two-thirds of those available, have already sold even though the event is still almost five months away. That number exceeds sales for the same time last year, even though registration opened nearly a month later this time around.

"This is a great show of confidence in the game in our region," says Carolinas GCSA Executive Director Tim Kreger. "For so many of our vendors to commit so heavily so far in advance says something about their faith in the game here and the men and women who present the courses we play on."

The Carolinas GCSA's annual event is the largest regional conference and trade show for superintendents in the country. ■

More Than a Buzzword

BASF EMBRACES SUSTAINABILITY
IN ITS BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

The big buzzword in agriculture, which has filtered down to the golf course maintenance industry, is "sustainability." Then again, the "S" word seems to be the buzzword in just about every industry these days.

Many companies that supply equipment and chemicals to the golf course maintenance industry have grasped the sustainability concept. One of the companies, BASF, recently held a media summit in Chicago to discuss sustainability. The two-day event, held in June, focused on sustainability in agriculture and turfgrass maintenance, as well as other matters pertaining to the issue.

Jan Buberl, who assumed the role

of BASF's director of specialty products last October, told *Golfdom* that golf course superintendents are aware of sustainability, even though they might refer to it as another term.

"It's our job to make them aware and conscious of the concept," Buberl said. "We want to know what we can do and what we can offer as a company to help in the situation."

Superintendents may be resistant to sustainability, especially if they don't understand its nuances.

"It's our job to make them more comfortable with it, and it's an educational process," says Buberl says, who stresses that superintendents must be educated about the balanced approach of sustainability, which will allow them to do their jobs better in the long run.

Continued on page 12

Off The Fringe

BUZZWORD *Continued from page 6*

Stefan Marcinowski, a member of BASF's board of executive directors, said BASF has created a forum to discuss agricultural sustainability and practical solutions to help farmers with the concept.

"Farmers have a tremendous responsibility to produce more than ever while continuing to protect the environment for future generations," Marcinowski says. "Our conversations with representatives from stakeholders throughout the value chain will help to bring together the many visions of agricultural sustainability to a practical point of what growers need from all of us."

During his presentation during the summit, Markus Heldt, president of BASF Crop Protection, said new pesticide packaging will help farmers use pesticides safer and faster. It's safe

to assume the same holds true at the specialty products level.

While it's a buzzword now, Buberl expects "sustainability" will turn into something much more.

"We're convinced it's [for real]," he says.

To BASF, sustainability is a "journey" and a "commitment," Buberl says. There will always be new challenges in nature, including new pests and disease, and sustainability will always play a role.

"For us, it's a business principle and a journey that doesn't have an end point," he says.

One thing is for certain with BASF. The company will not remove its tagline, "The Chemical Company," from its logo. While sustainability is about protecting the environment, chemicals play a safe role in doing that, Buberl believes.



BASF's Jan Buberl says "sustainability is a business principle and a journey that doesn't have an end point."

"It's in our DNA, it's at our core," Buberl says of the tagline. "And it's our job to explain what we do and make more people comfortable with it." ■

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