

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

November Rounds Soar

The weather was awesome in many parts of the country during November, so it's no surprise golf rounds rose 15.8 percent for the month compared to the same time in 2008, according to the National Rounds Played Report from Golf Datatech.

This makes up for a dismal October, when rounds sank a whopping 15.9 percent compared to October 2008. Incidentally, October had lousy weather throughout the country. It should also be noted that rounds in November 2008 were down 6.7 percent from 2007.

Rounds were up more than 100 percent in some states and cities, including North Dakota, South Dakota, Minneapolis, Cleveland and Milwaukee.

The findings in the November 2009 report represent 3,670 courses.

Rounds were down slightly through November 2009 — 0.2 percent — compared to 2008. Public course play is up 0.1 percent year to date. Private course activity is down 1.3 percent for the year.

Myers Joins L.A. Country Club

Russ Myers is the new golf course superintendent at the Los Angeles Country Club. He replaces Bruce Williams, who left the club last fall. Myers, formerly of Southern Hills Country Club, joins Los Angeles Country Club at a time when the 99-year-old club is undergoing a major renovation.

Myers came to Southern Hills in 2006 and hosted the PGA Championship in 2007. The Los Angeles Country Club job is heralded by some as one of the top jobs in the industry. Myers is heralded as one of the nation's top young superintendents. ■

Aline de Costa Faé
says golf is already
growing in Brazil.

Golf Joins The Games

TURFGRASS EXPERT EXPECTS OLYMPICS
TO BOLSTER POPULARITY OF THE SPORT
IN HER NATIVE COUNTRY

By Aline de Costa Faé

For the first time in the history of the Olympiad, a country in Latin America will host the Olympic Games. Brazil, represented by Rio de Janeiro, won the race to host the event in 2016, beating out Chicago, Madrid and Tokyo.

Also, golf will be included in the 2016 Olympics — the first time the sport has ever participated in the storied event.

Rio is Brazil's largest economy and the 10th biggest in the world. Some say it will be the fifth-biggest economy by 2016. Forbes magazine selected Rio de Janeiro as the "happiest city in the world." Newsweek printed that Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is the most

popular president in the world.

Rio's citizens, by more than 80 percent, supported the city's candidacy to host the games. For the entire country, the Olympics will represent a boost of money and jobs.

Brazil is a large and diverse country. It's the fifth-largest country in the world and occupies almost half of South America. Brazil is the fifth-most populated country (about 180 millions). Sports play a very important role in Brazilians' lives.

Soccer is by far the most popular sport with about 30 million participants, followed by volleyball, table tennis and swimming. About 25,000 Brazilians play golf. However, the number of players increases every year — in 1990, there were about 7,000 players.

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'It's Not About Growing Grass'

VETERAN DOBIE REAFFIRMS THE IMPORTANCE OF EVERYTHING NOT ASSOCIATED WITH TENDING TURF

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

Frank Dobie has been in the golf business for 49 years. So it's easily assumed that Dobie, general manager and superintendent of the Sharon Golf Club in Sharon Center, Ohio, knows a thing or two or three or five thousand about running a golf facility -- in addition to growing turfgrass.

That's why Dobie gave a presentation titled, "It's Not About Growing Grass," at the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation's annual conference and trade show in December in Columbus. Dobie talked about everything from dealing with others to dealing with a budget.

Dobie said his mentor -- the late su-

perintendent Bob Williams -- told him many years ago, "Ninety percent of what we need to know to be successful in this business is not about growing grass."

Dobie took Williams' advice to heart. And he told a packed room of superintendents who came to hear him speak that Williams' statement is just as true today as it was when Williams told him that in 1959.

Dobie reminded superintendents the importance of common courtesy and proper etiquette when dealing with others. We've heard these things many times before, but you can never be reminded of them enough.

Ironically, just as Dobie was waxing about common courtesy, a late attendee entered the meeting room and let the door slam with a crash. Dobie didn't bat an eyelash, but the late attendee's action was the epitome of bad manners.

"We've always tried to control costs so we don't have to cut costs."

Dobie pointed out how important it is for superintendents to listen intently to their staff members and others, who can end up suggesting some good ideas on how to get things done.

"You need to listen to everyone," Dobie says. "Even a jerk has a good idea once in awhile."

Dobie also spoke about managing the golf course budget. Two of his rules are:

1. Spend what you need to get the job done right.
2. Don't spend what you don't have.

"We've always tried to control costs so we don't have to cut costs," Dobie says. ■

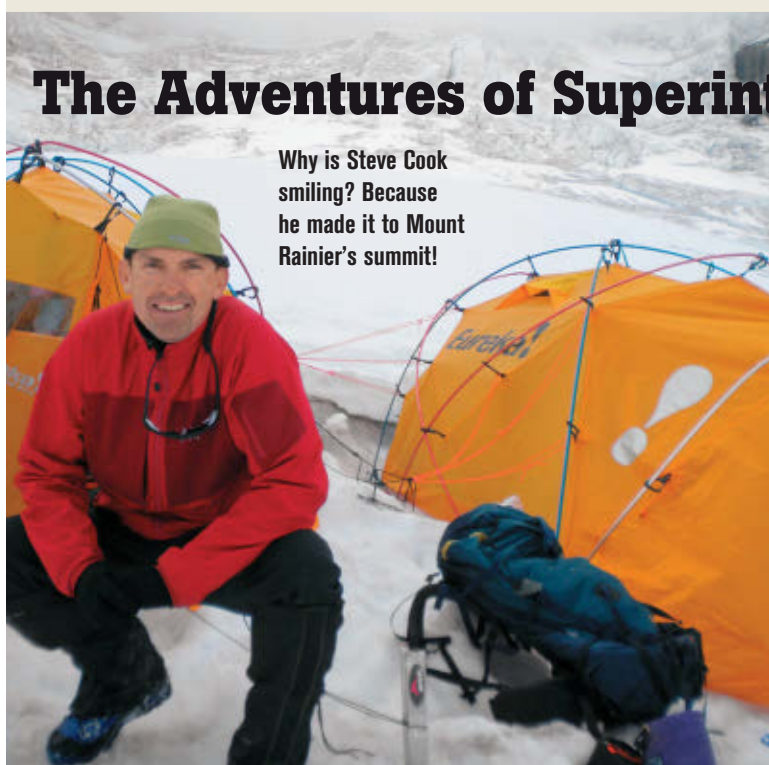
The Adventures of Superintendent Steve Cook

Why is Steve Cook smiling? Because he made it to Mount Rainier's summit!

Steve Cook not only can tend turfgrass with the best of 'em, he can climb mountains with the best of 'em. Late last summer, Cook, the golf course manager for Oakland Hills Country Club near Detroit, which hosted the PGA Championship in 2008, took a vacation to the Seattle area in Washington. Yeah, Cook probably spent some downtime in one of Seattle's coffee shops, but he also spent some "up" time scaling the 14,411-foot Mount Rainier. We don't think Cook found any dollar spot on Mount Rainier's summit, though.

"Climbing Mount Rainier was a wonderful learning experience," Cook says. "I had done a lot of backpacking in the mountains, but this was my first attempt at 'Mountaineering 101.'"

"The whole experience was very exciting -- and physically very difficult. I was the oldest in our group to summit. So there's something to celebrate for a 50-year-old!" -- Larry Aylward



WITH **Rick Slattery**

We Must Reduce Our Dependence on Water

ally eliminate any reliance on community water supplies for irrigation — and that includes businesses and homeowners. It can be done; there are already proactive golf course superintendents who aren't affected when water rationing is mandated, because they already use less than what is allocated to them. It's increasingly imperative that, as an industry, we start turning down the water on a mass scale. One solution may simply be for everyone to install a basic GPM (gallons per minute) gauge on their courses' irrigation systems, and just try to use less water than the previous year.

The future will dictate to us, for environmental and economic reasons, that we must manage golf courses with less agronomic input. The days of high maintenance and high input are coming to a close, even for the elite golf clubs that will still be able to afford it.

Without sacrificing job security, superintendents must continue to search for ways to reduce input but not quality. In the 40 years I've been involved in golf course maintenance, we absorbed the loss of a countless number of chemicals that became considered unsafe for the environment, while overall playing conditions actually improved during the same time period.

Going forward, should we only focus on defending our way of life, or increase our attention to removing the barriers for new research and innovation that's targeted to discover alternative methods of safer, less costly and more available means of agriculture? If the new political spotlight is on "Rebuilding America" then we should want to be a part of that. ■

Golfdom would like to hear your deep thoughts on Slattery's view. Just send an e-mail to info@golfdom.com.

THE GAMES *Continued from page 6*

The number is low, compared to other types of sport, but it's a good number when taken into consideration the sport is relatively new to Brazilians.

The first golf course constructed in Brazil was in 1901. Today, there are about 100 golf courses with many more coming. The decision to include golf in the program for the 2016 Olympic Games has brought considerable attention to the sport in Brazil. Many people believe this will be the incentive the sport needs to increase its popularity around the country.

The Brazilian Olympic Committee (COB) ensures the Brazilian Golf Confederation (CBG) will have the resources to develop an action plan to increase the number of players. The CBG intends to build new training centers, among other initiatives.

For Brazil, the advantages of hosting the Olympic Games seems to outweigh the disadvantages. Normally with big events, Brazilians are most concerned with the possibility of corruption and misuse of public money. However, they understand that by engaging the whole country and auditing

the process and the money expenditure, the 2016 Olympics will be a success.

Brazilians also believe it will be good for golf in South America, especially Brazil. Golf will become more visible in the media. People will learn how golf is played. Brazilians will certainly fall in love with golf — 25,000 of us already have. ■

Aline de Costa Faé, who lives in Florianópolis, Brazil, is the country's lead for the GlobalTurfNetwork. She has authored or co-authored 65 technical articles on turfgrass management in Portuguese and English.