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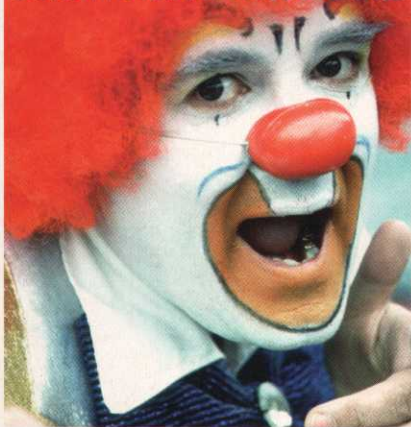
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*"Here at Merion Golf Club, our members are passionate about golf and the condition of our course, so we have an active *Poa annua* management program. We rely on Cutless because it is highly effective in reducing *Poa annua* infestations in bentgrass fairways. My experience with Cutless is that it is less disruptive on the bentgrass, while being highly effective in reducing *Poa annua* populations. In addition to bentgrass conversion, Cutless also provides labor savings by reducing our mowing requirement. Cutless is a great product that I am glad to see SePRO bring back to the golf course market."*

Matt Shaffer
Director of Golf Course Operations,
Merion Golf Club, Ardmore, PA



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Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Briefs continued from page 14

United acquires Nu-Gro

United Industries, which operates Spectrum Brands, will acquire the Nu-Gro Corp., based in Brantford, Ontario. The combined companies will have sales of about \$750 million with more than 1,800 employees in the United States and Canada. The transaction should be completed in May.

"I see this acquisition as a strong and positive venture for both Nu-Gro and United," said Mark Barbera, Nu-Gro's vice president a general manager.

Noer group approves studies

The O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research Foundation recently approved funding for the following research projects: "Microbial Control of the Black Cutworm in Turfgrass using a Naturally Occurring Baculovirus," "Seasonal Biology and Pro-Active Management of Mound-Building Nuisance Ants on Golf Putting Greens" and "Developing Water-Saving Irrigation Scheduling Indices from Bentgrass Fairways."

Coldwell creates golf division

Coldwell Banker Commercial/Nicholson Williams Realty has created a new Golf Course Sales Division. Heading up the division is Charles Smith, and Kathy Bissell. "Coldwell Banker Commercial Nicholson

Williams Realty has identified a growing niche in the commercial real estate market, one that's particularly hot in the South," said George Slusser, president of Coldwell Banker Commercial.

Course can use Merit donation

The First Tee of San Diego at Colina Park Golf Course recently received a donation of a year's worth of Merit Insecticide from Bayer Environmental Science. Bayer made the donation in celebration of the ten-year anniversary of Merit.

"We are happy to receive the donation of Merit from Bayer," said Doug Sparks, superintendent at Colina Park. "We have problems with black turfgrass atenius, white grubs, and cutworms in turfgrass, as well as aphids, whitefly, thrips, and mealybugs in ornamental plants."

Continued from page 14
gested modifying the five-year testing cycle that all varieties undergo. One proposal was to establish two tiers of testing — a preliminary trial to identify promising experimentals, followed by a lengthier trial that seed/sod suppliers could use for marketing.

Another seed marketer suggested extending testing species such as Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue to six or seven years to better evaluate and market them. Also suggested was shortening ryegrass trials because many varieties disappear from test plots after several years. The length of the turf trials has not been modified since they were increased from four to five years in the mid 1990s.

The audience's suggestions had a predictable marketing flavor because NTEP is used as much for marketing as it is to evaluate the relative strengths of each species or variety participating in the turfgrass trials.

Other suggestions included:

- Including species such as seashore paspalum, the new hybrid bluegrasses and, perhaps, ornamental grasses in NTEP testing.
- Establishing trials using effluent and saline water for irrigation.
- Expanding and improving testing for traffic tolerance.
- Testing for insect and disease tolerance.
- Installing additional trial sites in the West and Southwest.
- Separate trials for colonial and velvet bentgrasses.

Also, Morris noted that the onsite bentgrass greens and bermudagrass trials have run their course (apparently the end of their five-year trials), and there doesn't seem to be much interest from the seed companies to re-establish them.

Hall is editor-in-chief of Landscape Management magazine.



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Hole of the

■ No. 7

**The Course at Wentz Vineyards
Livermore Valley, Calif.**

Month

California Dreamin'

Look at this splendid view of the seventh hole of The Course at Wente Vineyards. What was that saying in that old commercial? Oh yeah, "It doesn't get any better than this."

And to think that people get to play golf in this setting and that a superintendent, Glenn Matthews, gets to tend turf in it.

But long before there was golf in this California valley, there was wine. The Wente Vineyards was created in the late 1800s and continues its success more than 120 years later. But now there is golf to go with the vineyards, specifically this 18-hole design by Greg Norman.

The course's holes play through the vineyards, and the site contains more than 200 feet of elevation change. The par-3 seventh hole is downhill, and golfers should be wary to select the appropriate clubs. Tee shots have been known to play about a club short because of the wind blowing from the left.

Golfdom's Hole of the Month is presented in partnership with:

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MIKE KOLINE

Jim Nantz of CBS Sports was the keynote speaker at the opening session of the GCSAA Conference and Show in San Diego. It was a happy case of serendipity since Nantz was in town to anchor the broadcast of the Buick Invitational being held at the nearby Torrey Pines Golf Course. It turned out to be an opening session for the ages.

As the program began with the usual ceremonies and awards, I noticed Nantz making notes on his speech. I wondered if the video of the history of the association and the itemized list of contributions and accomplishments of the award winners was shedding new light on his perceptions of the GCSAA and superintendents.

As Nantz began his presentation, it was a folksy, nostalgic trip down memory lane, laced with insider glimpses into his career and sports acquaintances. Naturally, it was weighted heavily with golf personalities, especially considering the audience. He poked fun at his own waning golf skills at the University of Houston and gave everyone the inside scoop on why Freddy Couples, his college roommate, buried his face in Nantz's shoulder in the Butler Cabin at Augusta in 1992 when he won the coveted green jacket at the Masters.

It seems Nantz and Couples had rehearsed the winner's interview years before in their college dorm room as Nantz practiced becoming a broadcaster. Broadcasting became Nantz's career goal after watching roommates Couples and Blaine McCallister, another future PGA Tour player, put his golf game to shame.

The moral of the story was that dreams, whether they change throughout your life or not, can come true. Then Nantz did something extraordinary — he offered to use his celebrity status to make superintendents' dreams of getting more attention from golfers come true.

Nantz opened the door when he admitted to the audience that the media had done a poor job of recognizing the role superintendents play in golf. He said he had been remiss in that area as well, and he promised he would strive to a better job in the future.

I had always hoped that we'd get something more in prime time than the once in

When You Wish Upon a Star

BY JOEL JACKSON



**JIM NANTZ
OFFERED TO USE
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MORE ATTENTION
TO YOUR JOBS –
AND MAKE
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DREAMS COME
TRUE**

awhile generic thank you comment at the end of a telecast. Nantz began fulfilling his promise the following Saturday and Sunday with comments on superintendents being the unsung heroes of golf and mentioning the GCSAA was in town. He even had his sidekick, Lanny Wadkins, throwing us bouquets on air. It was sweet.

It dawned on me that while superintendents are often overlooked, we must proceed with this prime-time praise opportunity cautiously. If I compare our roles to film production, we are definitely backstage and off-camera. How many of you can name the set designer, lighting director or cinematographer for *Star Wars* or *Raiders of the Lost Ark*? A film, like a golf course tournament, is a collaborative effort.

The stars at a tournament are the players and the broadcasters. Mandatory credits roll at the end of a film. We should get real credit on air, but it should remain proportionate. We obviously shouldn't be asking for more credit than the stars of the show.

A way for us to help Nantz to "do a better job" will be for GCSAA's Director of Communications Jeff Bollig to work with host superintendents to spice up the usual course fact sheets with some anecdotes beyond grass types and cutting heights. We can toss in some interesting and maybe even humorous tidbits about what it took to prepare each tournament.

Nantz is good enough that he can work those insider facts into the broadcast and help shine the spotlight on the superintendent in a creative but subtle way. For now, Nantz has miles to go and promises to keep, but it is the beginning of a dream — one that we can all hope will someday become reality.

Joel Jackson, CGCS, retired from Disney's golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.



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The Old Pro

They say grow-ins are only for young superintendents.

But don't give Roger Barton that bull

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR

A cold rain falls hard and steady. Beads of water trickle down the lenses of Roger Barton's wire-rimmed glasses. But the late-morning deluge and the drenching of Barton's clothes haven't dampened his enthusiasm to seize the day.

There goes Barton — zooming through puddles and mud in a utility vehicle down a hilly fairway. He's giving a visitor a tour of the fledgling turf growing at his new job — Angels Crossing Golf Course in Vicksburg, Mich.

An excited Barton points here and there, waxing eloquently about the course that opens in May. With the enthusiasm he exhibits, one gets the feeling that Angels Crossing is Barton's first job as a superintendent. But, ironically, it's probably his last. Barton, called the "dean of Michigan superintendents" by some of his peers, is 65 years old and in his 40th year as a superintendent. While he has no plans to retire, Barton will likely finish his career at the Bruce Matthews design, where he was hired in early 2003.

A major reason Barton came to Angels Crossing — and left PohlCat Championship Golf Course in Mount Pleasant, Mich., where he was superintendent for 11 years — is because he wanted to experience the challenge and artistry of growing in another golf course.

ROGER BOETTCHER



Angels Crossing is Roger Barton's third grow-in in his 40-year career. Barton and others involved with the project say the creation of Angels Crossing is a fine example of teamwork. See the related story on page 32.

They say grow-ins are for young superintendents in their primes. But don't give Barton that bull.

The big-shouldered Barton looks, feels and talks like a man much younger than his mid-60s. Remember Nolan Ryan blowing away hitters with his heater when he was in his 40s? Now picture Barton on the course getting down and dirty with his 20-something crew.

It was fate with a capital "F" that brought Barton to Angels Crossing. To many, Barton was destined to end his career at the course.

But enough about finales — Angels Crossing represents a new beginning for Barton. He may be near retirement age, but that doesn't mean he doesn't have goals and dreams like a kid fresh out of turf school.

Here's the funny thing: Nobody really knew Barton was looking for a new job — not even Barton. "I had no intention of changing jobs," he says.

Matthews says Barton was at the pinnacle of his career at PohlCat. "He was doing an excellent job and being compensated very well for it," Matthews notes.

But a fall day in 2002 changed all that. Matthews, who has known Barton for many years, asked him to tour the new course he had been hired to design in Vicksburg, located outside of Kalamazoo.

"I like to have Roger look at my golf courses," Matthews says. "I value his input."

Barton, who worked as superintendent at Grand Haven Golf Club in the late 1960s, a course designed by Matthews' grandfather, gladly accepted the invitation. He traveled the short distance to Vicksburg from Mount Pleasant and toured the property with Matthews. Oh yeah, the Thompson broth-

ers, Bob and Jim, who were building the course, tagged along for the tour.

As they walked the site, the Thompson brothers fired an array of agronomic questions at Barton, who answered them specifically and thoroughly. Barton also seemed genuinely interested in the course. He stuck his hand in a batch of greens mix and rubbed the material with his fingers.

"We were on the course for three and a half hours," Jim Thompson says. "After touring six holes, we knew Roger was the man we wanted as superintendent."

But Matthews told the Thompson brothers that Barton would never leave PohlCat to come to Angels Crossing, which made the Thompson brothers want Barton even more.

"You don't want to be told that you can't have something because that's usually the motivation you need to get it," Bob Thompson says.

What no one realized was that Barton was wondering what it might be like to be the superintendent at Angels Crossing. He had enjoyed his visit to the course immensely. He also liked the Thompsons and knew he would enjoy working for them. And deep down, he felt stagnant at PohlCat because he wasn't being challenged enough.

The more Barton thought about it, the more he was attracted to Angels Crossing. It was, in a sense, a dream job. He longed to do another grow-in, which would be his third. He knew he would also get to work with people he liked and respected.

Bob Thompson, a Vicksburg farmer, wasn't necessarily looking for some young whippersnapper to be the Angels Crossing superintendent. So when he met Barton, he was

Continued on page 30

COURTESY OF ANGELS CROSSING

The Old Pro

Continued from page 29

impressed with his experience and knowledge. When he heard Barton's age, he didn't raise an eyebrow.

In fact, the 47-year-old Thompson, who spent a lot of time with his grandparents while growing up, has never accepted the stereotype that labels people over 60 as over the hill.

"I've always had a real respect for older people," he says. "I enjoy listening to them because I always learn so much from them."

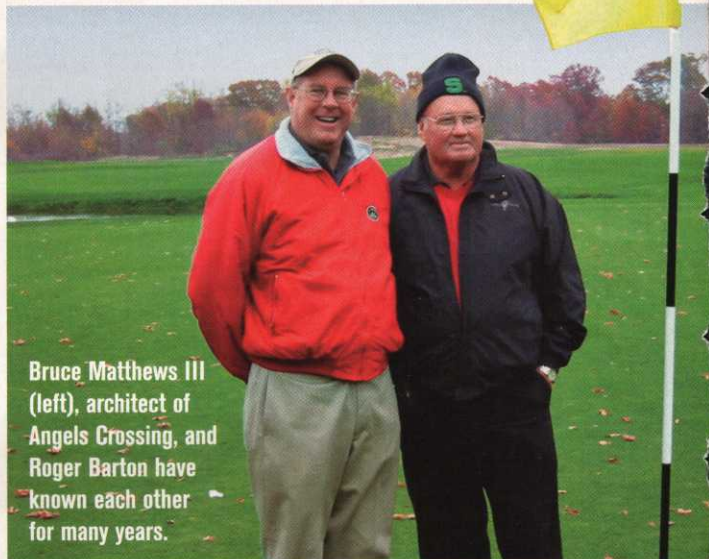
Bob also wasn't concerned that Barton, regarded as one of the top superintendents in the state, would command a high salary commensurate with his experience and reputation. As a farmer, Thompson learned that paying more for quality was worth it in the long run.

"I've always found that it pays to hire confident, professional people to do things for us that we don't know much about," he says.

Jim Thompson says there's significant value in knowing the course has a superintendent who can cruise around the course in his utility vehicle, spot a specific turf disease with a glance and treat it before it spreads. Barton can tell you when conditions are ripe for an insect invasion or a turf disease breakout. He trusts his instincts like weathermen trust their Doppler radar.

"What does *that* do to the chemical budget?" the 35-year-old Jim asks rhetorically.

In his distinguished career, Barton has worked as superintendent at several Michigan courses in addition to PohlCat and Grand Haven, including Morrison Lake Golf Course, Dearborn Country Club and Blythefield Country Club. Barton, who has a two-year degree in tool and dye making from Grand Rapids Junior College, honed his turf skills by attending numerous short courses and seminars at



Bruce Matthews III (left), architect of Angels Crossing, and Roger Barton have known each other for many years.

Purdue University and Michigan State University in the past 40 years.

One might think the veteran Barton knows everything there is about the golf business, but not Barton. That's another reason he came to Angels Crossing. "I like to learn new things," he says.

Take the grow-in for instance, which occurred last spring and summer. It was a difficult time. A grow-in is a time-consuming and painstaking process. There are washouts, sunlight issues — and more washouts to deal with it. In the end, a grow-in can test the patience of even the most even-tempered superintendent.

"It takes a special breed of superintendent to be a grow-in superintendent," Matthews says.

Barton experienced his share of washouts at Angels Crossing. Unusual long and hard rains pounded the area. Two of the course's greens washed out three times. The washouts were so bad that the opening of the course, scheduled for July, was delayed until the fall and again until this year.

Barton, despite his wisdom and experience, was frustrated. "But I just learned to let it roll off my back."

Barton says it helped that his owner didn't jump up and down screaming and demand that Barton perform a Moses-like miracle to meet the opening date. But Bob Thompson, who has experienced his share of seed washouts as a farmer, knew better. "This wasn't anything new to me," he says.

Thompson's comment brings into focus another reason why Barton likes it so much at Angels Crossing. Everybody communicates well and tries to understand each other's needs. And they're friends. Barton says he and Bob talk all the time, and not always about work.

Who knows how long Barton will work at Angels Crossing. Seventy? Seventy-five? Here's betting he'll go as long as he can — for he's one of those people who cherishes his trade.

"I'm luckier than a lot of people," Barton says. "Being a superintendent hasn't been work for me. There's no reason to retire." ■



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANGELS CROSSING

Barton clowns with Angels Crossing pro Mike Hill (left). Who says superintendents and pros don't get along?