

Continued from page 14

what you can do with a PDA," he adds.

Standerfer does not see the pendulum swinging back since a larger portion of the multibillion-dollar communication industry is designed to support cell phones with a much smaller proportion funneled towards PDA improvement.

Another problem in getting PDA technology adopted by superintendents, he said, is that the device just adds to an already large list of carried-around items such as radios, pagers, sunglasses, knives, notepads and cell phones.

**For some superintendents, the technology of the PDA does not simplify their jobs.**

For some superintendents, the technology of the PDA does not simplify their jobs, Standerfer said. Although there is no hard evidence to back their guess, those in the irrigation field surmise between 30 percent and 50 percent of superintendents use PDA's.

Jim Barrett, president of James Barrett Associates, a New Jersey-based irrigation

consulting and design firm, says his mostly upscale clients have embraced the PDA technology. "We haven't done a system (in the last four years) that didn't have a PDA in it," he said.

Barrett's firm has worked on courses such as Shinnecock Hills Golf Club and Muirfield Village Golf Club.

It doesn't matter if the PDA, the cell phone or another communication device is the tool of the future, said Brian Smith, president and CEO of Signature Controls, who is more concerned with the fact that the industry is hesitant to adopt technology quickly, or even at a rate on par with other parts of the world.

Smith said technology to improve a superintendent's life is available but is not being embraced. He says he has heard that superintendents are often not permitted by owners/members to be the first on the block to purchase new products. That attitude, he adds, is hurting the golf course's operation.

As an example, Smith says that one European country club his company works with runs its irrigation system exclusively by cell phone. "You don't see any course here with that," he added.

## Quotable

**"In Canada, we play hockey."**

— Jim Ross, of the Prairie Turfgrass Research Center in Alberta, Canada, on what superintendents in the Great White North do when they get ice on their greens.

**"If there's a way to get the speed of a round under control, that will help the game. I think more people should watch John Daly and the way he plays. He walks up to the ball and bang. . . . And he walks up to the ball and bangs it again."**

— Dave Catalano, director of Bethpage State Park, on finding a figurehead to speed up the game.

### 21 YEARS & COUNTING

SURFSIDE 37 Wetting Agent is the clear winner in the **GREEN SPEED WAR** at CASTLE PINES GC. My **GREENS** have kept pace with the **STIMPMETER**, **HEIGHT of CUT**, and **MAINTAINING NEAR TOURNAMENT CONDITIONS** throughout the **GOLFING SEASON**,

I enjoy the challenge, I enjoy my course.

*Marshall A. Fearing*  
Marshall Fearing



**SURF  
SIDE®**

**CASTLE PINES<sup>GC</sup>**

**HOME OF THE INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENT  
CASTLE ROCK, CO.**

Montco Products Box 404 Ambler, PA 19002 Phone: 800-401-0411

• SURF-SIDE DOESN'T BURN, DISCOLOR, OR ROOT PRUNE •



**I** had the privilege this year of representing the Central Florida GCSA at the 2005 Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's (GCSAA) Chapter Delegates Meeting in Kansas City, Mo. I came away with two distinct impressions. First, the GCSAA is working hard to structure and position the association to work effectively for the membership and the profession. Second, members can have a significant voice, input and impact on the direction and accomplishments of the GCSAA.

Of course, that means actually participating in the association. It doesn't have to mean service on GCSAA committees, although I strongly recommend that every member toss his or her hat into the ring. You learn a lot and you get to put your two cents into the discussion. It's a funny thing how people can bring preconceived notions to the meeting, and once a wide range of facts, figures and viewpoints are exchanged, consensus can be reached on issues.

You can and should have these same discussions at the local chapter level. At the local level we logically tend to focus on immediate needs almost to the exclusion of the big-picture issues. While meeting sites, speakers, tournaments and fund raisers are all very key to our chapters' function, we also need to spend some time on long-range planning, and the trends in golf and needs of our profession.

That is where the chapter delegate process comes into play. Like your elected representative to Congress, this person can take your chapter's consensus position on the issues of the Professional Development Initiative, marketing the value of GCSAA membership, membership growth and retention, and a host of others to the annual Chapter Delegates Meeting. But I wouldn't wait a whole year to respond to the information your delegate just brought home from the last meeting. Local chapters should go through the agenda, the presentation notes and the published outcomes from this year's meeting.

There is nothing wrong with local chapters drafting letters, memos or e-mails addressing some of the topics that were brought up at this year's meeting. If the rank-and-file members want responsive leadership, then they

## Reviving the People's Power

BY JOEL JACKSON



JUST LIKE OUR  
FEDERAL  
GOVERNMENT,  
ASSOCIATION  
GOVERNANCE IS  
NOT ALWAYS  
PERFECT, BUT IT'S  
THE BEST THING  
WE HAVE GOING

need to provide meaningful input to the process. That should be an ongoing process.

There were about 30 percent new faces at the last delegates meeting. How much more effective at relaying GCSAA and local chapter concerns over things like PDI and Class A renewals would they have been if the chapter had sent these folks prepared to provide questions and concerns to the session? On GCSAA's part, the meeting resource book containing the agenda and notes, etc., should be sent to arrive at least a month before the meeting so a chapter has ample time to prepare input on issues.

I know several people like me were last-minute replacements for delegates who had work obligations crop up. This will always be the case in our business, but we can all be better prepared. We are not there to give personal opinions. We are there to represent the consensus position of our chapters.

I'm sure your delegate brought back a few issues that raised a few questions. I know I had mine. Just like our federal government, association governance is not always perfect, but it's the best thing we have going. And just like with the federal government, there will be criticism and fault finding. The squeaky wheel might get the grease, but it will not necessarily change the direction the wagon is heading. To do that, the membership needs to be engaged and provide feedback that will help our association leadership and staff map out the best route to success for all.

We often mount grassroots letter-writing campaigns to our elected officials in Washington over issues affecting the environment. Why not do the same for issues affecting our association? Power to the people.

---

*Certified Superintendent Joel Jackson is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.*



# After 40 Years of Experience, Turfco® is the #1 Brand of Top Dressers and Material Handlers.



## THE WIDESPIN™ 1530 IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE REASON WHY:

- **Guaranteed 3-year warranty.** Unmatched in the industry!
- **Patented 3-position switch.** Guarantees even application every time.
- **Patented WideSpin technology.** Top dressing that ranges from 15' heavy to 30' light—no different attachments required.
- **Adjustable angle of spinners from 0-15°.** Allows for broadcast applications or to drive the sand into the turf.
- **Galvanized hopper.** No rust or flaking paint means no-stick action.
- **A manufacturer with 40 years of turf experience.** Our knowledge brings you cutting-edge equipment.



When it comes to top dressing, we have been—and still are—the industry leader. If you want unparalleled performance in any top dressing application, choose the WideSpin 1530. For a demo or to request product information, call **1-800-679-8201** or visit **turfco.com**.



30 Feet Light



15 Feet Heavy



**THE LEADER. SINCE 1961.**

1655 101st Avenue NE • Minneapolis, MN 55449-4420 U.S.A.  
(763) 785-1000 • Fax (763) 785-0556 • [www.turfco.com](http://www.turfco.com)

Turfco's ranking according to the National Golf Foundation's Turf Brand Share Report.



**T**he brass at *Golfdom* would not OK the thousands of dollars in holiday gifts that I wanted to spend on golf's power players. So, just between us, here's what I would have bought them.

For **Peter Dawson**, secretary of the R&A, who said at the British Open that "all this discussion that players are hitting the ball further is not true." Now, the 2005 Open's average driving distance shot up 27 yards from last year. Behind the scenes, Dawson was telling people that the next time St. Andrews hosts the Open, something will have been done to slow down the golf ball. If I could afford it, Peter, a beautiful titanium-plated safety muzzle normally reserved for yapping Chihuahuas.

For **Tom Doak**, the famous golf architect who works around the world and who registered nearly 1,500 posts on architecture Web site *golclubatlas.com* this year. If I could afford it, Tom, an Internet-ready wireless laptop that would allow you to post from atop a bulldozer.

For **Hootie Johnson**, the head man at Augusta National, who announced more changes that will stretch the course to more than 7,400 yards for next year's Masters. If I could find them on e-Bay, Hootie, I'd buy you several dozen boxes of the mysterious "Distance R.I.P." ball that a golf manufacturer distributed to demonstrate how awful the game would be if top players could only drive it 310 instead of 340.

For **Jack Nicklaus**, retired all-time golfing great, whose name was stamped on the other side of those "Distance R.I.P." balls. That's right, the manufacturer showed its appreciation for Jack's devotion to the game by sarcastically imprinting, "This is the ball Jack wants you to play." If I could afford them, Jack, I'd enlist some persistent attorneys to make calls on your behalf to find out which manufacturer has no class.

For **Brian Curley**, the golf architect whose hit single "U.S.G.A.," a spoof of the Village People's Y.M.C.A., was warmly received on *SI.com* this year. If I could make a few calls, Brian, I'd secure a recording contract for you. In the meantime, let's get that tune up on Kazaa.

For **Donald Trump's** golf course investors, who

## If I Were Buying for the Bigwigs ...

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



THE PERFECT

HOLIDAY GIFTS FOR

DOAK, NICKLAUS,

FAY AND OTHERS

ponied up (at least according to The Donald) \$264 million to date for the purchase, renovation and upgrades to Trump National Los Angeles. If I could, suckers . . . err . . . investors, I'd let you go back in time and buy Google stock instead.

For **David Fay**, USGA executive director who announced the organization's new policy on "gender reassigned" golfers with a straight face, suggesting that the "movement in this direction is inexorable." If I could, David, I would push Bud Selig aside and get you that dream job: commissioner of baseball. No more nutty executive committee meetings to discuss X and Y chromosomes!

For **Tim Finchem**, commissioner of the PGA Tour, who was asked about the success of Harding Park's \$16 million renovation and what he would do if he were the city of San Francisco. He replied, "If this is my baby, but it was not for profit — I would want some texture to the communication of this place." If I could, Tim, I'd get you that master's in business administration you deserve, all so you can stop talking like that!

Finally, for the **Golf Digest Panel**, which this year bumped several classics off the Top 100 list in favor of overbuilt, resistant-to-scoring bores and probably cost a few superintendents their jobs. If I could, well, the first idea isn't fit for print. But, ideally, I'd have Sports Media Group send copies of my latest book, "Lines of Charm: Brilliant and Irreverent Notes, Quotes and Anecdotes from Golf's Golden Age Architects," to all panel members — one, so that I can shamelessly plug it here; and, two, because I know you panelists don't read. My book has lots of pretty drawings for you raters to look at.

Contributing Editor Geoff Shackelford can be reached at [geoffshac@aol.com](mailto:geoffshac@aol.com)



# Water

Where does it really go?

When you irrigate, do you know where your water really goes?

Many factors can affect the true efficiency of your irrigation system, but perhaps the most overlooked factor is how water moves in the soil.

Water is the driving force behind maintaining metabolic functions and plant growth, and it's important to get it into the soil uniformly for healthy turf

performance. But water repellency, even at low levels, can prevent water from penetrating properly.

When penetration is disrupted, water has a greater tendency to evaporate instead of entering the soil. The problem can be further compounded by sloping areas such as mounds and hillsides where water is more likely to run off, creating wet spots that contribute to poor playing conditions, promote soil

compaction, and can encourage disease.

**Dispatch**<sup>®</sup> bridges the gap between getting water to the soil and getting it in the soil. It combats water repellency in the thatch/mat layer and the soil just below it, ensuring that applied water or rainfall penetrates quickly where it lands.

**Dispatch**<sup>®</sup> makes sure water goes where you want it, giving you more consistent performance from tee to green.

---

**Greener, more uniform turf just got easier.**

---





# Respectable



## The State of Your Industry: Inside the *Golfdom Report*

Nobody is jumping up and down like they won the Masters, but the people who work in the golf industry – from superintendents to owners to general managers – are slowly regaining confidence in their industry as it regains its economic strength.

Last year we reported there were signs the golf industry was pulling itself out of the economic doldrums. This year we report in our lead story, which begins on the opposite page, that the signs are genuine and that the industry is rebounding from the economic demise of the early 2000s.

This year's *Golfdom Report* also includes Geoff Shackelford's year in review (page 34). Shackelford reports on the good, the bad and the ugly of 2005.

On pages 40-42, in a section titled "Up and Down," you can review statistics compiled from our year-end survey. This section also features the year's best quotables.

Rounding out the report on page 44, superintendent Ron Furlong writes about the benefits that brown turf can bring to the golf course. Happy reading.



# Showing

The golf industry continues to inch its way out of the economic doldrums

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR IN CHIEF

**W**hen Mike Hughes hears that rounds at U.S. golf courses are as flat as a flounder, he doesn't feel an angry urge to fling his five-iron in a pond. While flat may seem ho-hum, it's a decent performance considering the bumpy times the golf industry has endured this decade.

"I think it's a reasonable result considering the state of the industry for the last couple of years," says Hughes, the executive director of the National Golf Course Owners Association. "Having talked to a lot of owners, rounds are down but revenues are holding even or slightly ahead. So from a revenue standpoint, the business is certainly better than it was a couple of years ago."

Others in the golf industry share Hughes' assessment, including Jim Thompson, the general manager of Angels Crossing Golf Course in Vicksburg, Mich., who says flat is just fine by him.

"I'd say that's a heckuva good showing," Thompson adds.

They are satisfied, perhaps, because they know the industry continues to inch forward with economic improvement after taking its hits in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The industry's wheels weren't coming off then, but they sure were wobbly. An unfavorable combination of too many golf courses, not enough golfers and a struggling economy led to some tough years. So the slightest decrease in rounds this year — minus six-tenths of a percent through September, according to the National Golf Foundation — is not bad news, especially on the heels of a 1.4 increase in rounds in 2004. Throw in the fact that retail sales of balls, clubs, bags and other hard goods rose in 2005 when compared to 2004 and 2003,

*Continued on page 28*

## Apocalypse Now? Industry Prevails Despite Disasters

The world experienced calamity on a grand scale in 2005. Nature displayed its ferocious side, unfurling a fury of disasters, including hurricanes, which caused widespread damage and destruction of a major U.S. city.

While the hurricanes, most notably Katrina, damaged several golf courses in the South, the losses in rounds and revenue didn't impact the industry negatively, especially on the Gulf Coast, says Tom Stine, co-founder of Golf Datatech, a Kissimmee, Fla.-based golf market research firm.

"I know golf is important to the people [on the Gulf Coast] and for some it is their lives . . . but there isn't a huge enough number of rounds of golf being played there by a huge population," Stine says.

Armchair economists said destruction caused by the hurricanes also would filter down and affect many U.S. consumers' pocketbooks, causing them to pay more for gas, food and other necessities. That happened, but has it also caused those people to cut expenses in other areas, such as money spent on entertainment and playing golf?

Mike Hughes, executive director of the National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA), says it's the media's nature to report about a world in turmoil and how it could hurt economic development. "But I don't think that's affecting the golf industry negatively," he adds.

Hughes says an improved economy is a sign that things may not be as bad as they seem. He may have a point. The country's economic growth was 3.8 percent in the third quarter, according to the Commerce Department, despite all the bad news.

Stine agrees that there are a lot of bad things going on in the world that affect consumers' spending habits.

"But when is that not the case?" he asks.

— Larry Aylward



*Continued from page 27*

according to Kissimmee, Fla.-based golf market research firm Golf Datatech, and there's reason for people to feel even more upbeat about the state of their industry.

While *Golfdom's* readers are confident about their respective businesses, they seem unsure of what the future holds for the general economy, according to a recent online survey of 380 superintendents and other golf industry personnel. Sixty-eight percent of readers said they are "very optimistic" or "kind of optimistic" about the economic health of their facilities compared to 11 percent that are "very pessimistic" or "kind of pessimistic." (Twenty percent said they are neutral.) But only 33 percent of readers said they expect the general economy to improve in 2006, compared to 35 percent who said they don't expect the economy to improve, and 32 percent who said they are unsure if it will improve.

Fact is, the U.S. economy is improving — growth was 3.8 percent in the third quarter, which reflects vigorous consumer spending — despite a decline in consumer confidence. Hughes believes the improving economy will spur more rounds and revenue next year.

"If the economy is healthy and growing and people feel secure in their jobs, then they have discretionary income and they'll spend it," Hughes says.

People spent their discretionary income at Angel's Crossing this year. The course, which opened in 2004, did more than 25,000 rounds. Thompson expected it to do about 17,500 rounds.

Thompson says Angels Crossing has helped its own

## Summer Heat Keeps Fungicide Makers Busy

By Thomas Skernivitz, Managing Editor

The sweltering summer east of the Mississippi River prompted plenty of speed dialing between superintendent and chemical company in 2005.

"Our phone rang off the hook," says Joe DiPaola, the golf market manager for Syngenta Professional Products.

The hot topic was the hottest season in the Midwest and Northeast

since 1995. Philadelphia, in the 90 days preceding Labor Day, experienced 62 days of above-normal temperatures. The thermome-

### FOCUS ON: CHEMICALS

ter in Cleveland touched 90 degrees Fahrenheit 25 days, well above the average of eight.

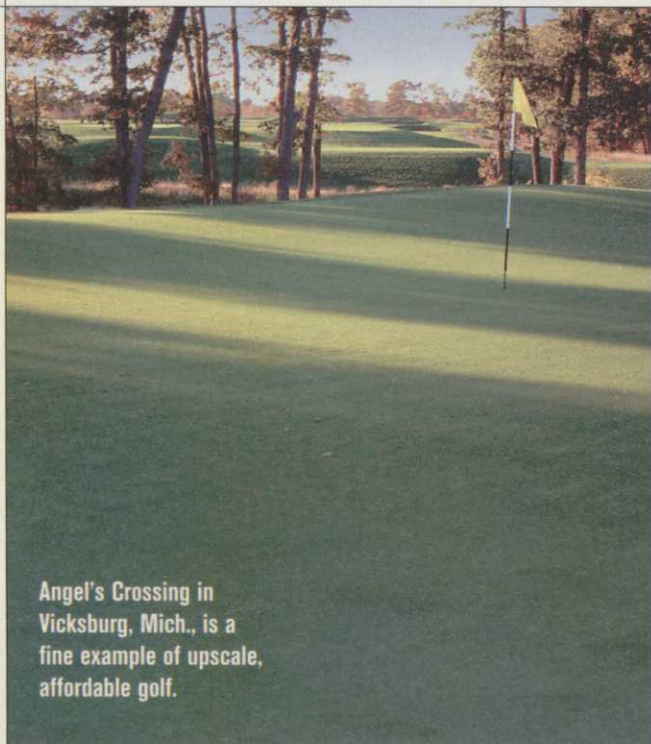
"Some folks, even as late as mid-October, were saying, 'Summer just won't let me go this year,'" DiPaola says.

Turf disease loved it. Spring marked the arrival of snow mold. Then came brown patch, gray leaf spot, anthracnose and take-all patch. Worst of all, pythium resurfaced because of the heat and humidity after laying low the previous mild summers.

"For those courses that were hot and wet, there was only so much you could do about pythium," DiPaola says.

Courses "clearly increased" their expenditures on pest control products, particularly fungicides, DiPaola says. But many superintendents — at an average age of 40 and with an average tenure of six years at their current course — never knew what hit them until it was too late.

"If this was the toughest summer in 10 years, that means that most superintendents had never experienced a tough summer on the course that they're now at. And many superintendents, because of their young ages, would not have experienced one at all," DiPaola says. "That added angst to the whole situation."



Angel's Crossing in Vicksburg, Mich., is a fine example of upscale, affordable golf.

cause by providing upscale, affordable golf. The Bruce Matthews design, which cost less than \$2 million to build, has an 18-hole green fee of \$44 (with golf car) on the weekend. Thompson, a former accountant, believes Angels Crossing is a fine example of how golf courses should be built today.

"If you're going to survive in the next 20 years, you're going to have to do what we've done," he says. "Because if you're not doing it, somebody is going to come back in your backyard and do it."

The industry has its share of critics who charge that golf is too expensive and that some high-end public courses have driven themselves out of the market because of their expensive \$125-plus green fees. There just isn't a good supply of golfers to afford those prices.

So in order to justify a high green fee of \$100 or more, courses had better have a solid name brand attached to their designs or offer something extraordinary with their golf experiences, Hughes says. Otherwise, the price pressures created by supply and demand are going to squeeze them.



Exacerbating the situation even more was tournament preparation. With luminaries headed to the first tee, some courses elected to close for weeks at a time while trying to eradicate a disease or remedy its effects.

"In some cases, they just didn't want to take the gamble," DiPaola says. "You can only do so much sometimes. And those courses that went unscathed were a combination of very, very good and very lucky."

Few courses went the cheap route at the expense of the turf. This upheld Syngenta's market research that had indicated that superintendents, if pressed, would exceed their pesticide budgets between 10 percent and 20 percent. In turn, courses saved some money on fuel costs because the heat suppressed the need to mow as often.

Despite the rush on fungicide, at no time was there a shortage involving the product, DiPaola says. "Because the summers had been mild preceding this, there was a fair level of inventory on hand," he adds.

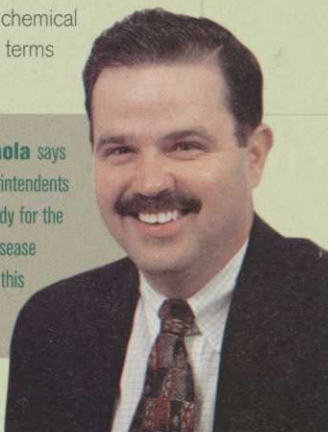
DiPaola calls 2005 a "solid year" for the chemical industry, although "not an outstanding situation" despite the disease prevalence.

"It wasn't like the Exxon situation," he laughs. "That's a whole different deal. We're up over the prior year, but we could have been up over the prior year despite the weather."

Skyrocketing fuel costs are hurting chemical companies, DiPaola says, particularly in terms of transportation and raw materials. Yet Syngenta has maintained its pricing structure from the previous year.

"I don't know how much better you can be in the face of all that. We're obviously eating quite a bit there," DiPaola says.

**Joe DiPaola** says some superintendents weren't ready for the waves of disease that struck this summer.



"If you do have something special, you can be successful," Hughes says. "But if you don't stand out . . . those price pressures are going to affect your business."

The courses that offer something special — from a terrain that can't be replicated to an experience that can't be duplicated — are getting golfers to pay the high green fees. Hughes cites the Dallas Cowboys Golf Club, billed as the country's only NFL-themed golf course, as a good example.

Tripp Davis, a golf course architect based in Norman, Okla., says the industry needs to be razzle-dazzle and more pragmatic to improve its economic health. For example, Davis would like to see fewer man-made waterfalls on golf courses and more Mother Nature-made natural areas.

"If you can build a golf course that does what you want and you build it for a cost that makes money in the long run, then why not go that route instead of spending an exorbitant amount of money on glitz and glamour that's wasteful," Davis asks.

Thompson says there's a vicious circle in golf where

*Continued on page 30*

## Hurricanes Create Shortage of PVC Pipe; Projects Delayed

By Thomas Skernivitz, Managing Editor

The irrigation sector, as much as any that caters to the golf course industry, has suffered in the wake of the three hurricanes that struck the Gulf Coast region in 2005.

Irrigation projects across the country have been delayed because of a hurricane-induced shortage of PVC pipe, which is a byproduct of petroleum. And what pipe is available is at least 25 percent more expensive than it had been to start the summer.

"Right now, it's

almost what you'd call a crisis because some jobs are being held up

### FOCUS ON: IRRIGATION

as a result of it," says Rod McWhirter, national specifications manager for Rain Bird Golf Division. "The hurricanes had a very profound effect. It's been a shortage as well as significant price jump . . . since the New Orleans hurricane (Katrina). That's causing some concern and some real obvious pain and agony among customers and contractors."

Contractors are especially hurting, as they're also having to foot higher bills for their lifeblood — diesel fuel.

"I've heard several golf course builders remark to me throughout the year, especially during the last half of the year, that the diesel prices are really hurting them," McWhirter says. "Contractors not only have their on-site diesel fuel costs, but they have the high cost of getting equipment from one job to another."

Hurricanes aside, the irrigation industry enjoyed a decent year, McWhirter says.

"It was a better year than we've had in the last four years. There was some improvement," he says.

Although new golf course construction remained "pretty slow" in the United States, according to McWhirter, the renovation business continued to pick up.

"Renovation is still the big focus for us because the new construction market is still soft," he says. "We're really focused on that; not to the extent where we're ignoring or abandoning the new business, but we've refocused a lot on the renovation business. And we'll probably continue to do that next year as well."

The situation differs significantly outside of the United States. McWhirter says new course construction is thriving in Asia, Europe, the Caribbean, Mexico and Canada.

"We do very well internationally," he says. "I wouldn't call it a golf boom, but the robust international market helps us a lot."

**Rod McWhirter** says his irrigation company is focusing on the renovation business.





*Continued from page 29*

one business segment overcharges another business segment and so on. "It has gotten out of hand," he says. "Everybody in golf is sticking it to everybody else."

Something similar has happened in Myrtle Beach, S.C., says Donald Wizeman, president and CEO of International Resort and Golf Resources, a golf resort consulting firm. Myrtle Beach, regarded as a golf Mecca in the South, is not getting the amount of play it did five years ago. Ten courses have closed or have been sold for redevelopment in the past two years, says Wizeman, who expects at least five more closings next year.

The area needs a jolt of contemporary and creative marketing to revive the tired golf scene, Wizeman says. Currently, he says golf courses are stealing business from each other instead of trying to grow the business together.

"It's a terrible situation," Wizeman says. "Everybody is struggling."

It's not that the Myrtle Beach market can't bounce back. "[Golf courses] need to understand that they have to work together for the common good," Wizeman says.

One could make the argument that Myrtle Beach was overbuilt with golf courses. The area peaked at about 120 courses a few years ago. Could it be undergoing a correction of sorts, similar to other areas of the country?

The number of courses being built in the United States has declined dramatically in the past five years. But because the golf course building blitz of the mid-1990s was excessive in some regions, the golf economies in those areas are correcting themselves. That's not a bad thing, says Hughes, noting that supply and demand is getting back in balance. "You can't sustain a healthy industry unless it's in sync," he adds.

Tom Stine, the co-founder of Golf Datatech, blames the golf course-housing development syndrome for the saturation problem.

"That business scenario doesn't work for the golf industry in all areas at all times," he says. "You have to remember that, at best, only 10 percent of the people in the United States play golf sometimes. So just because an area is growing in population, doesn't mean all those people are golfers."

Davis points out that home sales continue to drive the golf course market in some cities, such as Memphis, Dallas and Phoenix. "Home sales in those parts of the country are still going through the roof, and are still driving golf course communities."

That said, too many courses are built with little or no planning, Davis adds. Then expensive change orders are introduced during the building process, which drives up the cost of the course and eventually the cost to play a round.

While on the topic of expense, industry insiders are

*Continued on page 32*

## As Disease Thrives, So Do Independent Distributors

By Thomas Skernivitz, Managing Editor

Until someone develops an invincible transition-zone grass, independent distributors such as TenBarge Seed and Turfgrass Supplies are going to prosper, especially during hot and wet summers like 2005.

"We're in the transition zone, and in this area there's no perfect grass," Chad Will, the president of TenBarge, says from his office in Haubstadt, Ind. "It seems like every (turf variety) has a downfall, and when you have a summer of heat and stress like this year, we had a lot of customers who lost grass that had to be replaced. That makes for a good year for us."

Bentgrass putting greens fared especially poorly, Will says.

Ninety-degree heat and wet conditions, including the season's hurricanes,

### FOCUS ON: DISTRIBUTORS

intensified turf disease to levels that hadn't been seen since 1995. "In the 13 years that I've been in the business, it was definitely the worst year for pythium," Will says.

Previous mild summers may have lulled some superintendents into a false sense of security, Will says.

"Some guys slacked off on their spray programs a little bit," he says. "Because of the easy years we've had the last couple of summers, this year kind of caught them off guard."

In turn, chemical sales jumped for distributors. Will says his company experienced no shortages of inventory, nor had he heard of any fellow distributors running short of products.

As successful as 2005 was for TenBarge, it would have been even better if not for the high fuel prices. The company took a hit on freight charges, especially on seed deliveries from as far away as Oregon.

"It seemed to affect us more on incoming freight than outgoing freight," he says. "Those are unforeseen charges that aren't calculated (into the budget) and that you're really not aware of until you get the bill. That was a big surprise for us this year, and we had to address that."

TenBarge customers inherited some of those extra charges, although the company tried to absorb as much as possible.

"I wouldn't say there was a lot of backlash on that; maybe a few complaints here and there," Will says. "I think everybody saw the same thing with their own personal situations."

As for independent distributors, Will sees a bright outlook.

"I feel like that's the way of the future right now," he says. "The market is going toward the independents a little bit more, and we've been able to gain some market share."

**Chad Will** says increased freight charges didn't tarnish an otherwise successful year.

