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Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Houston can't deliver; show moved to Atlanta

The annual Golf Industry Show and its associated educational conferences have been moved to the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta in February because of "Houston's inability to deliver previously agreed upon services," according to the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) and the National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA).

The conferences and trade show, originally scheduled for New Orleans, had been moved to Houston on Sept. 7 in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Atlanta, which was one of a handful of cities examined for the original relocation, last hosted the GCSAA International Golf Course Conference and Show in 2003 at the Georgia World Congress Center. The association also held its conference in Atlanta in 1979 and 1983. The NGCOA has not conducted an annual meeting in Atlanta.

The dates for the 2006 conferences and show will remain the same as originally planned: the GCSAA Education Conference (Feb. 6-11), the NGCOA Solutions Summit (Feb. 7-10) and the Golf Industry Show (Feb. 9-11).

Wilkinson tapped at Jacobsen

Textron named Daniel F. Wilkinson the new president of Jacobsen. He replaces Jon Carlson, who left to pursue other opportunities.

Wilkinson joined Textron in 1997 as its director of national sales accounts at Greenlee, the company's professional tools business. He was responsible for large customers such as The Home Depot, Grainger and Graybar. His latest role was as senior vice president of marketing and sales, where he was responsible for product development,

Briefs continue on page 14

Gettin' the Lowdown on Rounds, Revenue

NGCOA, GOLF DATATECH INTRODUCE FINANCIAL BENCHMARKS PROGRAM FOR OWNERS, OPERATORS

It's simple: If golf course owners and operators get involved with a new initiative introduced by the National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) and Golf Datatech, they can learn more about their operations and how to improve them. But if owners and operators don't get involved, they could be passing up a fine opportunity to bolster their businesses.

NGCOA and Golf Datatech, a golf industry market research firm, have begun The Financial Benchmarks Program to measure the game's key financial benchmarks. NGCOA says the program provides accurate and consistent industry measurements to help owners and operators evaluate the performances of their facilities. They can also use

the information to compare their results to their competitors' results.

"The effort has been percolating for awhile," Mike Hughes, executive director of the NGCOA, told *Golf-dom*. "We started talking to our largest owners about collecting financial data about four or five years ago."

Based on information provided by participating owners and operators, the reports measure participation, revenues and course utilization on a monthly and rolling basis. The information will be confidential to participating owners and operators, who can use it not only for operational purposes but also for financing needs or when providing information to analysts and media.

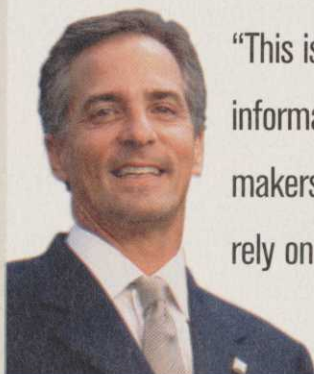
The reports, which include information on rounds played, total

round revenue, revenue per utilized round and revenue per available tee time, are available to every U.S. city for members and non-members.

The recent decision to launch the program nationally follows a five-month pilot study

Continued on page 18

"This is the type of information decision makers in other industries rely on to analyze trends."



MIKE HUGHES,
NGCOA



Super Shot Leads to Superintendent's Cup

MARTINEZ WINS BASF TOURNAMENT AT PEOPLE VS. THE PROS

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

Rafael Martinez should have figured — especially after he chipped in a spectacular par-saving shot from 30 yards out — that this was going to be his day.

Martinez, the certified superintendent of Via Verde Country Club in San Dimas, Calif., made the super shot on the first hole of a three-hole playoff with the winner advancing to the Superintendent's Cup of the People vs. The Pros, sponsored by BASF Professional Turf & Ornamentals and held in September at the Barton Creek Resort in Austin, Texas.

Thanks to the shot, Martinez went on to defeat Matt Curl, superintendent of Indian Creek Golf and Country Club in Fairbury, Ill., in the playoff to advance. And then in the Superintendent's Cup, held on Barton Creek's challenging Fazio Foothills course, Martinez defeated Greg Wiles, superintendent of The Links at Echo Springs Golf Course, in match play to

earn a \$10,000 check and \$10,000 worth of free BASF products. Wiles earned \$5,000 and Curl \$2,500 for their efforts.

Twenty superintendents joined nearly 200 competitors vying to play against PGA professionals Justin Leonard or Ben Crenshaw in the fourth-annual People vs. The Pros for the opportunity to win \$100,000. The top two scoring superintendents not playing against the pros competed against one another in the second-annual Superintendent's Cup.

The pros prevailed at the grand prize match, also held on the Fazio Foothills course. In the 18- to 49-year-old division, Jeff Jumonville conceded to Justin Leonard at the 15th hole. In the 50-and-over division, Ben Crenshaw closed out Jay Whiteside at the 18th hole. Both Leonard and Crenshaw received \$100,000, and the runners-up received \$50,000.

If not for making the chip shot,

Continued on page 18

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Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Briefs continued from page 12

managing the Greenlee brand and developing the business' long-term strategy.

Golf and firefighting: A match made in turfgrass heaven?

POK Firefighting Equipment is partnering with David G. Milailides, inventor and marketer of the underground hose reel, to form a new turf division. POK has introduced a new product line for the turf market under close supervision with Milailides, the inventor of the Direct under-Ground Maintenance Syringing System and the golf and irrigation representative for Reelcraft Industries. POK, which manufactures more than 2,500 firefighting, water delivery products and equipment for several industries, will offer heavy-duty multiple-gallonage spray pattern handline nozzles, tips, and chemical proportioner applicators to the turf industry as well as other products.

Dressed to . . . Hit with a Hickory-Shafted Club

Members of the The Rhode Island Golf Course Superintendents Association (RIGCSA) dressed the part — in knickers as well as derby hats and argyle socks — to celebrate its 75th anniversary as an association on Sept. 28 at Sakonnet Golf Club in Little Compton, R.I. The players also played hickory-shafted clubs and percher balls during the outing.

On Feb. 22, 1930, a meeting was held in Providence to discuss forming the Greenskeepers of Rhode Island into an association. The purpose of such an organization was mainly to benefit its members, by giving them a recognized status in the golfing world. Hence, the RIGCSA was born.



Celebrating the anniversary were (from left): John F. Streeter, certified superintendent of North Shore Country Club; David G. Mihailides of Reelcraft Industries; Les Kennedy Jr., certified superintendent of The Blind Brook Club; Tim O' Neill, certified superintendent of the Country Club of Darien; and Mark Richard, certified superintendent of Kirkbrae Country Club.

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Standard Golf: Onward in Iowa

By Thomas Skernivitz,
Managing Editor

Time doesn't stand still in Cedar Falls. Located in the heart of Iowa, the home of Standard Golf, to your surprise, appears blatantly chic.

Its downtown district, while probably one day emblematic of The Waltons, has since been commandeered by the cast of The OC. There's neon and martinis and the ultimate anti-sooey — sushi. Eclectic restaurants, trendy bars and art galleries go by the likes of Montage, The Stuffed Olive and Pursuing Picasso. Together, they line a strip of fresh concrete that literally defies patrons to walk the straight and narrow — the renovated street is curved like a letter S.

A few miles up The Hill, at the University of Northern Iowa, students and townies avidly support their favorite football and basketball teams. It's a scene not unlike many college towns, except that Panthers Nation does its cheering from inside a dome. And while the Uni-Dome is already nearing its 30th birthday, the facility, with its white bubble rising above the campus and surrounding cornfields, nonetheless seems like a technological marvel — and oddity — to the first-time visitor.

Not that Cedar Falls has lost its little-town charm. Its main street, even with the fancy new curves, is still Main Street. The sushi bar shares property with an old-school barber-shop. And the buzz down at Toad's Bar and Grill is over this Saturday's headliner at the Uni-Dome — Larry the Cable Guy.

"Larry is not a graduate of UNI," Ron Smith, the Panthers head assistant basketball coach, jokingly notes while leading a tour of the school's state-of-the-art athletic facilities. "But we like his motto."

Yes, Iowans like to Git-R-Done.

So, too, do the employees of Standard Golf, most of whom have deep Iowa roots. The family-owned business, founded in 1910, is into its third generation in the name of Peter E. Voorhees. Matt Hurley, the vice president and

general manager, was born and raised in Cedar Falls. He graduated from UNI, as did John Kelly, the director of marketing. They've been with the company a combined 37 years, which is about par for the 50 or so Standard Golf employees.

Standard Golf prides itself as being

Continued on page 16



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Off The Fringe

Continued from page 15

a leader in "golf course furniture" — flagsticks, flags, ball washers, tee markers, etc. More than 250 distributors in 47 countries in six continents sell its products.

"So we're not a really tiny operation sitting here in Iowa that no one knows about," Kelly says. "I think we'd be really very surprised if we were ever on a golf course that didn't have something on it that we manufactured."

With more golfers wanting to turn their backyards into single-hole fields of dreams, Standard Golf this year changed its philosophy and started offering 60 of its regular products directly to the lightest of consumers.

"We'd get hundreds of calls a year from homeowners that wanted to order just one cup, one flag and one flagstick," says Mike Doyle, director of sales development. "For years we pretty much said, 'We only sell to distributors,' and we hung up, not knowing if they ever called the distributor. But the distributors we talked to didn't want (the homeowners) calling them anyway. They had nine flagsticks in a box and they didn't want to sell them one flagstick, one cup."

The company is embarking on its most exciting move since it literally changed locations within the city after a fire destroyed its factory in 1992. In December it will begin



In December Standard Golf will begin selling a ball picker that can operate in reverse direction.

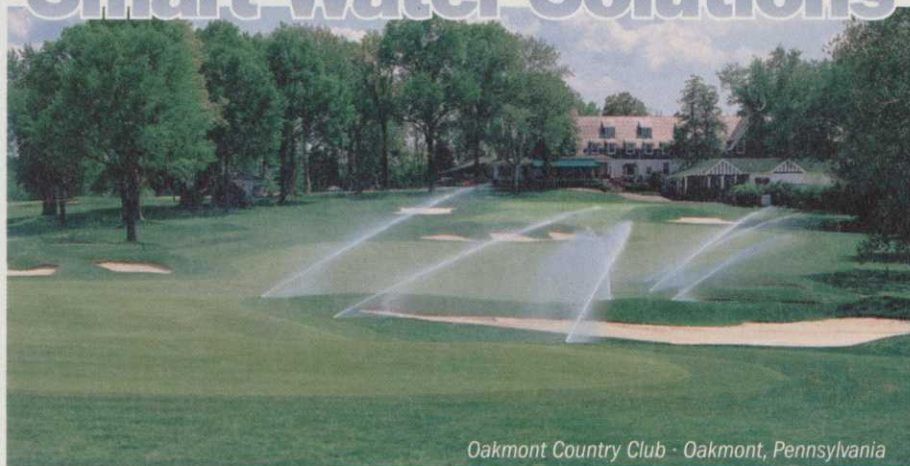
selling a revolutionary ball picker that can operate in reverse direction.

Available in three- and five-gang pickers, the Magnum Harvester can clear a driving range 30 percent more quickly, the company says. The primary selling point of the picker is the ability for the operator — often a teenager — to switch into reverse without tangling or damaging the gangs.

"We had one guy tell us, 'Well, you know, it would be great if you can make a picker that backs up. But that can't be done. It's impossible,'" Hurley says.

Impossible? Not at Standard Golf. It's progress or bust these days in Cedar Falls, even if Gitting-R-Done means making a machine that goes backward.

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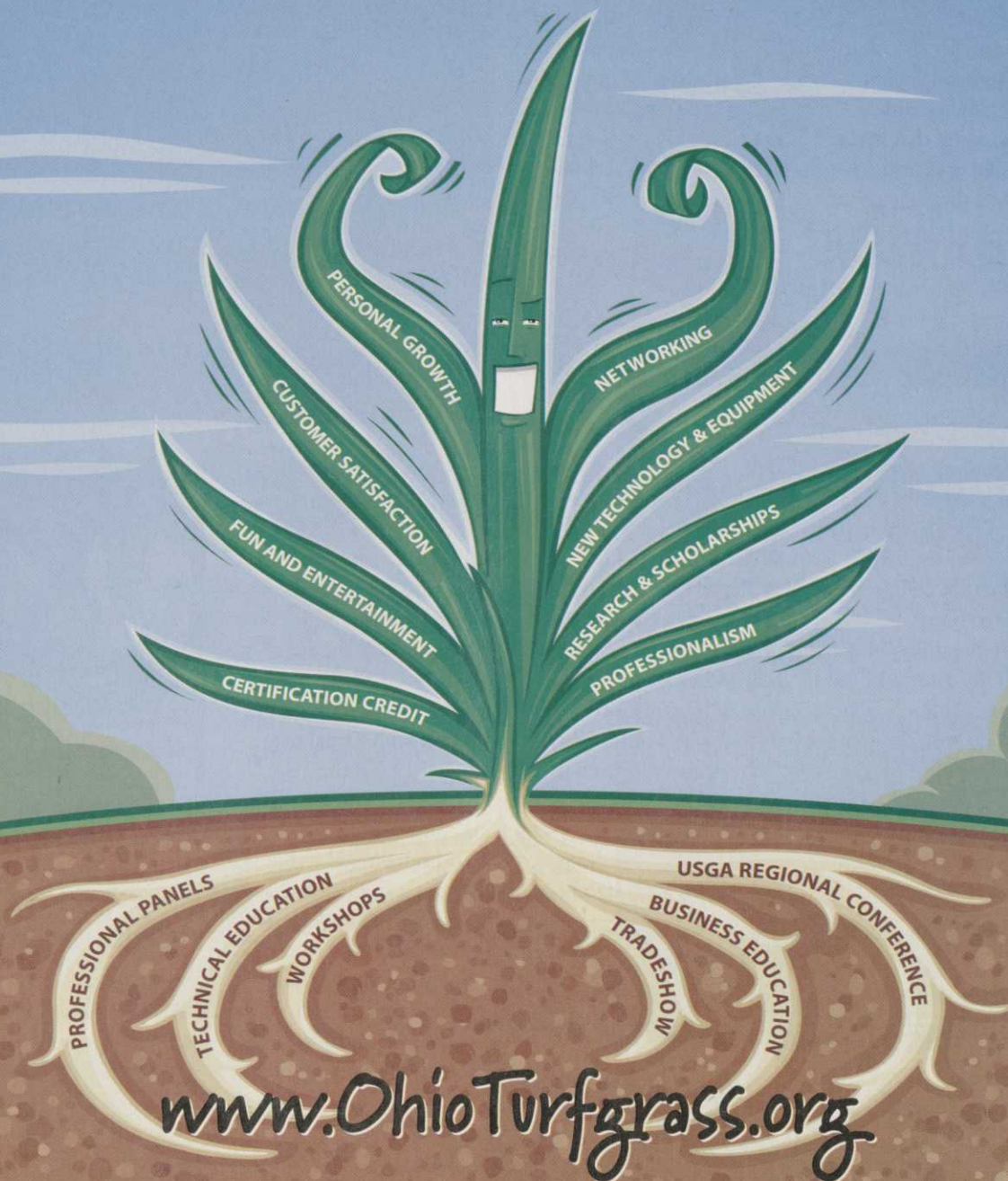
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Off The Fringe

Continued from page 12
in Atlanta, Las Vegas and Phoenix earlier this year.

Program participants receive information that allows them to compare their facilities' performance against the overall market. "This is the type of information decision makers in other industries rely on to understand and analyze trends," Hughes said.

It's no secret that many owners and operators have questioned the accuracy of participation reports from sources within the industry. Since the numbers reported in the Financial Benchmarks Program come directly from owners, credibil-

ity isn't an issue, said Hud Hinton, president and chief operating officer of Troon Golf, which manages operations at more than 160 courses. "These are the right metrics reported in an easy-to-understand format," Hinton added.

Hughes said that previous data wasn't "actionable."

"It wasn't something an operator could take a look at and say, 'This is what I need to do, and this is how I stack up against my competition,'" Hughes said. "That's the kind of information our members want."

Golfdom's Larry Aylward contributed to this story.

Continued from page 13
Martinez probably wouldn't have won the playoff to play in the Superintendent's Cup. The shot definitely invigorated him.

"I felt like things were going in my direction," said Martinez, relating how he felt after making the shot. "I said to myself, 'Let's go get 'em.'"

Martinez, who played steady golf during the Superintendents Cup and

kept the ball in play, went two holes up over Wiles after nine holes. He closed Wiles out after 14 holes.

"I just wanted to put it in play and see what happened," said the 42-year-old Martinez, a six-handicap. "My short game is the strongest part of my game. I'm never on the green in regulation, so I need to have a good short game."

Wiles, a 16-handicap, said he "hit some decent

shots here and there," but made too many mistakes, mostly off the tee. Incidentally, Wiles, who won a regional BASF qualifier tournament in 2004 and participated in the Pinehurst, N.C., final, was this year's top-scoring superintendent with a total net score of 147 in the 18- to 49-age division, placing third overall.

Both men said walking the course in the infamous Texas heat took its toll on them.

"I'm a golf course superintendent," Wiley said with a smile. "I'm used to riding around in golf cars. Rafael looked at me after the 12th hole and said, 'Man, I'm beat.' I said, 'So am I.'"

Martinez and Wiles qualified for the event after winning their respective regional



Toni Bucci (right), business manager for BASF Professional Turf and Ornamentals, presents Rafael Martinez with the winning check.

tournaments held by BASF earlier in the summer. BASF flew the two men and 18 other superintendents to Barton Creek, put them up for several days and treated them like ... well ... PGA players.

"This was a fantastic experience," Wiley said. "You can't beat playing in something like this."

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Some hopeless romantics will have you believe that “love” means never having to say you’re sorry. And they might make a good case for that contention, based on Erich Segal’s novel, “Love Story.”

As any serious student of the game knows, golf is right up there with love. In fact, passion knows no bounds when it comes to the click and feel of a perfectly struck golf shot or the sound of the ball as it rattles in the bottom of the cup.

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Whether the equipment is old or new, we hope our search for that perfect combination of swing mechanics and equipment results in a perfect marriage that lasts happily ever after or until the United States Golf Association’s (USGA) Coefficient of Rebound (COR) do us part. In each round, the honeymoon usually ends with the first triple bogie. And as the three putts add up, thoughts of divorce are contemplated. But the counselor at the 19th hole makes it all better.

The camaraderie on the links, the fun and serious competition, the rub of the green and those fatalistic bounces that separate good from great and the birdie from a bogey . . . all these things and more define the game of golf. Strategy, skill and luck in varying amounts take us on the thrill ride of the game, and not once have I mentioned turfgrass conditions.

And that is the point of this exposition. It isn’t the turf that is the primary driver in the game; it is the game itself. Perfectly manicured golf courses are beautiful works of art, but alas I must report they are not the end-all measure to the enjoyment of the game. I have played golf shots off concrete, asphalt,

Golf Means Never Having to Say You’re Sorry

BY JOEL JACKSON



IT ISN'T THE TURF
THAT IS THE
PRIMARY DRIVER
IN THE GAME; IT IS
THE GAME ITSELF.

crushed rock, wooden planks, pine straw, St. Augustinegrass, Bahiagrass and occasionally the intended warm- or cool-season turf planted through the green. All of which goes a long way, I suppose, to explain my 19-20 stroke handicap. Although my handicap has suffered over time (I once was a 10), it is my playing time that affected my scoring, not course conditioning.

The challenge to execute the necessary golf shot is not a function of the begonias on the tee box or the edging of the cart path. I still hit a miracle shot now and then and it keeps me coming back. For true golfers, the real lovers of the game, you never have to say you’re sorry for the condition of your golf course. If the tee blocks are lined up square, and the cups are set on the greens, the game is on. Golf doesn’t care, or it shouldn’t care, whether you have a crew of six or a crew of 30, or a budget of \$250,000 to more than \$1 million.

The No. 1 mandate is to keep the greens rolling as smoothly and consistently as possible. Faster speeds are a function of budget, ego and talent of the superintendent and equipment manager trying to balance turfgrass survival vs. the death wishes of the members of Club Wannabe.

But for real hardcore golfers, the weekend warriors of the links and the bag draggers who love this game, golf means never having to say you’re sorry, maybe just an occasional “Fore!”

Certified Superintendent Joel Jackson retired from Disney’s golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.