

# Talpirid saves Farmington time, labor and turf

In his 11 years with Farmington Country Club in Farmington, Conn., John Ruzsbatzky, CGCS, has tried bombs, baits, traps and other methods to get rid of moles on the golf course. Results were varied — and none were to his satisfaction.

That all changed two years ago, when Ruzsbatzky's LESCO representative introduced him to Talpirid Mole Bait.

"It's such a simple product, in its design and effectiveness," says Ruzsbatzky. While he began using the product with some skepticism, the results changed his mind fast.

"Some were gone the next day and all were gone within four days," he notes. "Most of our problem areas were in the rough and surrounding the tees, but we had some burrowing in the greens as well. It was all gone."

In fact, Ruzsbatzky reports that the eight problem areas he had on his 18-hole, private course in 2004 decreased by half in 2005. And so far in 2006, he hasn't seen any activity at all.



## Set it and forget it

Ruzsbatzky and his assistant superintendent, Ryan O'Neal, appreciate the low-maintenance aspect of using Talpirid.

"Smoke bombs could be effective when we knew where the moles were, but with Talpirid, you only need to worry about finding the main artery," he explains. "You drop the 'worm' and forget about it, because there won't be any odor or carcasses."

He believes it has also resonated positively with club members, who no longer see bombs, traps — or burrows.

"The moles made such a mess of the turf before," he says. "They were really a nuisance."

Best of all, going with Talpirid has meant a great amount of time and labor savings for Ruzsbatzky. No more setting, checking and

moving traps means he and his crew can free up their time for other tasks. It has even had a trickle-down effect for their grub control program.

"We used to do wall-to-wall grub protection," Ruzsbatzky explains. "Now, when we see grub activity, we target spray when it's necessary. It's reactive, targeted control as opposed to spraying pesticides in an effort to keep a step ahead of the moles. Moles really aren't part of that equation now."







Steve Garske, president of Par Aide Products, has a bright outlook for the accessory business.

# Counter Measures

Accessory manufacturers respond to flat market with 'innovative,' 'quality' products

**BY LARRY AYLWARD**  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

**H**ow wonderful it was to sell ball washers and flagsticks in the mid and late 1990s when golf courses were popping up across the country as fast as Wal-Marts. Accessory manufacturers couldn't produce their products fast enough to keep up with the swift clip in which golf courses were opening.

But, as the old song says, "those days are gone my friends." And accessory manufacturers have been forced to change with the times.

"It was awfully nice when 300 to 400 golf courses were opening every year," says John Kelly, president of Cedar Falls, Iowa-based Standard Golf Co. "That made us all look pretty good. But it's a little bit tougher now."

Last year only 124.5 golf courses (in 18-hole equivalents) opened, according to the National Golf Foundation. With 98 closures, the net addition was only 26.5 course openings. Compare that to 2000 when 398.5 golf courses opened.

Kelly says he expected the downturn, which began shortly after Sept. 11, 2001. It was easy to see, what with the high number of new courses being built in accordance with the low number of new players coming into the game.

Also, with real-estate prices skyrocketing, Kelly wasn't surprised that some owners jumped at the chance to sell their courses to let them be converted into housing developments.

Steve Garske, president of Lino Lakes, Minn.-based Par Aide Products, says he

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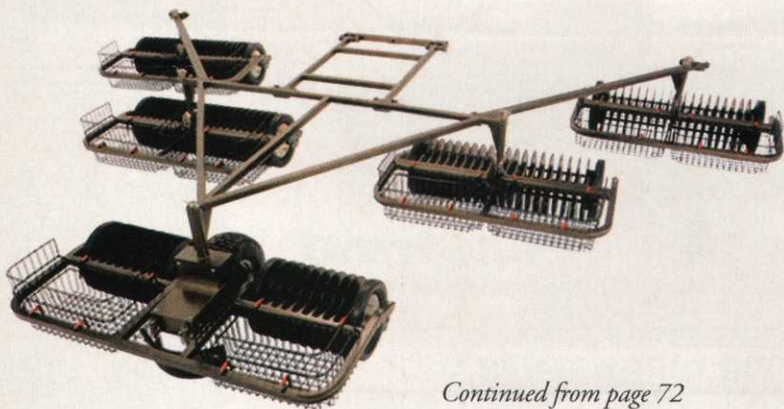
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## Counter Measures



**Standard Golf's Magnum Harvester Ball Picker is billed as a product to save time and money.**

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began telling people in the late 1990s that he expected golf course growth to decline significantly by 2000. He wasn't far off. But Garske says Par Aide's business has been steady despite the economic downturn.

"We haven't seen any huge downturns, but we haven't seen any huge increases either," he adds.

But Garske's outlook for the business is brighter than it has been in the last few years.

"This is the first spring in the last five years where I've heard a number of people

tell me they were going to buy new equipment," he said in May.

So, what's driving the resurgence? What's new and cool on the golf course accessory circuit? What are the products that manufacturers can't make fast enough?

Shirley Anderson, president of Winnipeg, Manitoba-based Bayco Golf, says recycled plastic products — such as rope, hazard and out-of-bounds stakes — are selling well.

"They're maintenance free, they don't warp, and you don't have to paint them," she says. Bayco's custom accessory business has also been strong, Anderson notes.

"Everybody wants embroidered flags, screen-printed flags and their courses' names printed on their ball washers," she adds.

Anderson believes the custom business

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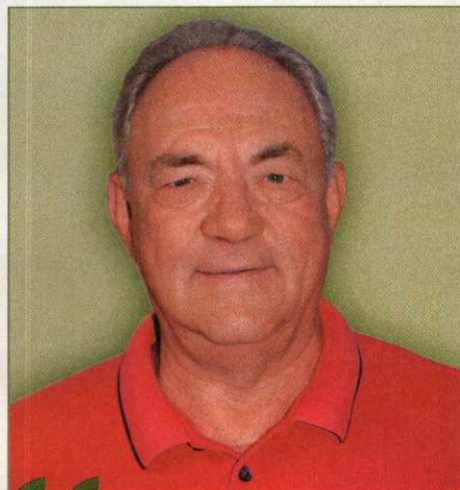
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**“It was awfully nice when 300 to 400 golf courses were opening every year. That made us all look pretty good.”**

**JOHN KELLY**

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“Everybody wants embroidered flags, screenprinted flags and their courses’ names printed on their ball washers.”

**SHIRLEY ANDERSON**  
PRESIDENT | BAYCO GOLF

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boom is because of increased competition among golf courses.

“[Courses] are trying to go the extra mile

to make sure their names are up front,” she says.

Anderson says her customers are also asking for different-colored accessories to brighten up their courses.

“Before it was just red and green,” she says. “Now they want navy blue and gray.”

Mark Hammer, national sales manager for Delafield, Wis.-based Great Lakes Golf Course Products, says water-related accessories are popular items, such as convenient huts and boxes to store water bottles.

“We build a lot of custom-shaped and custom-sized water bottle boxes and convenient huts,” he adds.

Great Lakes, in partnership with Halsey-Taylor, also offers a powerless water fountain. It taps into an existing water line on the course and delivers chilled water through copper tubing that runs through ice stored in the fountain’s infrastructure.

While the cost for the powerless water fountain initially may be more expensive than a box or convenience station, it will be cheaper in the long run because it uses municipal water, Hammer says. That way courses don’t have to keep buying and supplying bottled water.

Another popular new product offered by Great Lakes is a tee monument that combines storage, waste, a clock, signage, a course logo and a ball washer all in one.

Standard Golf recently added marking paint to its product line. The company has added additional lines of the paint, manufactured by Rustoleum, for use on parking lots.

Last year Standard Golf introduced its Magnum Harvester Ball Picker, a gang picker that can go forward and backward without tangling or damaging the gangs. Standard billed the product as an item that would “save golf professionals time and money when picking up their ranges.”

Par Aide recently introduced the Core Hog, a bracket that attaches to the front of a walk-behind mower and is used for core cleanup.

Timing is everything when it comes to releasing new products these days, Garske says. The same can be said of aggressive and



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innovative new product development, Kelly adds. To be the first company out with a needed and quality new product is the best way to get a leg up on the competition, Hammer notes.

Nobody wants to reveal top-secret information when it comes to new product development. But all will probably agree that solid product performance is imperative. Anderson says her customers desire quality products that provide many years of service.

"They don't want to have to buy any parts to replace anything," she says. "They want more bang for their bucks."

Of course, it's not all about what's new in the world of accessories. It's also about staying power.

Asked what Bayco can always count on to sell, Anderson doesn't hesitate about her reply.

"Ball washers," she says.

Kelly says Standard Golf's mainstay products are flagsticks, cups and bunker rakes.

"In terms of sheer numbers, it's hard to believe the number of cups, flagsticks and rakes we sell every year," he adds.

Regarding staying power, it's

**Some tee monuments come with all of the fixings, including this one from Great Lakes Golf Course Products. The Solid Teak Tee Monument (below) has an engraved tee sign, a 6-inch weatherproof clock, a ball washer and a plank-style roof.**



important to keep up with the trends in the accessory segment. While ball washers might have long lives, their colors might not.

The color of equipment often helps define the accessories market. For instance, brown was a popular color for accessories on the course in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Kelly points out.

"People thought that brown blended in nicely," he adds. "There were brown ball washers and brown benches. But [brown] peaked after three or four years and went out of style."

Green is the "in" color now, Kelly notes. "You have to keep on top of what seems to be popular."

There are also former mainstay products that have faded or are fading. Items like spike brushes are not selling as well as they were because so many courses have banned metal spikes, Garske says. The brushes just don't get torn up as much with soft spikes.


Anderson says she has noticed that courses aren't using as many big signs in an attempt to decrease clutter on golf courses.

"If courses do put out signs, they want small ones that aren't that obvious," Anderson says, noting that courses are taking a more subtle approach to conveying messages.

Hammer says demand for water-cooler enclosures is decreasing because more courses believe water bottle boxes are a safer way to offer a cool drink. Hammer also has noticed that more courses are painting more lines rather than using hazard markers. He wonders if courses are painting as part of a cost-cutting measure.

Kelly says it's common for Standard Golf to discontinue the sale of one or two items annually.

"Everything kind of runs its course," he says. "We have some tee markers that have been around for eons. But as long as there are reasonable amounts sold every year, we keep them in the line." ■




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# Flying High

BY CRAIG TIEDE

**D**an Schuknecht had no trouble handling the multiple tasks needed so the Talons of Tuscany Golf Club could open for the current season. And in the off months, the assistant superintendent of the Ankeny, Iowa, golf course leads his maintenance crew in upgrading equipment, making repairs, preparing to hire seasonal staff and even starting to build a back nine.

These are no small tasks, especially when building a new course, but Schuknecht remains unfazed. And if you ask him about the source of his efficiency, he'll attribute it to being an Eagle Scout.

Schuknecht wanted to be a golf course superintendent ever since he stepped foot onto the green of his local course in his hometown of Greene, Iowa, during the summer after

eight grade. As a seasonal maintenance worker, he fell in love not just with the sport, but with being outdoors as well.

Schuknecht says his scouting years were invaluable in developing communication skills, discipline and time management.

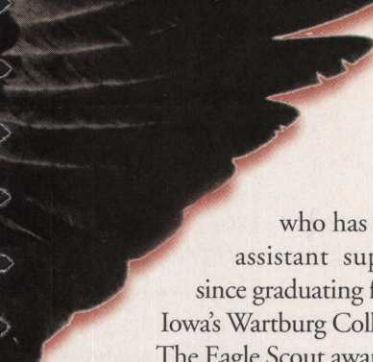
"A lot of those skills I use every day on the golf course," says the 25-year-old Schuknecht,

**Dan Schuknecht says his scouting years were invaluable in helping him develop the skills he uses as a golf course superintendent.**



PHOTOS COURTESY: DAN SCHUKNECHT (LEFT), INDEXOPEN (TOP)





who has worked as an assistant superintendent since graduating from Waverly, Iowa's Wartburg College in 2003.

The Eagle Scout award is the highest advancement rank in Boy Scouting. To receive an Eagle, a Scout must fulfill requirements in the areas of leadership, service and outdoor skills, according to the Boy Scouts of America. A Scout must earn 21 self-selected merit badges within 119 different specialties, 12 of which are required in areas like first aid, citizenship in the community and the nation, and environmental science. Elective merit badge specialties range from astronomy to communications to forestry and, yes, even golf. In addition, a Scout must complete a community service project, all before turning 18.

Schuknecht's success as a superintendent can be attributed to his scouting background and his acquired affinity for the outdoors, says Renee Fairrer, associate director of marketing for the Boy Scouts of America.

"These are people who are leaders who know how to work with people," Fairrer says. "These are people who have learned how to approach a problem or an issue and then talk to people and do whatever's necessary to accomplish a final end result."

It doesn't hurt, either, that one of the underlying tenets of the Boy Scout philosophy is respect for the environment.

"What we call 'leave no trace' is taught from the youngest Cub Scouts on up," Fairrer says. It goes beyond not littering, to the point of instilling the wisdom that "what they do to the land will affect other generations to come."

Love of the outdoors also lured Bruce Williams to the Boy Scouts when he was a youngster. Growing up in the south side of Chicago, where his father was superintendent of Beverly Country Club, Williams longed for more than his urban environs could provide.

"It's hard to gain an appreciation for nature when you're in the city," recalls Williams, who is now the director of golf courses and grounds for the Los Angeles Country Club. "Scouting was a bridge to enable me to do that."

Moving to the north suburbs of Chicago when he was 9 years old, Williams became

a model Scout, receiving his Eagle by age 13 in 1963.

"When I go back to my developmental years, scouting was very important to me," Williams says. "I rank my Eagle award on my wall as every bit as valuable as my college diploma because of what it did for me preparing me for life."

Even after receiving an English degree

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from Baldwin-Wallace College in Ohio, scouting and golf remained very close to Williams because he went on to Michigan State for his master's degree in turfgrass science. Upon completion of his master's, he returned to follow in his father's footsteps at the Bob O'Link Golf Club in Highland Park, Ill., as superintendent.

Despite being immersed in his career, Williams never turned his back on scouting because he feels it shaped him to the person he is today.

"Early on in life you're given tests and challenges," Williams says. "Scouting provides real good tests for the making of a man, proper life balance and doing the right things for the community."

Williams served as district commissioner of the North Suburban Council of Chicago's Scouts for 20 years while holding leadership positions such as president of the of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America in 1996.

He moved to Los Angeles nine years ago and is the president of the California Golf Course Superintendents Association. Though inactive with scouting leadership since moving to Los Angeles, Williams still structures his career and life around what he learned as a Boy Scout.

"Scouting is certainly a major part of the cornerstone of principles I live by today," he says. "I don't have to don a uniform to regenerate those feelings. Once you have those feelings and live by the principles, they stay with you forever."

Being a Scout enabled Schuknecht and Williams to actualize their dreams by giving them the skills needed to excel at their chosen vocation. However, not all Scouts become Eagles like they did.

According to the Boy Scouts of America, less than 5 percent of the million boys who enter the scouting program as a Cub Scout go on to receive their Eagle award.

"Not everyone is destined to become an Eagle Scout," Williams says. "I think that's a

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