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Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Core Golfers on the Rise

The National Golf Foundation's most comprehensive golf participation study unveiled good news for the industry: Core golfers — adults who play at least 8 rounds each year — rose to about 15 million, up from 12.5 million last year.

The results stem from a comprehensive USA Sports Participation Study, a collaboration of the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association, Snowsports Industries America, the Outdoor Industry Foundation and NGF.

"This year's study is superior to ones we've done in the past, primarily due to the larger sample size of 60,000," NGF President and CEO Joe Beditz said in a prepared statement. "This larger sample gives us a more detailed view of the American golfer than we have ever had, and we also have better information on other sports and fitness activities that golfers engage in."

The study also identified about 400,000 more junior golfers to total 4.8 million players between age 6 and age 17. The total number of golfers, 28.7 million, is down 2 percent from last year, according to the report.

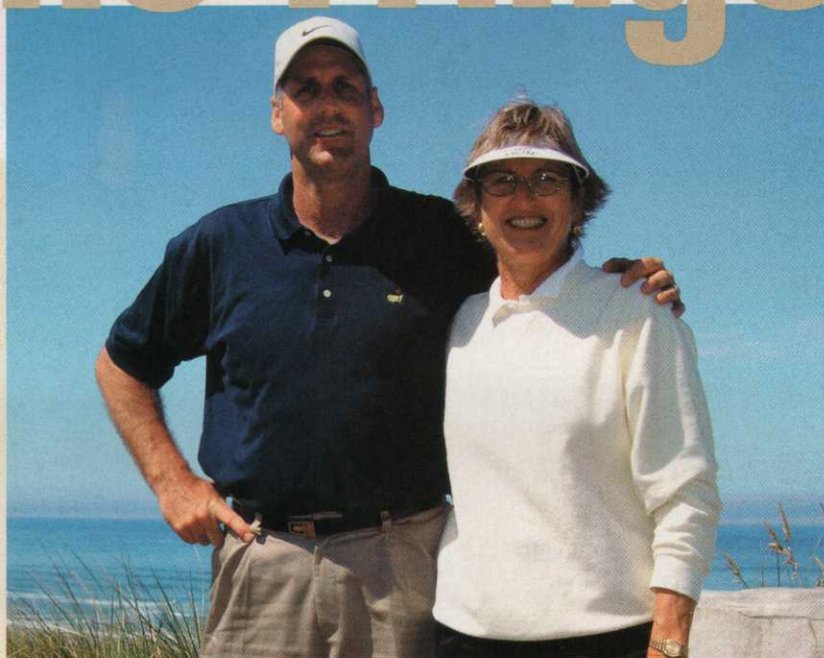
Petersan Joins Nutramax

Doug Petersan, regarded as one of the nation's top superintendents, has joined Nutramax Laboratories. He provides agronomic advice and guidance for Nutramax customers and distributors in Texas and the Southwest.

"His experience and industry knowledge will be a great asset to our company and to our customers," said George Barger, director of the Nutramax's agricultural division.

Petersan recently retired as superintendent of Austin Golf Club. He still serves as a

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Time of His Life

SUPERINTENDENT CHRIS GAUGHAN WILL NEVER FORGET CADDYING FOR HIS SISTER ON THE LPGA TOUR **By Anthony Pioppi**

Like many other superintendents, Chris Gaughan didn't come directly to the profession. But like few others, Gaughan has "LPGA caddy" listed on his resume.

Gaughan, 48, has been a part of Eugene (Ore.) Country Club for almost his entire life, from his days as a caddy starting when he was 10 years old to today where he is in his 14th season as superintendent.

As much as he enjoys maintaining Eugene Country Club, he readily admits that nothing surpasses the time between 1982 and 1984. That's when Gaughan toted clubs, gauged the wind and read putts for his sister,

Kathy Mant, on the LPGA Tour. Kathy is the oldest of the seven Gaughan children, and Chris is the second youngest.

"It was a ball. I was meeting people, traveling and I enjoy golf," Gaughan says. "It was the most fun job I've ever had."

Caddying came as an unexpected invitation from his sister after Gaughan completed his fourth year at the University of Oregon, still a few classes shy of his finance degree. But he decided to try the nomadic lifestyle, one where caddies are known only by nicknames, such as Speedway (from Indianapolis) and Scraper (short for

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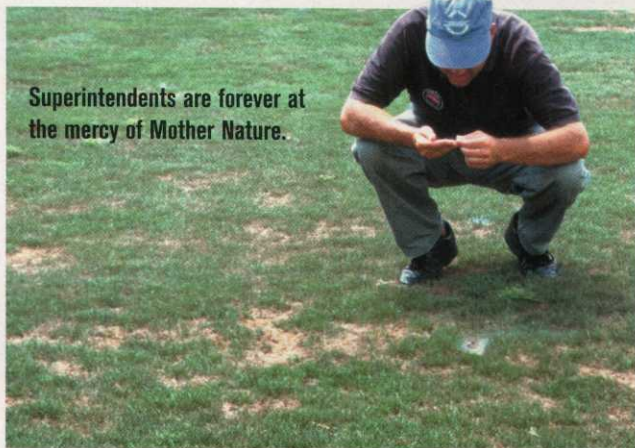


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Off The Fringe

Death, Taxes and Turf Loss

YOU CAN'T CONTROL THE FIRST TWO,
BUT YOU CAN THE THIRD



Superintendents are forever at the mercy of Mother Nature.

By Charlie Fultz, Contributing Editor

A friend of mine, a superintendent who had been in the business for more than 20 years, once told me, "It's not *if* you'll ever lose turf, but *when*." He followed that quote with, "But you know the good superintendents are the ones who recover quickly and never miss a beat."

What does a superintendent do to prepare for such an unknown disaster? And when it strikes, be it a disease-ridden green or fairway, how does one handle the situation and shine in spite of it?

For one, superintendents are forever at the mercy of Mother Nature. Even on their best days, superintendents hope to break even with the person in charge. With that in mind, is it possible to prepare for the unknown? Yes, with a few important pieces of information from your own course.

For starters, turf loss, whether in the spring, summer, fall or winter, has some key factors associated with it — factors that can be avoided. Lack of air movement, limited sunlight and poor drainage are just a few of the factors that can be reversed before a disaster strikes.

If trees lead to lack of air movement and limit sunlight, then selective pruning or removal should be considered. Fans are also a great way to create air movement.

Quotable

"The kid you yelled at at the pool last year is maybe your president 10 years later."

— Chris Borders, general manager of the Atlanta Athletic Club, on how things sometimes turn out in this crazy business. So you'd better be careful of who you holler at for doing cannon balls off the diving board.

"Bob, you get around a lot. ... I mean that in an agronomic sense."

— John Street, an Ohio State University turfgrass specialist, acknowledging the field experience of the United States Golf Association Green Section's North-Central Region Director Bob Brame before asking him a question at a recent turf conference.

"I appreciate the clarification."

— a humored Brame, responding to Street with a deadpan quip.

"I wish I could tell you a really neat story to go along with [how we came up with the name] ... the Father, Son and Holy Ghost or something."

— Toni Bucci, business manager for BASF Professional Turf & Ornamentals, on how BASF came up with the name for its new fungicide, Trinity.

In the case of excessive water, gravel-only drainage, slit drains or standard 4-inch corrugated drain installs can be ways to eliminate major problems before they arrive. But if disasters do occur, superintendents can still shine. How do they demonstrate the professional attributes that make them valuable managers?

Communication is vital at this point. They must make sure that people in charge (owner, general manager, greens

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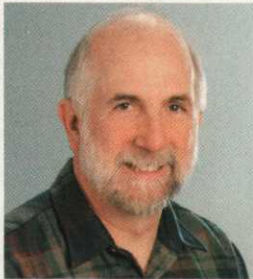
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Revving Up for Biodiesel Technology



TORO'S STEVE WOOD DISCUSSES COMPANY'S
ROLE IN IMPLEMENTING BIODIESEL
TECHNOLOGY *By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief*

At the Golf Industry Show in February, The Toro Co. announced that all of its diesel-powered golf course, sports field and grounds equipment will be made Biodiesel Ready by 2008. This includes the Toro Reelmaster, Groundsmaster, Greensmaster, Workman and Multipro product families.

"Our biodiesel readiness initiative is part of a commitment to developing innovative solutions that meet the evolving needs of our customers and help to better the environment," said Toro's Chairman and CEO Mike Hoffman in a prepared statement. "The time is right for Toro and the industry to commit to this effort."

Steve Wood, manager of Toro's Commercial Test Engineering Department and the leader of Toro's Engine Specialization Team, has been the project leader for Toro's biodiesel testing program that began in 2002. He also has been one of the primary advocates at Toro for making biodiesel technology available to its customers.

Toro recently spent time with *Golfdom* to answer these questions:

Why did Toro decide to pursue this initiative five years ago through extensive equipment testing?

Wood: Toro had periodic inquiries from customers who wished to operate their fleets on biodiesel, and we did not have an experience base to be able to answer their questions about how

well this would work and what problems might be encountered. Our engine suppliers also had very little experience with biodiesel, but two of them agreed to participate in the test program for the first two years with Toro. Many of the customers asking about biodiesel wanted to be able to run on B100 (100 percent biodiesel) fuel, so this is what we tested.

What did Toro learn about this concept through testing? Why did Toro decide to roll it out now?

Wood: We learned that our diesel-powered equipment ran quite well on biodiesel fuel overall. We experienced some minor problems with fuel hose degradation, premature fuel filter

The availability and cost of fuel will play a big factor in which types of engines will be preferred.

plugging, cold-weather waxing, and fuel dilution of the crankcase oil in some of the vehicles. But for the most part there was no perceptible change in the way the engines started or performed. It took quite some time to develop solutions for each of these problems and to qualify the new components required. There was also some hesitation internally to support the use of biodiesel beyond what our en-

gine suppliers were willing to endorse or recommend.

How long have your customers been asking for this technology? What has been the reaction from superintendents to your initiative?

Wood: Toro has had occasional inquiries from both domestic and international customers for at least seven years. Biodiesel fuel wasn't widely available during most of this time, and the cost for B100 was roughly twice that of petroleum-based diesel fuel. Within the last one to two years, availability and public awareness about biodiesel has increased, and cost has approached parity with petroleum fuels. Reaction from the booth visitors at the Golf Industry Show, including golf course superintendents, was extremely positive. They are aware of the advantages of biodiesel fuel, which is better for the environment because it's renewable and produces lower emissions.

In 10 years, how do you think fairway mowers, greens mowers and utility vehicles will be powered?

Off-highway equipment, such as commercial lawnmowers and utility vehicles, will still be powered by internal combustion engines for some time to come at least for 10 more years. The availability and cost of fuel will play a big factor in which types of engines will be preferred, as will fuel efficiency, cost, and exhaust emissions. The Tier 4 standards for diesel exhaust emissions starting in 2012 will trigger more complexity and cost than in today's products. Hydrogen-powered engines and/or fuel cells will begin to make some inroads within this time but are unlikely to be the mainstream products. ■

Editor's note: For a podcast of a similar interview with Wood, see www.golfdom.com/onlineexclusive.

syngenta Business Tip of the Month

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committee) understand what has happened and what effect it will have on the golf course.

The golfers should also be aware of what's going on. Keep in mind that arming them with the proper information is a lot better than allowing them to form their own opinions and foster inaccuracies.

It's also important to write a recovery plan, including the cost to remedy the situation. In the plan, state what has happened, how it happened (if known), the steps necessary to remedy it, and how long this particular area will be out of play while it heals. Be realistic when writing the plan; don't sugarcoat anything. If possible, bring in another superintendent or professional colleague to get their views as well.

Also, take photographs of what happened. Note any limiting factors associated with the problem. Were there tree or sunlight issues you weren't allowed to address that accentuated this problem? If so, photograph them to help provide an explanation.

With all of this in mind, a plan and a proactive approach are only good if both are implemented. It's also time for a superintendent to prove his or her worth. Few things are more impressive than overcoming adversity in the face of unforeseen obstacles.

Once recovered, use the time after to self-reflect. Did the damaged area recover as you expected? If not, why? What could you have done differently to make this recover quicker, if possible? Ask yourself how you can prevent it from happening again in the future?

The soul searching will make you smarter and wiser. And a successful recovery also cements in the supervisor's mind that his or her superintendent can handle challenges and persevere. ■

Fultz is superintendent of the Shenvallee (Va.) Golf Resort and a frequent contributor to Golfdom.

How to Retain the Best Employees

For many golf course superintendents, finding and retaining reliable employees is a bigger professional concern than their own job security. The turnover rate among golf course maintenance workers, who often leave for better-paying and less-demanding jobs, is high and has been a continuing problem at public and private courses alike. But it's a problem that can be addressed on several fronts.

For starters, superintendents might want to begin paying maintenance workers a higher wage to retain them. A higher wage could be as little as one more dollar an hour. Superintendents should also keep in mind that turnover costs them more money in the long run to retrain new employees, which may make a pay increase even more sensible. Also, a constant influx of inexperienced employees could have a negative impact on course conditioning.

Hence, boosting workers' wages can provide them with more satisfaction and motivation. Superintendents benefit by having harder-working and more reliable workers, which translates into less turnover.

While money can help superintendents retain employees, it's not the only alternative. It's also vital to empower employees and let them know they are valued. If you're a good boss — someone who cares about his or her employees, empowers them to do their jobs and provides them the opportunity to grow — there's a good chance your employees will want to stay with you, even if they have opportunities to leave for more lucrative jobs.

The "Tip of the Month" is provided by Syngenta to support superintendents in their agronomic, business and professional development. To comment on this column, submit a lesson from your own experience, or suggest a topic to be covered in a future issue, please visit www.golfbusinesslips.com.



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Syngenta offers a complete portfolio of products and services to help golf course superintendents drive business by creating playing conditions that bring golfers back again and again. For more information about how Syngenta can help you create conditions worthy of devotion, visit syngentaprofessionalproducts.com or call 1-866-SYNGENTA (796-4368).

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Business briefs

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consultant to the club and also works with other facilities around the country. Prior to his tenure at Austin Golf Club, he was golf course superintendent at Baltimore Country Club in Maryland for eight years and at Prairie Dunes Golf Club in Hutchinson, Kan., for 12 years. Before that, he served at facilities in Nebraska and Illinois from 1960 to 1980.

Nutramax supplies the turf, ornamental and agricultural industries with L-amino acid based products for the health and wellness of plants.

Sage Golf Formed

There's a new management company on the block: Sage Golf Group Worldwide (SGG Worldwide).

Pete Davison, who has more than 40 years of experience in the club industry, including the past 25 years with the TPC Network, recently announced the formation of the full-service luxury golf management company specializing in third-party management contracts, as well as club development and construction for new and existing facilities in the United States and abroad. Davison is president and CEO of the company, which also offers consulting services.

SGG Worldwide is made up of most members of the management team that operated the PGA Tour's Tournament Players Club Network from its inception in 1980. The company will focus on premier world-class oriented properties in the private, resort and daily-fee sectors. Davison said discussions are under way for involvement with a number of leading developers and owners from the United States and other countries around the world.

Davison is the former senior vice president and chief operating officer of PGA Tour Golf Course Properties and the TPC Network. The other members of SGG Worldwide include Roberta McDougal, vice president of finance and accounting; Chuck Green, vice president of golf course maintenance operations and agronomy; Mike Diffenderfer, senior consultant marketing

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My Life as a Rough Fluffer

VOLUNTEER CHRONICLES HIS GOLF MAINTENANCE EXPERIENCE
AT THE WACHOVIA CHAMPIONSHIP

By Adam Slick

Editor's note: Adam Slick (right) is a marketing communications manager with Jacobsen, who volunteered his time at Quail Hollow Club in Charlotte, N.C., to help the course prepare for the Wachovia Championship in May. Jacobsen is the exclusive equipment provider to the Quail Hollow Club and an official sponsor of the Wachovia Championship.



It's 4:45 a.m. and the turf maintenance crew is up before the golfers, way before the fans and even before the earliest of the local birds (quail, of course). Heck, we might be the only ones up in North Carolina. For the gathered turf professionals and agronomists, this is a chance to prepare one of America's finest courses for Tiger, Phil, Vijay and the rest of the world's top players. For the volunteers, we're just happy to be alongside some of the biggest unsung heroes on the PGA Tour.

At this hour, coffee has little to no effect. We stand around grunting like bears as we wait for our leader to emerge and hand down his edict of assignments. My daydream of walking the famed 17th hole with a greens mower or mowing the fairways is interrupted as superintendent Jeff Kent appears to open proceedings. My curiosity turns to angst as the more glamorous mowing jobs (yes, there is such a thing) are given to volunteers who actually do this for a living. I anxiously await my name like the 10-year-old baseball player not wanting to be the last one picked. I eventually get news that I'll be "fluffing roughs" with a group. It sounds interesting until I learn my assignment is actually a euphemism for "raking grass."

I quickly ascertain that "fluffing rough" is the equivalent to starting in the mailroom at Microsoft: You have an important job and it's a great place to work, but it sure is a long way to the top. Our task, as the job description implies, is to fluff up the rough that the mowers mat down.

Before long, the sun is up. We return for a warm meal and share war stories with other fluffers. We watch the tournament unfold and hope someone — anyone — notices our work on the crisp, clean 5 inches of pristine grass surrounding the fairways. Of course, our work is unheralded and underappreciated — the best courses in the world purposely look as if they are placed there by Mother Nature. But even if one fan looked down at the tall grass, and thought, "That is some nice rough," then we did our job. We don't do it for the fame, we do it for the love of the game.

In all seriousness, we thank Jeff Kent and the entire Quail Hollow Club crew for letting us be a small part of something great. We are certainly proud to participate in what has become one of the PGA Tour's biggest events. We truly look at any job at Quail Hollow Club as a privilege — whether it be cutting the 17th green or raking the grass.

Who knows, maybe next year we can be in charge of getting rid of the gophers. ■

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When Performance Matters.™

Off The Fringe



Golf Club Turns Campground

FarmLinks Golf Club in Sylacauga, Ala., was transformed into a campground for attendees of Outback America, an outdoor weekend adventure developed to give parents and teenagers practical answers for daily living. The two-day event focuses on building, restoring and strengthening relationships with God, family, friends, church and community. Campers didn't sleep in tents pitched on greens, tees and fairways, though. The campground was located on peripheral areas of the course. The maintenance facility, however, was transformed into a dining hall for the event. This is the 10th time FarmLinks has hosted Outback. FarmLinks President Erle Fairly says the club aims to give back to the community by hosting such functions. "We do about 30 events annually," he says.

CALL FOR ENTRIES!

2008 Dog Days of Golf Calendar



Is Your Canine Camera-Friendly? If so, please submit a photo of your dog to be considered for the Lebanon Turf's 2008 Dog Days of Golf calendar. Photos of your dog in a golf related setting, in action or with you are encouraged. The 2008 calendar will feature superintendent's dogs and be circulated to golf course professionals throughout the country. Any questions? Please call Cynthia Andrews, 1-800-532-0090 ext 253.

Submit your nomination today for the Lebanon Turf's 2008 Dog Days of Golf calendar. Complete the following information and send in a high-resolution photo of your dog to Golfdom magazine, Attn: Kristen Morabito, 600 Superior Avenue East, Suite 1100, Cleveland, Ohio 44114 or e-mail it to kmorabito@questex.com.

Deadline for entries: August 31, 2007

Free Hat & Bandana for First 25 Entries!

Dog's Name: _____
 Dog's Breed: _____
 Course: _____
 Your Name: _____
 Address: _____
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