

ELECTRONIC BULLETIN BOARD

FOR THE TURF INDUSTRY

TURFBYTE, the first computer accessible bulletin board for the turf industry opened its doors this month for anyone desiring to take part in a new and unique way of communicating. Centrally located in Lawrence, Kansas, it offers the turf manager a way to gain valuable information and insight through the sharing of experiences from across the country for the price of a phone call.

The use of electronic bulletin boards to trade information among persons of similar interests is on the increase nationwide. No longer just for computer experts, telecommunications is now common in all professions and the use of bulletin boards offer a renewed sense of community in a world which has grown too large to easily assimilate. It is reminiscent of the old time "party line" concept which kept the neighborhood together through a bit of harmless eavesdropping. With bulletin boards, everyone is encouraged to listen in and participate in the discussion, though not necessarily at the same time. Being able to join a discussion at one's convenience is the real value of this type of communication and a reason for its rapid growth.

TURFBYTE evolved from an idea presented in the November, 1987 issue of GOLF COURSE MANAGEMENT on telecommunications by Jon Scott, Valhalla Golf Club, and Bill Spence of The Country Club at Brookline, site of the 1988 US Open. That article interested Duane Patton of the Lawrence (KS) Country Club. With the guidance of Dale Gadd, founder of his own computer bulletin board, TURFBYTE was created. At present, Duane is the system operator, or "Sysop" in computer jargon, and runs the service on his office computer at the club. Duane and the others using TURFBYTE welcome all newcomers to the board and encourage anyone with a computer and telephone modem to sign on and become a regular contributor.

"Connecting to TURFBYTE is as easy as dialing a number," says Scott. "All you need is a computer modem and some type of communications software. When a connection is made with the bulletin board, simple, friendly instructions quickly get you signed up and communicating."

A typical visit takes five to ten minutes once one becomes familiar with the system. First visits are slightly longer, but a few extra minutes reading instructions and bulletins pay off in faster visits. Messages from other users are read on command and replied to or commented on at will.

"The real value of the bulletin board concept depends on the user's participation in a discussion," Patton offers. "One subject may have as many comments or suggest-

ions as there are users," he continues. "Messages to specific individuals can be addressed and sent very much like letters, and can be either private, seen by only the receiver, or public, shared by all. Whole text files and public computer programs, called shareware and public domain, can be sent to the board for all to download and use. Industry announcements are posted in the 'Bulletins' section for all to read on sign-on. Messages can be left requesting a return phone call at a specified time eliminating the need to play phone tag."

Patton and Scott feel the uses of the board are varied and many, depending on the expertise and needs of the visitor. "It does not take long to get started," says Scott. "The greatest fear I had was the idea that the phone meter was running, and I'd see a big bill cross my manager's desk. Now I am spending less total time on the phone than before and able to make my call when the rates are lower. That is saving money, and at the same time I am gaining valuable information I might otherwise miss."

TURFBYTE currently supports 300 to 1200 baud modems with parity settings of 8 bits, No parity, 1 stop bit. The phone number is 913-842-0592 and the hours of operation are from 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. Central Time daily. Patton is available during business hours for voice communications by dialing the same number. Jon Scott can be reached at 502-245-1715 for further information on accessing TURFBYTE.

THANK YOU

We would like to thank the following contributors to the hospitality room in Houston:

North Star Turf (R. L. Gould)
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Dakota Turf
Northrup King
Landscape and Turf Supply
Edward Long (Par-Ex Company)
London Fog (Mound Spraying)
Kromer Company