

Believing in his own people

MURRYSVILLE, Pa. — Irrigation expert Tamas (Tom) Tanto thinks that having the right people in the right place at the right time is vital.

"We feel it is very important to take our own employees to out-of-town jobs, and not hire local people there," he explains. "We might have one inexperienced person in an eight-man crew, but he's from our home base and we're training him. Most of our crews have been together for a long time. They work long hours—seven days a week to meet the deadlines—and they do quality work."

Some irrigation organizations send out two or three experienced people, and then hire locally to fill out the crew. But often they find it difficult to get on-site



Tamas "Tom" Tanto (right) confers with David Alexandrowicz, superintendent at St. Clair C.C. in Venetia, Pa.

help of any kind. And they face the problem, right after payday and as a project winds down, that some local help will not show up.

Tanto's company installs irrigation systems for Arnold Palmer, Jack Nick-

laus, Reese Jones, Robert Trent Jones and other top golf course designers. It also re-does irrigation on top-notch, well-known existing courses.

Tanto's 67 employees restrict themselves to an area

extending from Maine to Florida, and from the Atlantic Ocean to Ohio. They work hard to keep on top of 20 to 25 concurrent projects.

Tanto, a 1956 Hungarian refugee who earned a civil engineering degree from the University of Pittsburgh, built complete golf courses until 1974. Then the energy crisis convinced him he should concentrate on irrigation, the least energy-dependent and his favorite phase.

How does he keep up with the fast pace he's set for himself?

"It takes a combination of things," he says. "Good people, good equipment, a commitment to finishing jobs right and on time...it's a matter of putting several pieces of a puzzle together."

Tanto has found it im-
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portant to use reliable trenching and vibratory plowing equipment, which can be maintained by distributors wherever he goes. After trying a bit of everything, he has settled on Ditch Witch: six 30 hp trenchers and one 65 hp trencher, along with five 35 hp lawn plows and various attachments, including two earth saws.

"We expect to get 2,000 feet a day out of each machine and crew," says Tanto. "Usually, we run only one machine at a time on a job. Trenching is normally finished by noon, and the whole day is spent laying pipe."

Tanto also recently acquired a Ditch Witch P40

rod pusher, specifically for a course whose manager would not allow him to saw across roads and cart paths. It's "smaller and lighter than any rod pushers we've used before," he says.

Tanto himself visits all job sites frequently, discussing needs with course officials and making sure their schedules are being met. His "normal" 18-hole irrigation job on a new course takes about 60 days.

What about the future? The demand for new golf courses is increasing almost exponentially, and competent irrigation companies are getting busier. What once was a seasonal activity has become a fast-paced, year-round, high-tech activity for dedicated people like Tanto and his crews.



Paul Thomas (left) and Joe Ardolino were responsible for renovating the baseball field at Towson State University.

Towson's renovation: using all the resources

BALTIMORE — When East Coast Conference officials decided that Towson State's baseball team couldn't play on its home field if it qualified for post-season play, Paul Thomas and Joe Ardolino knew it was time to renovate.

Thomas is grounds supervisor and Ardolino assistant athletic director at this small suburban college. Together they transformed the school's baseball stadium from censure to championship quality, as evidenced by the Beam Clay College Diamond Award won last year.

"The most important

step you can take is also the least expensive step," notes Thomas. "And that is to have a conduit between you and the coaches." Thomas notes that there is no shortage of egos to be found on any coaching staff, which underscores the need to have a strong communicator in close contact with coaches.

"We tried very hard to establish positive dialogue with athletic administrators to get a total picture of their needs instead of working on a game-by-game or as-needed basis," says Thomas.

Finding the money for