2001 and August 2002 was the second driest recorded over the past 107 years by the National Climatic Data Center and NOAA. However, since the early fall, most areas have now received in excess of 35 inches of rainfall and the drought restrictions in most areas have been removed. The period between September and December 2002 had the 99th wettest past 108 years.

Unfortunately, the frequent rains and below-normal temperatures accompanying the cloudy weather with the rain events has caused wet soil conditions and impacted the health of both cool- and warm-season turfgrasses.

Numerous inquiries have been received by the USGA Southeast Region office regarding golf course playing conditions over the past 60 days. Many golfers are perplexed about why their golf courses have turned into swamps, why the putting greens are not as firm, and why the overseeding has failed.

Some golfers are even now questioning the abilities of their golf course superintendents due to their dissatisfaction with the presentation of the golf course.

It isn't a surprise that golfers are upset.

Over the past four years, during the drought, course playability was excellent overall at most golf facilities. Superintendents repeatedly informed us of the positives of the prolonged dry weather including the following:

• The game is more fun to play when it is dry. The ball rolls farther and golfers can play more of a variety of shots.

• Maximized revenues - no tee times lost due to weather.

• Less disease pressure.

• Mowing schedule uninterrupted.

• Maintenance more efficient (i.e. no bunker washouts, debris removal, etc.)

Now with the extended wet weather, superintendents are noting the following negative impacts:

• Lost revenue. Days and weeks of tee times cancelled due to rain.

• Maintenance schedule disrupted.

• Crisis jobs more frequent (debris removal, bunker washout repair, etc.)

• Carts restricted to path more often.

• Ideal conditions for weed seed germination and spread of weed seed.

• Diseases more common. Other pests such as algae, earthworms, and fire ants more problematic.

As we travel around the Southeast Region, every course has been impacted negatively by many of the following: muddy fairways, poor putting results, fairway and putting green disease issues, cart damage to fairways and roughs, and thin turf, and tees with lower density turf.

Fairway overseeding ended up being a complete waste of money in many instances and when successful, it was no panacea for these issues. Golfers should be patient and understand that course conditions aren’t going to improve much until it dries up and the temperatures warm so the turf can recover.

MARK MY WORDS

Beyond Golf

By Mark Jarrell

My apologies in advance to my peers who expect this space to be devoted strictly to golf-course related issues, but I believe most will appreciate some provocative and controversial reflections on our country’s future security since 9/11.

The terrorist attacks on our country have shaken us all and changed us forever. Maybe because I dodged a bullet with personal tragedy - my son had been working at the World Trade Center four months prior, and my closest cousin working at the Pentagon was not on site - I’ve spent more time than most trying to understand the mentality of people who could commit such acts, and those around the world who cheered. That bastard Mohammad Atta had lived among us - had eaten dinner at The Olive Garden two miles from my house, for God’s sake! - and was still filled with such hate for us that he could fly a plane into one of the World Trade Center Towers! Contrast this with my own and most Americans concern and misgivings about the possible death of Iraqis as we go to war with that country.

Reading an article in American Heritage magazine introduced me to an author who not only has the background to offer valid answers and insights about our dangerous world. He is a brilliant, though controversial, strategic thinker who offers sound advice on U.S military, foreign, and domestic policy.

His name is Ralph Peters, and he retired as a lieutenant colonel from the army in 1998. He has served at the Pentagon, the Executive Office of the President, and visited 50 countries from the Middle East to the former Soviet Union to Southeast Asia. He now writes, lectures, and consults. I purchased and highly recommend two of his books - Fighting for the Future - Will America Triumph? and Beyond Terror - Strategy in a Changing World.

The books are mostly collections of essays, some of which in the first book were published before 9/11 (eerily prophetic and provocative!). I’m guessing (and hoping) that President Bush and his top advisors are very familiar with Col. Peters’ work. Any American who wishes to better understand those who would not hesitate to kill us if they had the means, and revolutionary strategies for dealing with the threat they pose, should read these two books. I found I couldn’t put them down, and consider them essential reading for all Americans to make better decisions at the polls, at home, and at the workplace.

You’ll also feel better about being an American, as Col. Peters is adept at analyzing the strengths and marvels of our society, while acknowledging our weaknesses and offering strategies for succeeding against those who would exploit them to destroy us. Things like the American work ethic, the freedom of information dissemination, women in the workplace, the tolerance and socialization of our various religions - things we accept without realizing how unique they are to the planet and how central they are to our power and success as a society. Let me quote a few passages that I hope will whet your appetite enough to motivate a trip down to your favorite book store:

• “While Europe sleepwalks toward a thirty-five hour workweek, we are moving toward the thirty-five-hour day. The intense performance of our economy would be unattainable without the torrent of energy introduced by competitive female job candidates. American women revolutionized the workforce and the workplace. Future social and economic historians will probably judge that the entry of women into our workforce was the factor that broke the stranglehold of American trade unions and the intense performance of our economy would be unattainable without the torrent of energy introduced by competitive female job candidates. American women revolutionized the workforce and the workplace. Future social and economic historians will probably judge that the entry of women into our workforce was the factor that broke the stranglehold of American trade unions and
2002 Photo Contest Results

This is part three of presenting the four category winners of the 2002 photo contest.

First Place - “#1 Tee from the Grille Room” by Tom Biggy, Bent Tree C.C., Sarasota

Second Place - “Bridge Crossing” by Jason DiMartino, Audubon C.C., Naples.

Category 2 - Formal Landscaping: includes annuals and ornamental shrubs and trees planted in formal beds on the course or club entrance.

Second Place - “Bridge Crossing” by Jason DiMartino, Audubon C.C., Naples.

2003 Photo Contest Rules

Category 1 - Wildlife on the course: includes any critter on the course that walks, flies, swims, slithers or crawls.

Category 2 - Formal Landscaping: includes annuals and ornamental shrubs and trees planted in formal beds on the course or club entrance.

Category 3 - Native Areas: includes beds of native plants including trees, shrubs and grasses used in naturalized areas to reduce turf inputs and aquatic vegetation plantings used to create habitat and protect water quality.

Category 4 - Scenic Hole: includes any view of a golf hole (panoramic or close up) that demonstrates the scenic beauty of a golf course.

Easy Rules

1. Color prints or slides. Prefer prints. Only one entry per category. There are too many variables affecting publication quality to permit digital entries at this time.

2. Photo must be taken on an FGCSA member’s course. Photo must be taken by an FGCSA member or a member of his staff.

3. Attach a label on the back of the print or slide which identifies the category, course and photographer. Do not write directly on the back of the print. Each print shall be attached to an 8.5” x 11” sheet of paper using a loop of masking tape on the back of the print. Slides should be in plastic sleeves for easy access for viewing.

4. A caption identifying the category, course and photographer should be typed or printed on the sheet of paper below the mounted print.

5. Judging will be done by a panel of FGCSA members not participating in the contest.

6. Mail entries in a bend-proof package marked PHOTOS DO NOT BEND to Joel Jackson, 6780 Tamarind Circle, Orlando, 32819. Entries postmarked after Aug. 1, 2003 automatically will be entered in the 2004 Photo Contest.
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A is for apple, aspirin and arsenic. An apple is a fruit. Aspirin is salicylic acid. Arsenic is a natural element classified as a “heavy metal” in the Periodic Table of Elements found in every chemistry classroom and textbook in the world.

An apple a day purportedly keeps the doctor away. Too many apples and your digestive tract may either be set free or bound up depending on your constitution and metabolism.

Take two aspirin to reduce a fever, ease joint pain and prevent serious damage from a heart attack. Swallow too much aspirin too often and you can thin your blood too much and also eat a hole in your stomach lining.

Take some arsenic atoms and combine them with some carbon, hydrogen and oxygen atoms and make MSMA. Dilute it with water and kill some weeds in turfgrass. Mix it in a cup of tea and serve it to some guests and you can write a comedy play called, “Arsenic and Old Lace.” Maybe that’s how arsenic came to be known as a poison, and forgotten as a naturally occurring element.

Of course it really depends on how much arsenic was put into the cup of tea, but then let’s not quibble about details. It seems only Poison Control Centers at hospitals understand that “dose makes the poison.” It has been shown time and again that practically any substance or product abused and used in excess can have negative consequences.

It is obvious that arsenic compounds and other pesticides along with many other substances including cleansers, solvents, petroleum products, and even medicines can have negative effects on human beings. It is how these products are used and how people are exposed to them that define the real risk to human health aside from allergic reactions.

The recent studies coming out of South Florida reporting high levels of arsenic in golf course water and soil samples reflect the total arsenic and do not differentiate or explain where the arsenic comes from. Since arsenic is on the label of MSMA, then a direct link is inferred. But one study also inferred that 492 metric tons of arsenic was applied to Florida golf courses by simply multiplying the number of golf course (1400) times the average size (150 acres) by an average application of 11.7 lbs of MSMA per acre per year.

What is troubling is that the basic assumption that we apply MSMA to the total acreage of a golf course is incorrect, and thus puts the calculations way off the mark. We may be contributing arsenic to the environment, but let’s get the numbers right first. We have responded to those miscalculations.

While the arsenic levels in the samples from South Florida are higher than the threshold levels set by state and federal officials. It is not clear from the studies if the arsenic is bio-available to humans or is just a calculated statistic in a laboratory. There is another whole discussion over background arsenic levels exceeding those threshold numbers in non-golf or non-agricultural lands.

The bottom line is that we need to know if our use of a legal, EPA-approved pesticide is potentially causing a problem of human health concern. EPA will weigh in on the issue soon enough as MSMA is currently under review by the agency.

In the meantime do yourself and your golf club a favor and explore your weed-control programs to see if there are any other products you can use to control your weed problems. Consider changing your pre-emergent herbicide strategies to require less post-emergent control. Do like some clubs and initiate a daily weed hunt where each employee mechanistically removes 10 weeds a day. A simple thing like that can add up in savings in the chemical budget and also help the environment.

Even if more data and testing proves the “arsenic and old lace” poison syndrome is incorrect, regulators and politicians may not be able to defend a scientific position, but will have to resort to a political decision to appease the emotional concerns of the public. It happened in the wood-preservative industry. It can happen to the green industry as well.

You can help by calculating how much MSMA you currently use from your pesticide-spraying records and sharing that information with the FGCSA. See your chapter’s external vice president for a copy of a confidential survey on MSMA use and send me your information, so researchers and regulators can get a real world handle on the issue.
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