The more things change...

Editor's note: Steve Renzetti started as a superintendent two months before Golf Course News came into existence.

By STEVEN RENZETTI
• Director of golf operations at Wykagyl Country Club in New Rochelle, N.Y.

It is always interesting to reflect back. Sometimes the more things change, the more they seem to stay the same.

Ten years ago, I was a first-year superintendent preparing for my first full season of having the responsibilities and pressures of prepping a golf course for spring. As I was then, I still am today: reviewing bids from suppliers; wrapping up winter projects; training staff; educating members; and mapping out control strategies for the season. I'm still fighting moss on greens; trying to reduce the effects of poa annua seeding in May; tuning my Hyperody control (oops, I mean annual bluegrass weevil); and trying to get rid of my slice.

Much of the core equipment is the same, perhaps a safety switch here or a tweak there. But all in all, much is the same. As for revolutionary equipment, two things stand out.

The first is the Hydroject aerifier, which has enabled turf managers to get oxygen down into the soil with minimal dis-

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Audubon rough, the Web and GCN

BY GORDON WITTEVEEN
• Golf course superintendent, The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Toronto County Club.

In the business of golf course maintenance, the last decade of the 20th century belongs to Audubon rough, the Internet and Golf Course News. All three have changed the face of golf.

There isn't a new golf course being built without fescue, birdhouses and a Web Site. Similarly, the minute an entrepreneur starts up a new golfing venture he grabs for the latest copy of Golf Course News, an ungainly tabloid published in an no-name place on the East Coast. For Pete's sake, don't they know that for any new magazine to be successful it must come from places like New York, Cleveland or perhaps even Kansas City?

That little newspaper with modest beginnings grew and grew with each succeeding issue, and against all odds survived to celebrate its 10th birthday. Perhaps it'll even make it into the 21st century, in spite of its awkward size. Who wants to read a magazine, anyway, that is difficult to handle, that almost always falls out of your hands, and knocks the glasses off your nose?

I remember certain things in life very well: the day we beat the Russians in hockey right in their own backyard in Moscow...[and] the first time I picked up a copy of Golf Course News.'
Renzetti
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ruption to play.
The second is alternative
spikes. I recall bringing the lit-
erature home from a trade show
and offering anyone a free
change-over just to try them.
Now you can hardly buy a pair of
shoes without them.
Irrigation systems are much
better. More efficient pump sta-
tions and control systems have
dramatically improved water us-
age and playability.
This overlaps with what is the
most significant change in the
industry—computerization. Ten
years ago, I was explaining to
my chairman the need to computerize the department. Today,
ironically, my chairman is an
executive with Sun Microsoft.
My office has two desktop com-
puters, one DTN weather moni-
tor with satellite dish, a laptop
computer, facsimile machine,
copier, Hewlett Packard scanner,
cellular telephone, television/VCR
and a Bose radio.
I know a superintendent who,
just a few years ago, scoffed at
the idea of using a computer.
Now he is a regular on the
Internet, and is spearheading an
association Web page. This new
equipment gives us the ability to
document and professionally
prepare reports and proposals.
I find a greater
need to promote
what superinten-
dents have done
for decades. The
Audubon Inter-
national program
has given cred-
ibility to what is second nature
to us—conservation and pres-
servation.

I interpret the new generation
of regulations to be good and
bad. Some force us to tighten
our belts up a little, while others
just don’t make sense at all.
I hear a lot of talk about how
television golf has put undo pres-
sure on the day-to-day condition-
ing of golf courses. But what I
see is superintendents answer-
ing the call, stepping up to the
plate and performing.
I play courses all over the coun-
try and time after time find my-
self saying at the end of my
round, ‘Boy, is this place in great
shape.’ I think television has put
superintendents in the spotlight,
both in recognition and compen-
sation.
The golfing public has fully
recognized superintendents are
the most influential people at
their facilities in terms of the
total golfing experience. This is
where the Golf Course Superin-
tendents Association of America’s
board and staff has come into play. GCSAA has come
full circle. It is an organization
that works diligently and tire-
lessly in supporting and promot-
ing endeavors we feel are impor-
tant. I trust the management and
direction our national associa-
tion is heading.

Maxwell
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product selection.
However, all of this increased
competition will be of no value if
we don’t create new golfers. The
change that we need to see that
hasn’t happened in the past 10
years is a significant growth in
numbers. The in-
creased supply of courses, ap-
parel and equipment has far ex-
ceeded the demand for these
goods and services. In simple
terms, we’re all fighting for big-
ger pieces of the same pie. As an
industry we need to focus on
increasing the pie.
When golf was merely a game
we didn’t worry about market
share, return on investment and
such. If we’re going to be an
industry, we have to act like one.

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Percent of Weed Control

Percent Control

100
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60
40
20
0
96%
80
60
40
20
0
51%
51%
16%
35%
73%

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