Organic management plan offers best results

To the Editor,

Here at Lahontan Golf Club, we strive to be 100 percent organic through sustainable agriculture, by feeding the soil, not the plant! "Organic golf activists score major victory" GCN April 2002 and "The time for organic golf has arrived" GCN May 2002.

Our results have provided exceptional turf conditions, however, we realize that the definition of organic vs. inorganic can be subjective and is open to discussion. Synthetic vs. organic is easy to understand, but if a golf course over applies "organics" to the course, it could still result in leaching and runoff of phosphorus and nitrogen, requiring additional best management practices and mitigation to avoid contamination of waterways. Therefore, through all of this, management is pivotal to success, even if the course is organic.

I think Neal Lewis hits the point on the head by describing an "Organic Management Plan. "That implies the use of non-synthetic fertilizers coupled with a management plan that understands the agriculture of turf grass wholly and holistically.

Take care,

Martyn Hoffmann
DMG/Highlands Group, LLC
Truckee, Calif.

Moss article covered bases

Editor's note: The following is contributior Kevin Ross' response to Neil Goldberg's letter in last month's issue that raised several questions about Ross' article "Moss hits Colorado hard, more research needed" (GCN April 2002). To the Editor,

I would like to address a few issues from Neil Goldberg's response and offer additional information concerning the Colorado moss symptom. As far as the Ultra Down issue, I stated that Ultra Down gave the most consistent results, which is absolutely correct. The Oregon State study is the only study that had poor results using Ultra Down. However, their technique used Ultra Down as a broadcast application through a boom sprayer and not a drench application. It is widely believed that the broadcast application was the reason for the ineffectiveness. In Frank Dobie's Moss Network (cited in Goldberg's letter), Ultra Down was determined as the most effective control for moss. As far as the discoloration issue, the research shows that only slight discoloring happens with temperatures above 80 degrees. This is consistent with most all products, including Terracyte.

On the subject of research, I did mention Frank Rossi at Cornell University as a site where independently funded research was taking place. Rossi's conclusions to date showed junction ranked first and Terracyte ranked second in his trials to control moss. Neither of these products are a one-time fix for moss and neither provided 100 percent control. Concerning Terracyte, the article did indicate that Terracyte was one of the potential products that looked promising. I also stated, as did Dr. Koski, and Matt Nelson, USGA, at the symposium, that more research is certainly needed. As mentioned above, Terracyte has only been studied in university research by Dr. Rossi, with quantifiable results.

The climatic conditions in Colorado are certainly much different than that of Ithaca, N.Y. It appears there will be more research conducted at Colorado State University, led by Dr. Koski, starting this season. Research will be sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Golf Course Superintendents Association.

The purpose of the article was to call attention to a problem that requires additional research and a solution. I interviewed many superintendents at the symposium, and most all stated they went home more confused than when the arrived. This should tell everyone something concerning moss.

In my opinion we have not found a cure-all for moss, no matter what product it is, and no matter who makes it. Best regards,

Kevin J. Ross, CGCS
The Country Club of the Rockies
Edwards, Colo.

Uihlein: Golf ball not to blame

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Woods stands 6 feet 2 inches tall, weighs 180 pounds and can bench press in excess of 270 pounds. Today's chiseled professional athlete who tours in the U.S. PGA Tour is using longer, lighter drivers with oversize clubheads featuring faces that tramponline at impact. The golf ball does not act alone, conspiracy theories notwithstanding.

NEWER COURSES WOULD BE A BETTER TEST

The U.S. PGA Tour plays 44 events per year. Since 1986 the USGA Men's Open has been played at 20 different courses. If it is the professional game that we are concerned about and this involves, at best, only 65 to 70 courses annually, why is there a debate that 16,000 golf courses are at risk due to the advances in the golf equipment technology?

In 1980 there were 6,000 golf courses in the United States. Today, there are more than 16,000. Over the past 42 years, more than 10,000 golf courses have been constructed or opened. Since these new courses have been built anticipating the evolution of technology, why have only two (Bellerive in 1964 and Hazeltine in 1970) been selected to host a USGA Men's Open? Doesn't it seem logical that a modern course would be the best test of the modern player and the modern power game?

Former USGA technical director Frank Thomas stated that we should not worry about major distance changes in the future because the laws of physics will continue to prevail. Why is his research and viewpoint (www.franklygolf.com) being ignored? Each and every equipment rule in place has resulted from a working group and take relationship between the game's rules (the USGA and the R&A) and those who are ruled (the golf equipment manufacturers). We have ideas about the distances, but most of the equipment-related changes are driven by manufacturers. Unfortunately, with political white papers and a blatant media bias, the innocent golf ball has already been found guilty of crimes against the game. This situation makes any attempt at discussing where we go from here ineffective.

Walter Uihlein is the president and chief executive officer of the Acushnet Co.

A line in the sand

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safety reasons then construction, grow-in and maintenance costs increase up to 17 percent. How many developers will be discouraged from including a golf course in their future projects if acreage requirements continue to escalate?

Wally Uihlein's comment recently that the golf industry is flat and "mired in the same recession as the rest of the U.S." is true, but the primary problem is cost. It is a simple equation. The farther players can hit the ball, the more length and width we need for safe and enjoyable golf courses. Is this additional acreage means more development costs and greater maintenance budgets. These additional expenses are most likely going to be passed on to the golfer in the form of higher greens fees.

Let's hope we can roll back the clock on the course. We just want to keep it affordable so golfers of all ages can enjoy it. Making golf more expensive, time consuming, and more intimidating is not the way to grow participation rates.

Damian Pascuzzi is the president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects and is a partner in Graves & Pascuzzi, Ltd., a golf course design and development firm in El Dorado Hills, Calif.

We want to hear from you

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ANDREW OVERBECK, EDITOR
GOLF COURSE NEWS
106 Lafayette Street
PO BOX 997
YARMOUTH, ME 04096
FAX #: 207-846-0602
AOVERBECK@GOLFCOURSENWS.COM
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requiring extensive and expensive renovations to retrofit existing facilities. New courses will need to accommodate these advancements by being lengthened, and that will certainly increase expenses. Making the game easier doesn’t necessarily equate to more people playing, either. Keeping golf affordable is more of an enticement.

Another important aspect that will be affected is the heritage of the game. Innocently enough, Bobby Jones spoke no truer words when he said of Jack Nicklaus, ‘You play a game with which I’m unfamiliar.’ How much did that have to do with technological advances? I just hate to see tradition and history take a back seat to technology when we’re dealing with any of our favorite pastimes.’

— G. Steven Hupe, general manager and director of golf operations, Marriott Golf, Stone Mountain Golf Club, Stone Mountain, Ga.

• There is no doubt improvements in club and ball technology will result in longer courses, and longer courses will require more land and cost more. It may be that the game should be played on two levels, a super-championship course circuit where courses are 9,000 yards and players can use whatever technology has to offer; the other level being the championship circuit as played today, where club and ball technology is controlled. Think of it as the NASCAR approach.”

— Garrett Gill, president, Gill Miller Inc., Golf Course Architects, River Falls, Wis.