Speed = Excitement

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up under that absurdly low mowing height, and the market for Tifdwarf was born. The same thing happened with bentgrass, only with lesser gradients; that is until we took a quantum leap with L-93 and the A and G series in recent years. Recognizing the emerging importance of these two issues, we here at Golf Course News are announcing this month our Renovation of the Year Award (see ad on page 25), the first of which will be given in February 2004. GCN will solicit proposals from recently remodeled golf courses and have them judged by a panel of industry experts. The award will be given to the golf course and its supervising firm. Special recognition will also be given to the course architect, builder and participating vendors, with an emphasis on environmental enhancements.

As for your new publisher, my name is Jim Povec and my first job in life was caddying and cutting greens at Sleepy Hollow Country Club in Brecksville, Ohio. Since those early days, I've spent most of my career managing magazines, trade shows or Web sites with companies such as Forbes magazine, IDG, Softbank and Ziff/Davis.

My passion and my vocation finally meet here at Golf Course News. I am committed to a healthier golf course industry, giving way to more ideas like the Renovation of the Year Award. I am committed to faster play, which is an editorial focus of this issue. I am also committed to introducing more new players to the game, especially young players.

And finally, I am committed to prove that more investment in our golf courses means more revenues and more growth for the game. Please contact me at 207-846-0600, ext. 272, or e-mail me at jpovec@golfcoursenews.com.

That doesn't mean always, and never should. There will always be reasons to mow grass higher and accept slower green speeds when environmental conditions warrant. Further, if you don't have the new grasses and equipment at your course, mowing close to produce fast greens will be detrimental to your mental health. But don't blame Augusta, Bethpage or Muirfield Village for showing just how much skill it takes to get a ball on the hole on glass surfaces. Admit it; you like to see these guys challenged with fast greens. And, if you are really honest with yourself, you'll say you enjoy the excitement of putting when the ball takes one more half turn before it stops and falls in the hole. Speed doesn't have to kill if you have the right grass.

Jon Scott is the vice president of agronomy for the PGA Tour.

PRODUCE TRANSGENIC POLLEN

To the editor: In a recent article ("Debate over Roundup Ready bent rages on" GCN, March 2003), Dr. Bob Harriman from Scotts Co. was quoted as saying, "Gene escape in male-sterile varieties is still possible because you still have fertility, gene flow and sexuality in the hybrid system. It doesn't make it an ounce safer." Dr. Harriman does not understand that the male-sterile Penn A-4 plants containing the transgene for herbicide resistance cannot contaminate the environment because they have no pollen. The only truth in Bob Harriman's statement is that the seed we market will have some normal plants with normal pollen, which is no different from the Penn A-4 we market today. What needs to be clarified is that our transgenic plants will never produce fertile transgenic pollen. There lies the difference in our production practices. The Scotts/Monsanto production can and will pollinate, spreading transgenic glyphosate resistant pollen.

All the standard bentgrass production practices noted in the article are adequate for seed containment and have proven satisfactory for normal certified seed production. The new problem that is now presented is pollen containment. There are approximately 6,000 pollen grains produced for each seed. With a pollen grain contributing half the DNA to a seed, and in this case carrying the Roundup gene, pollen containment is essential to prevent gene trespass to other Agrostis species. A study by Pure Seed Testing showed that transgenic pollen was received by Agrostis plants 3,000 feet away in the first year. The 11,000-acre control area does little good when pollen grains live one to three hours and the wind blows five miles per hour. Even with dedicated equipment, pollen tresspass will contaminate the irrigation district and then move on to other areas in successive generations.

Sincerely,

Bill Rose, president
Hybrigene, TurfSeed and Tee-2-Green

COOK DISPUTES ACTIVIST’S SCIENTIFIC CLAIMS

Editor’s note: In response to several readers who questioned Jay Feldman's science in his Point "Golf contaminates environment" (GCN, March 2003), Golf Course News turned to Dr. Tom Cook, associate professor of horticulture at Oregon State University, for a response.

Correction

Due to a reporting error, GCN incorrectly stated that Hybrigene was working on developing male sterile glyphosate tolerant bentgrass ("Debate over Roundup Ready bent rages on" GCN, March 2003). Hybrigene is working with male sterile glufosinate tolerant plants.

By raising mowing heights, steeply pitched and boldly contoured greens will be allowed to continue to do what they were designed to do: direct the strategy of a well-designed hole, reward well-struck approach shots and demand creativity and skill from golfers attempting to recover from their surpluses. And, moreover, in this age of environmental stewardship, a higher cut on the greens will yield a stronger grass plant, better able to ward off disease and drought without assistance from expensive artificial inputs.

Let's do what's best for golf. Being environmentally responsive and environmentally conscious in regard to putting speeds is not only smart — such an approach also yields many fringe benefits. The most interesting greens on older courses can be saved. And, even more exciting from my view, golf architects will be provided future opportunities to create new greens with distinct character.

Mike DeVries is the principal of the golf course architecture firm DeVries Designs Inc. He is based in Traverse City, Mich.

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State University to put golf course pesticide use in the proper perspective. It is difficult to respond to this kind of sweeping condemnation of golf course pesticide use. By combining a hodgepodge of misconceptions (i.e. no apparent context, the author has created a scary image of impending doom. All in all can do is ask some questions.

1. How can anyone fairly evaluate the relative intensity of pesticide use without factual information?

The amount of pesticide applied per treated acre is an argument that has been used for many years. This argument exaggerates and skewers the actual use of pesticides in my opinion. For example, if a 150-acre planting of corn received a pre plant herbicide application at one pound of ai per acre, what would the statistics show? They show a total of three pounds of ai per acre. If I want to defend golf courses as areas that have poor general health habits including poor diet, smoking, alcohol consumption, sleep deprivation, etc. Add to that the emotional strain of trying to produce perfect playing conditions under all manner of weather-related stresses and it is probably surprising that superintendents don't have even more health problems. At many if not most golf courses, the superintendent isn't directly involved in pesticide application and has probably no more exposure to pesticides than the general golfing public. I feel it is a giant leap to equate superintendent health issues with pesticide use.

2. What conclusions can you draw from the GCSAA survey regarding health of golf course superintendents?

Are we to assume that the apparent increase in cancer is due to exposure to pesticides? Perhaps it is the natural consequence of people working in high-stress jobs who have poor general health habits including poor diet, smoking, alcohol consumption, sleep deprivation, etc. Add to that the emotional strain of trying to produce perfect playing conditions under all manner of weather-related stresses and it is probably surprising that superintendents don't have even more health problems. At many if not most golf courses, the superintendent isn't directly involved in pesticide application and has probably no more exposure to pesticides than the general golfing public. I feel it is a giant leap to equate superintendent health issues with pesticide use.