

September 2005

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COURSE NEWS

Serving the Business of Golf Course Management

INSIDE

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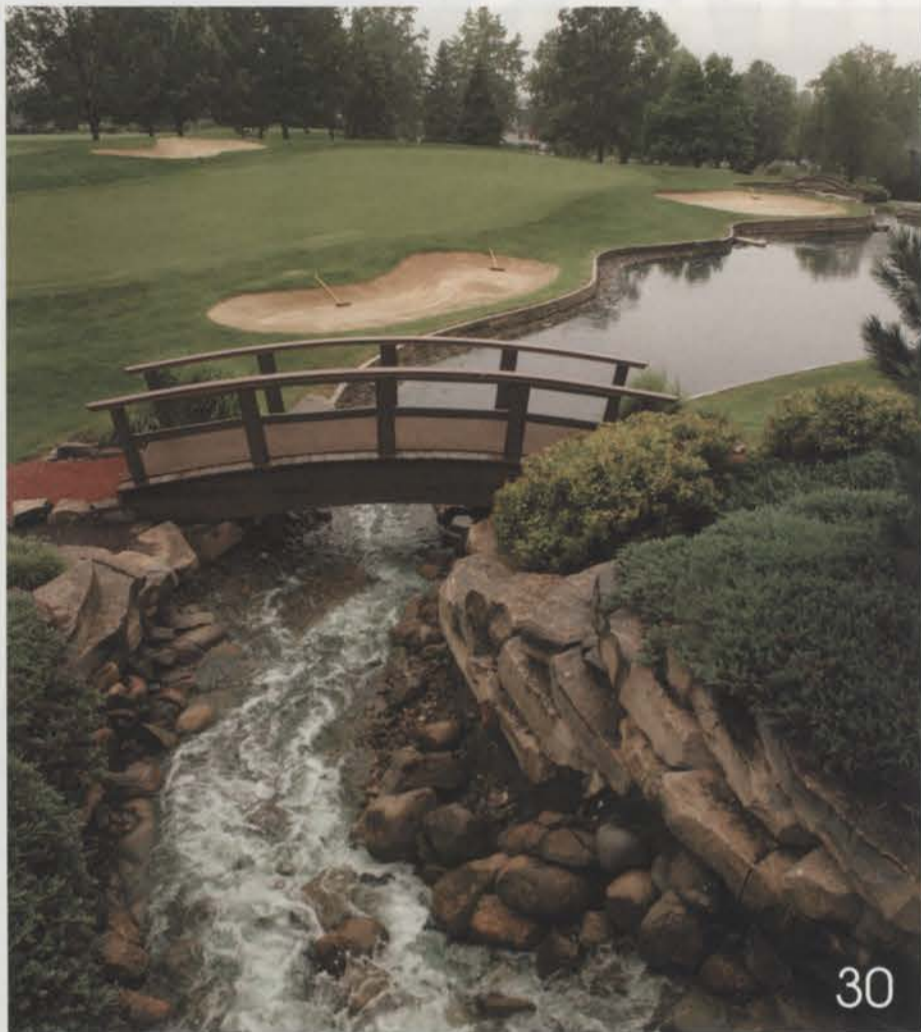
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Cover photo by EPIC Creative Communications

EDITORIAL MISSION STATEMENT:

Golf Course News reports on and analyzes the business of maintaining golf courses, as well as the broader business of golf course management. This includes three main areas: agronomy, business management and career development as it relates to golf course superintendents and those managers responsible for maintaining a golf course as an important asset. *Golf Course News* shows superintendents what's possible, helps them understand why it's important and tells them how to take the next step.

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SPLendor IN THE GRASS

Turfgrass research being conducted at The Ohio State University was on display at the 2005 OTF Turfgrass Research Field Day in Columbus.

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John Walsh
Editor

Other directions

At times, people fall into ruts at their jobs, negatively affecting them, their staffs and their businesses. With many jobs, people do the same thing over and over, time and time again, and the passion for the job fizzles out. This situation highlights the importance of people willing to learn new aspects of their jobs as well as letting their bosses know when they aren't being challenged enough and feel like they're falling into a rut.

In this industry, many people talk about something very similar: burn-out. It can sneak up on superintendents before they reach 50 or even younger. Jim McLoughlin, one of GCN's columnists, wrote about sabbatical leaves in the July issue (page 24). Sabbaticals are a good avenue superintendents can take to refresh themselves and develop a new outlook on their jobs when they feel they're burned-out.

Another option for superintendents is taking a different job within the golf industry. This option isn't for everyone and is controversial for some. While interviewing several people for an upcoming story about career development, I found examples of superintendents who moved on to other jobs within the golf industry. Those jobs include: a sales representative for a chemical company, director of golf for a club, general manager of a club, executive director of an association, a golf course owner and an area manager for a golf course management company.

Some of these jobs are closer to the golf course than others, and some are more desirable than others, but one thing is common among all of them: They affect and are linked to golf course superintendents. I wonder how many times superintendents have dealt with someone in any one of those positions and complained because that person didn't quite understand superintendents or what they go through. Wouldn't it be better for the industry if there were more superintendents in those types of positions? People in those positions could say, "Yes, I've been there and know what it's like." They might make decisions that would be more beneficial to superintendents because they once were superintendents.

Another aspect that would affect a decision to make a move like that is the tight job market. Superintendents have said it's

not as easy to get another superintendent job as it was five years ago. Those who are unhappy with their jobs and who are looking but have found nothing, might consider these other avenues.

This isn't to encourage all superintendents to leave the profession, just those who already are thinking about exploring other opportunities. For those who are good communicators and people persons, these job options might give them the opportunity to grow even more, professionally.

Some superintendents who have left the profession and have taken other jobs within golf have come back as superintendents, and the experience has made them better. Clearly, one doesn't have to leave the profession to be a better superintendent, but for those who are bored or need a different challenge – and where going to another course wouldn't fulfill that challenge – this is something that can be valuable.

Superintendents should challenge themselves in various ways and work on characteristics that need improvement. Asking the boss for additional responsibilities and becoming well rounded might or might not lead to another job within golf. Leaving the superintendent profession might be risky and carry a stigma, but it's been done before and will continue to be done.

With more and more turfgrass graduates entering the golf course maintenance field, combined with a slowdown of new golf course openings, the job market will remain tight. Additionally, even though the GCSAA isn't encouraging superintendents to leave their jobs, it's promoting the theme "the success of the facility." Combine those two aspects, along with a restless superintendent and a desire for progression, and the industry might experience more superintendents adding to their resumes by taking the chance to do something else in golf. This bodes well for the superintendent profession because other areas of golf will see where these successful people came from and might consider it a valuable job pool.

It's time every superintendent thinks about the future of his career and how the decision he makes could impact generations to follow. GCN

John Walsh

We would like to hear from you. Please post any comments you have about this column on our message board, which is at www.golfcoursenews.com/messageboard.



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Effective instruction

I really appreciated Jim McLoughlin's article "Golf's driving engine," in *Golf Course News'* May issue (page 24). I'm having the Nike Golf Learning Center directors of instruction read the article so we can discuss it during our next conference call. Our mission is to create golfers through our player development programs, and his article will be a great tool for us to develop new best practices, continue our growth and each golf professional's development.

While reading the article, I found myself wondering how McLoughlin would define what an effective golf professional is. I was hoping he might take a couple of minutes to answer this question. I look forward to sharing his reply with my team of golf professionals that are dedicated to helping people develop a passion for the game and have fun doing it.

Paul Devine, PGA Member
National director
Nike Golf Learning Centers
Norco, Calif.

McLoughlin's response follows:

I would define effective golf instructors as those who:

1. Communicate clearly and succinctly, using fewer words than more words, i.e., they don't overteach.
2. Have a thorough understanding of swing mechanics.
3. Develop a personal teaching philosophy that's a composite of generally established teaching philosophies.
4. Can paint an effective visual image (of swing and ball flight, etc.) through words.
5. Bond with their students by accepting responsibility for player development.
6. Know when to rebuild a student's swing from scratch and when not to.
7. Are willing and able to teach the better and higher handicap players effectively.
8. Have an energy and detectable passion for teaching and the game, which is contagious and transfers to the student.

In the end, the only real measure of an effective teacher is getting results from the players.

More recognition

Thank you for addressing the need for the golf industry to devote more efforts to actively promote the essential contributions of golf course superintendents

("More recognition," page 8 in the May issue). We at BASF couldn't agree more. Because most superintendents are driven by pride in their accomplishments rather than a desire for public accolades, it's little surprise their work often goes unrecognized.

BASF is one of many golf-industry manufacturers that has taken steps to showcase superintendents' dedication and hard work. In a broad-based initiative that salutes superintendents as the most important pro on the course, BASF has forged a partnership with the GCSAA, funds superintendents' education at regional and national levels, invites superintendents to compete in the People vs. The Pros Pro-Am golf championship, sponsors the top-two superintendents playing in the People vs. The Pros tournament to play head to head in a superintendent-only playoff championship televised on ESPN, and highlights superintendents' achievements on ESPN.

We appreciate the attention you're giving to supporting superintendents and invite additional efforts from throughout the industry.

Toni Bucci, Ph.D.
Business manager
BASF Professional Turf &
Ornamentals
Research Triangle Park, N.C.

Regarding John Walsh's most recent column regarding lack of superintendent recognition ("More recognition," page 8 in the May issue), I agree for the most part. However, the Golf Channel, throughout the last several years, has brought Mark Michaud from Shinnecock Hills and Dave Ward from Olympia Fields up to their interview tower. I also recall Jimmy Roberts interviewing Paul Jett during the '99 Open.

But more needs to be done. Jim Nantz made a vow at the 2004 San Diego GC-SAA Show that he would mention superintendents during CBS golf telecasts. Yet I watched most of the Memorial this year and didn't hear any recognition of the superintendent or crew.

The Golf Channel also did a feature on Jon Jennings and the course he works at, the Chicago Golf Club.

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Superintendents weigh in on various issues

Lawrence, Kan. – Superintendents offered their opinions about how to increase golfer participation via the 2005 Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Leadership Survey. The computer-based survey queried more than 860 golf course superintendents about trends in golf and golf course management.



Not raking bunkers was ranked by superintendents as the third biggest breach of golfer etiquette.

Photo: John Wosah

“The responses reveal the breadth and complexity of management issues these professionals face on a daily basis,” says GCSAA president Timothy T. O’Neill, CGCS. “Golf courses are financial, recreational and environmental assets to communities, and golf course superintendents enhance the value of the facility in all three areas.”

Thirty percent of superintendents polled have implemented alternative golf course set-ups and/or events to attract new or nontraditional golfers and have achieved a 70-percent success rate. The most popular include night golf, a short course, par-3 events and alternative routing.

Tim Willard, CGCS at Frankfort (Ky.) Country Club, agrees with the thought of shorter courses and more par-3s. He says people are spread too thin and are pushed for time to dedicate three to five hours on a golf course.

Willard, who has been at Frankfort since 1980, has seen quite a change in the membership during the last two decades. He says there was a time when the members were generally older men who would come to the club in suits, play a round of golf, have dinner and spend a lot of time. Now, it’s more likely the members are younger with families and try to get in a round of golf between soccer practice and everything else going on with children.

As golf ball/club technology continues to evolve, some courses have been renovated or remodeled to compensate for the changes in distance and accuracy. Twenty-one percent of superintendents polled recently have undertaken – or intend to – a course renovation or remodeling solely to compensate for changes in golf ball/club technology. Feedback from industry professionals indicates the renovations were occurring at old courses that had never undergone such work or had not done so in a while.

Michael Powers, CGCS at Highland Golf and Country Club in Indianapolis, Ind., doesn’t need to add length at the 90-year old course to combat equipment advancements.

“I can keep the scores about where I want them,” he says.

Powers says his course is landlocked. However, he’s able to control scores with green speeds, pin placements and height of cut in the rough.

Superintendents also were asked if they have added or subtracted wildlife habitat at their facility in the past five years. Fifty-two percent have added wildlife habitat, with 14 percent of those adding six or more acres and 38 percent adding less than six acres. Of the 14 percent that have added six or more acres, 40 percent have added more than 10 acres. Of the 38 percent that have added less than six acres, 71 percent have added two to six acres.

Sixty-four percent of superintendents, including Powers, identified the failure to repair ball marks on putting greens as the most common breach of golfer etiquette. Not replacing divots also was a concern of superintendents – 36 percent cited it as the second most common breach of etiquette. Not raking bunkers was third at 28 percent. However, Powers ranks cart traffic ahead of raking bunkers.

As for golfer feedback on course conditions, 26 percent polled say the most common complaint from players is unrepaired ball marks. Like golfers who complain about damaged turf caused by carts driving in areas they’re not supposed to be, the irony isn’t lost on Powers.

“Most complain about things they can take care of themselves,” he says.

Superintendents were asked about the effect the hurricane season had on their courses. Four percent say their course was directly hit by a hurricane, while 32 percent said their course was somehow affected by hurricane-related weather. Of those who indicated they were directly hit by a hurricane, respondents estimated an average of almost \$900,000 in damages plus loss of revenue – the highest clipping \$9.8 million.

Preventive approach advised by research institute

San Diego – Larry Stowell, Ph.D. and Wendy Gelernter, Ph.D., research directors of the PACE Turfgrass Research Institute, advise a preventive approach and caution against aggressive management practices that depend on rapid recovery of turf during the summer months. They say to manage carefully and in small doses until the autumnal equinox Sept. 22. Although hot days occur in the fall, turf damage is less because the

nights are longer, cooler and allow more time for turf to recover.

“The problem with rapid recovery from turf damage during the summer months is related to the growth of new leaves and roots at high temperatures,” Stowell says. “When the soil or canopy temperature exceeds the tolerance of the plant to grow new roots or leaves, any damage will remain until the air or soil temperature drops below that critical threshold. The



Researchers caution against aggressive practices to combat turf damage.

Photo: PACE

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exact temperature at which the plant growth is stopped or very slow is debatable and will depend on the conditions at each location and the turfgrass species and variety.”

Stowell and Gelernter suggest superintendents review and follow these preventive methods for avoiding summer stress on greens:

- Schedule monthly aeration using ¼-inch-diameter hollow cores or solid tines. This helps prevent surface sealing and black layer. The small holes aren't that disruptive to play, but allow oxygen into the root zone and enhance water movement.
- Always check soil salt levels and leach to remove excess salts prior to aeration.
- Because stressed or dying turf takes longer to recover when aerated during summer months, aeration should be used as a preventive strategy, not as a remedial tool used after damage has occurred.
- Raising mowing heights by 1/32 of

an inch can give turf a big boost in its ability to tolerate stresses from pests, heat and traffic.

- To keep green speeds fast, consider rolling as often as four times a week.
- Applications of Primo (trinexepacetyl) every 14 to 28 days at low-labeled rates will tighten the turf canopy and help maintain green speeds.
- Begin preventive cooling programs when turf canopy temperatures reach 100 F for *Poa*, 105 F for bentgrass or 125 F for Bermudagrass. The best way to measure turf canopy temperatures is with a digital thermometer and a bead thermocouple.
- Monitor at the hottest time of day. If you don't have a bead thermocouple, a quick test of turf canopy temperatures is to place the palm of your hand on the turf surface. If the surface feels warm, the canopy temperature is probably above 98 F and close to or within the cool-season turf danger zone of 100 F to 105 F.
- Change pin placements and avoid

traffic in areas that show stress.

- Route traffic onto the green at multiple locations.
- Rope off areas before they exhibit excessive wear.
- Keep the traffic moving by updating traffic flow and pin placements regularly to prevent excessive wear.

For a superintendent faced with damage before a high-profile tournament, Stowell says the number of variables makes it difficult to pinpoint one solution after the preventive management program is too late to implement.

“If the damage takes place within four weeks of the tournament, the damage will have to be carefully evaluated before a decision is made,” he says. “If there is no chance of recovery, re-sodding small areas is an option. All other practices will depend on the variety of the grass, general health of the system, soil conditions and predicted weather leading up to the tournament.”



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Scientists discuss water soil repellency at conference

Paulsboro, N.J. – American researchers of soil water repellency presented their research at the European Geosciences Union General Assembly in Vienna, Austria, as part of a session about soil water repellency.

Solicited oral papers about amelioration strategies for soil water repellency in turfgrass and agronomic systems were presented by John Cisar, Ph.D., University of Florida; Mike Fidanza, Ph.D., Pennsylvania State University; Stan Kostka, Ph.D., Aquatrols (New Jersey); Bernd Leinauer, Ph.D., New Mexico State University; and Birl Lowery, Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison. The presentations allowed U.S. turf and soils research related to soil water repellency to be introduced to scientists and individuals from other countries also working on soil water repellency.

The session "Soil Water Repellency: origins, environmental controls and hydrological impacts" was one of the largest sessions of the EGU General Assembly. About 8,000 people attended.

Cisar says it was nice to document the fact that when surfactants are used they help distribute water into the soil more uniformly and increase the amount of water in the soil. Studies show that if there is an improved water reservoir in the plant, there is less of a need for irrigation. When applying surfactants, there are a lot of factors to consider with different turfgrasses and climates, so Cisar recommends superintendents follow the manufacturers' labels.

Fidanza says a soil water repellency conference is planned in 2008 in Florida that would bring together experts from throughout the world.

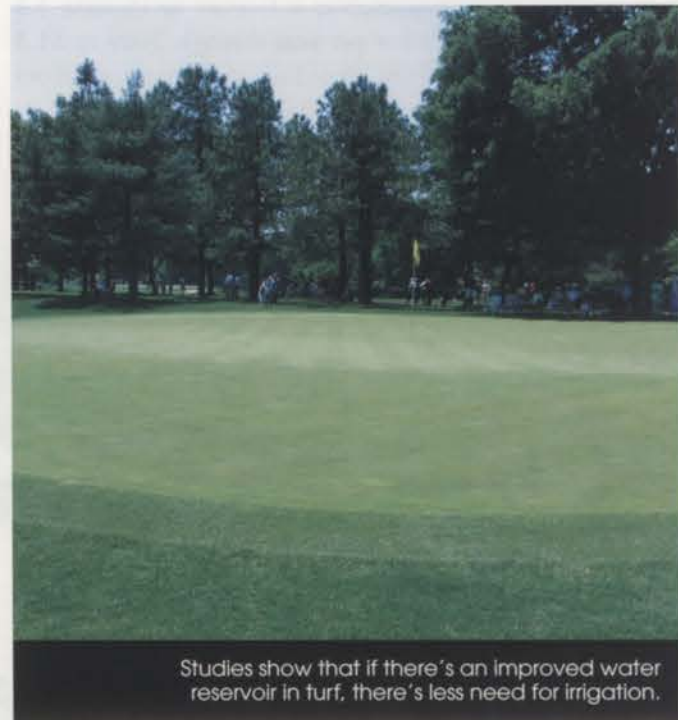


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Studies show that if there's an improved water reservoir in turf, there's less need for irrigation.

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Golf course consumables demand to increase through 2009

Cleveland – Demand for golf course consumables is forecast to increase 3.4 percent per year through 2009 to \$1.3 billion, according to a new study from The Freedonia Group, an industrial market research firm. The golf course industry has undergone several years of weak performance in terms of rounds played,

greens revenue generated and new course development. This performance translates into modest growth for golf course consumables through lower maintenance budgets, according to the report, which is based on a five-year forecast and is the first golf course consumable study the firm has conducted. The firm's analysts

interviewed 20 superintendents, product managers, and presidents and sales representatives of supply companies.

David Weiss, an analyst for the Freedonia Group, pegs the golf course consumables market at \$1.1 billion dollars and says many factors support the modest growth.

Pressures on the golf course industry, such as demographic changes, water supply and environmental regulations, will alter regional demand patterns and the properties of the products required by golf courses.

Demand growth for consumables will be supported by increases of the number of rounds played and expansion of real estate related to golf course construction. These factors will be driven by population expansion in the South and West.

However, demand for consumables will be constrained by environmental regulations and changes in water supplies.

Supply of new active pesticide ingredients will be limited because most golf and turf pesticides are reformulated versions of products developed for the much larger agricultural market, according to Weiss. The success of glyphosate-resistant crops has limited the potential market for new agricultural herbicides, reducing the interest among chemical companies for developing new herbicides. While new formulations will continue to be released, many new active ingredients or technologies aren't expected to emerge in the near future. Pesticides that are less persistent and have lower mobility will be favored to reduce storm water runoff and groundwater contamination.

Also, more specific insecticides, used at lower application rates, will be favored.

Turfgrasses that have increased resistance to salinity will see growing demand. The best opportunities for fertilizers are for products with organic sources of nitrogen and for liquid foliar feeding products, according to the report. Growth regulators also will perform well as they help reduce mowing and the associated labor costs.

Weiss says there's a shift to high-end liquid and natural-based fertilizers on greens because the liquid form is less affected by greens mowers.

Regionally, as the population shifts, demand for golf course consumables will move from to the South and West. Because of differing climates, these shifts will have varying effects on demand for golf



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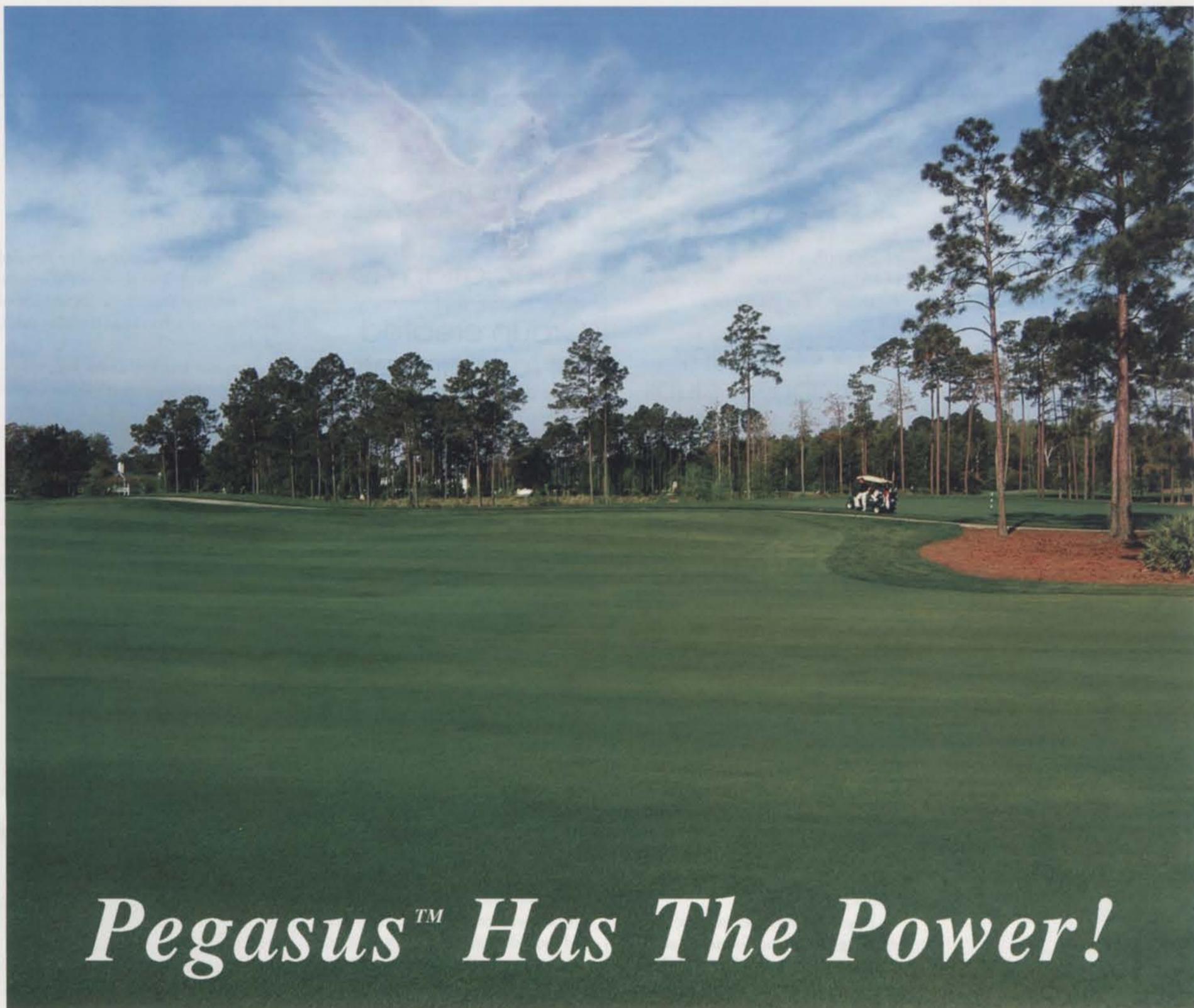
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NAME	MA1	NAME	MEAN	NAME	TX2	VA1	NAME	AZ1	MN1
LS - 44	8.0	LS - 44	97.6	LS - 44	5.8	5.0	LS - 44	7.0	6.7
Penncross	7.0	Penncross	96.7	Penn A - 1	5.9	4.2	Penn A - 1	6.6	6.1
Benchmark DSR	6.0	Penn A-1	96.1	Benchmark DSR	5.5	4.1	Benchmark DSR	6.3	6.3
Penn A-1	4.7	Benchmark DSR	95.6	Penncross	4.4	4.5	Penncross	6.9	5.3
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course consumables. The less humid climate in the growing regions requires fewer fungicides per course. However, the longer playing season will increase fertilizer usage per acre. Also, Florida and the remainder of the Southeast are more intensive users of herbicides, insecticides and lime than the remainder of the country.

New company to manage clubs

Dallas – Former ClubCorp president Jim Hinckley formed Century Golf Partners, a golf investment company created to acquire and manage country clubs and daily-fee golf courses throughout the United States. Hinckley also helped create a golf investment partnership between Century Golf and Walton Street Capital, a private real estate investment company based in Chicago.

Century Golf and Walton Street Capital acquired two portfolios consisting of 34 golf courses throughout Texas and the Northeast. The facilities in the portfolio have generated more than \$100 million in total annual revenues. GE Commercial Finance Real Estate provided the financing for the golf course acquisitions.

Century Golf also acquired the exclusive worldwide rights to the Arnold Palmer Golf Management brand and will operate its courses under the Arnold Palmer name.

The principals of Century are Hinckley, Greg Adair, and former ClubCorp executives Ken Story and Larry Galloway. Century manages its 34 owned courses and eight additional courses on behalf of third-party owners.

Growers examine new seed varieties

Canby, Ore. – Pure-Seed Testing's Grower Day provided an opportunity for growers to learn about and view test plots for new seed varieties available in the fall.

"So many of the new varieties we bring to market are bred for very specific attributes," says Bill Rose, president of Turf-Seed. "Not only are they new to our company, but they're new to the industry, so a firsthand look at these varieties and the research that supports the breed is important to our growers."

Growers can review current research including seed yield trials that represent how

much seed production can be expected from each variety. Turf quality trials also are featured that depict how successful a variety is under normal turf conditions.

Association news

Group created for tournaments

Phoenix – The Golf Tournament Association of America, the official association for the golf tournament, outing and event industry, was created to improve the success of the outings of all organizations that produce golf tournaments. Organizations include corporations, associations, meeting planners, charities, civic groups, schools, churches and ministries.

Membership in the GTAA costs nothing for event coordinators and includes services that will assist them in producing an event. Benefits include: education – a monthly newsletter will be offered via e-mail to all members; training – weekly seminars nationwide will be offered to all members; information and updates – monthly golf tournament tips will be sent via e-mail each month; planning guide – a step-by-step manual to assist with organizing and planning events; resource directory – a list of products and services needed for a golf tournament event; Web site – an Internet portal to help all members with ideas, information and tools that will help them with their event; golf course locator and negotiations – a service to assist with golf course bookings and negotiations; and consulting – a network of consultants will be available to assist.

There are more than 1 million amateur golf outings in the country each year, and the average event has 80 players and raises \$5,000, according to the GTAA.

Course news

Liberty National to open next year

Jersey City, N.J. – The development of Liberty National Golf Club is scheduled to be completed July 4, 2006. The club was conceptualized with the goal of attracting major events such as the U.S. Open, PGA Championship and Ryder Cup to New York for the first time.

The exclusive course represents a \$129-million investment by Wil-



lowbend Development in partnership with The Applied Cos. Liberty National sits on the western shore of New York Bay in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty and the Manhattan skyline.

Tom Kite and Bob Cupp designed the 18-hole championship course (7,400 yards, par 70).

Liberty National also will offer its members extensive golf practice and instruction facilities, including a 320-yard double-ended grass tee range, putting and chipping greens and an indoor/outdoor video teaching studio.

The 50,000-square-foot clubhouse will include a grille restaurant with a martini/wine bar, locker facilities, private lounges and massage rooms.

The course also will feature sub air technology to keep greens heated year round, and invitation-only memberships for individuals and corporations.

Compass Pointe opens new course

Pasadena, Md. – The East Course at Compass Pointe is open for play. The course is the final nine holes at the 800-acre Compass Pointe, completing the 36-hole facility that opened in 2003 with the North and West Courses.

The par-36 East Course features a links-style design with elevation changes, undulating greens, grass bunkering and collection areas, as well as wiry fescue rough. Measuring 3,470 yards from the back tees and 2,334 from the front, five sets of tees ensure the course is playable and challenging for all golfers.

The course will be paired with the North Course, creating a 7,157-yard track with a rolling terrain and an open feel.

Golf course architect Lindsay Ervin designed all four nines.

The courses feature bentgrass from tee to green, a practice putting surface and a driving range with both grass and mat stations.

Renovations done at Falmouth club

Falmouth, Mass. – Falmouth Country Club made significant capital enhance-

ments to the golf course, pro shop and clubhouse.

Managed by Billy Casper Golf, the facility is a public, daily-fee golf course owned by the Town of Falmouth. The 47-year-old club consists of a 6,665-yard, 18-hole course, and a recently added, regulation-length, nine-hole layout. The course's signature, 516-yard par-5, 10th hole is home to one of the area's largest Osprey nests.

Work on course conditions focused mainly on contouring fairways and maintaining putting surfaces. Bunker edges were freshly cut, too.

The club also introduced the "Cape Cod Card," a rewards program whereby points are earned toward reduced rates. Free for Falmouth residents and \$10 for Cape Cod residents, the card allows players to accumulate points for redemption. Cardholders also are eligible for other discount programs throughout the fall.

The pro shop carries a full line of brand name golf apparel and equipment. New carpet, fresh paint, televisions and seating have all been added. A new 240-square-foot tent accommodates events of 20 to 200 people.

Smyers rebuilds Club de Bonmont

Ormond Beach, Fla. – The Club de Bonmont Plantation Bay golf course will reopen in November after reconstruction. The greens complexes are being rebuilt, fairways recontoured, angles changed, bunkers removed and the course lengthened.

"Only the playing corridors will remain the same," says architect Steve Smyers, who was hired by Plantation Bay owner ICI Homes to revitalize the 18-hole course.

The facility also consists of the 18-hole, 6-year-old Prestwick Golf Course and the nine-hole Westlake track, which opened in March.

Smyers also is designing a golf course for the new Bridgewater golf community in Lakeland and is working with Nick Faldo to create the golf course for Bella Collina, a community under construction in Montverde.

More young professionals are blending with older members at Plantation Bay, and club officials want the course to

change in accordance.

Additionally, Plantation Bay will build a new 15,000-square-foot main clubhouse, new fitness center and maintenance complex next year. The entire project is expected to cost \$12 million – about \$5.5 million of that is for the golf course.

Golf course builder MacCurrach Golf began construction in April by closing the front nine, then the back nine two weeks later. Part of the reconstruction is a \$1.2-million remote-controlled irrigation system with a pumping station, and the greens will be built to USGA specifications. GCN



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Defining your market



Jack Brennan founded Paladin Golf Marketing in Plant City, Fla., to assist golf course owners and managers with successful marketing. He can be reached at Jackbrennan@tampabay.rr.com.

Defining the true market from which your golf course can draw demand can be challenging. Sometimes you need to spend money on infrastructure to make sure your facility can accommodate certain targeted groups, as well as spend money on advertising and promotions to attract golfers to your course. It's critically important to your success that you identify your real market potential before you spend millions of dollars on your course. It doesn't matter if it's a \$4-million course or a \$12-million course, if your market isn't clearly defined, you're in for surprises. Here's a real-life case study.

I recently consulted clients who built a golf course in the Bible Belt. They originally had a golf resort in mind but wanted to build the course first and then sell lots around it for residential development. They desired the revenue from lot sales and a membership base from the families that built homes. The owners sold the lots, but the majority of people that bought them didn't plan on building homes there for several years, therefore, the owners had a smaller membership base than expected. They ended up building just the golf course but not a clubhouse, pro shop, villas or meeting rooms like they originally intended because they needed the support of the local market first. That didn't materialize.

A simple demand analysis, using the population or participation method, would have revealed the local golf market (a 20-mile radius) wouldn't support the golf operations. If this had been known, the next step would have been to expand the drive market and conduct another demand analysis. When I expanded the analysis to the 20- to 30-mile radius, I found significantly more demand for quality courses in the \$45- to-\$75 range. If my clients had to do it all over again, they would have recognized this 20-plus mile area was the primary advertising market for the golf course and allocated the necessary marketing budget to drive rounds from this market.

The recently opened course is generating fewer than 20,000 rounds a year in a market with six other courses generating an average of 30,500 rounds per course. Part of the reason why the course generates fewer rounds than the other courses in the area is because the owners priced the course too high for the local market and didn't advertise to its regional and feeder markets. The green fees are \$40 during the week and

\$45 during the weekend. In comparison, the average fee among the local courses is \$26. The owners based the fees on how much better their course is compared with other local courses, which isn't disputed by local golfers — they just don't want to pay that much for a round of golf. If this \$10-million course was built in a metropolitan market, it would be a \$65- to \$80-a-round course, but this rural market hasn't been supporting it.

So, when I first consulted my clients about marketing their course, I asked if they had considered selling it and cutting their losses. I knew they would be lucky to get only \$4 or \$5 million dollars for it. The other option they had was to finish building the resort they originally planned and start to drawing from its regional and feeder markets, which are to the south in summer and north in winter. Then the course could piggyback off the popularity of a nearby lake, which draws more than 500,000 tourists per year, many of who are affluent.

Once we had completed a viability study and a marketing assessment report about the feasibility of a resort course in this market, my clients opted for the second choice. What they lacked was a clear vision of what market they served, what infrastructure they needed to serve the identified markets, and an idea of when they would reasonably stop putting millions of dollars into the project.

Defining new markets

We started by reviewing the regional market (20- to 30-mile radius). About 10 miles further from the edge of the course's local market, there are two towns that have seven resort golf courses and more affluent golfers than the local market of my clients' course. The resort golf courses are generating an average of more than 36,000 rounds annually. Some of these golfers are frustrated by the crowded courses they're playing and are willing to drive the extra miles to play a quality course that's less crowded.

So, our new marketing goal became to market further out than the local community because of the additional affluent golfers. These golfers are paying \$50 to \$80 green fees, so the green fees of my clients'

course are attractive to them.

The first goal to define the market was determining the course won't stabilize as is and needs other dimensions to draw golfers from regional and feeder markets so the owners could charge higher-than-average rates.

Expanding the market

If your local market isn't supporting your course, you have to be proactive and redefine your market potential. Now the plan with my clients is to continue building the resort infrastructure and promote it in feeder markets to attract golfers. In turn, rounds and revenue should stabilize at about 30,000 in about five years, based on market research and calculated demand participation, which includes an educated estimate of how much we can influence the local demand at an exclusive residents rate.

With a defined vision of what the course's true target markets are and a timeline for when those markets can be attracted to the facility (i.e. when amenities are finished and ready for use), then you can create submarketing plans to capture and monitor each segment of desired business.

The bottom line is that you need to calculate at what rate and how many rounds the course needs to sustain itself. You need to start with the local

YOU NEED TO CALCULATE AT WHAT RATE AND HOW MANY ROUNDS THE COURSE NEEDS TO SUSTAIN ITSELF.

market, where your targets are senior play, junior play, leagues, outings, memberships, etc. After you've define and targeted the local market, then move on to the targets of regional and feeder markets, define the business segments that you appeal to (day travelers, overnight travelers, corporate meetings, conferences, etc.) and build your submarketing plans to attract them.

In this case study, you can see that marketing is a changing strategy. The basics remain the same, but for this facility, the feeder markets are being defined later than they should have been. We began by conducting research about the locales of visitors to the nearby lake, marinas and lodging. Our new feeder markets began to materialize. What we found is the opportunity to succeed is around every corner. That's vision, marketing, and defining or redefining your true market(s). GCN

Worth the expense?

One of the oldest questions in golf is whether to get a pro involved with a golf course design or redesign. From the early days of Scotland, pros such as Old Tom Morris became involved in design as a side job to supplement their incomes. They were the golf experts, as the professions of greenkeeping and golf course design had not yet been established as much as club and ball making.

But now that golf course architecture is a separate profession and PGA Tour pros regularly show up for a half million dollars, perhaps it's time to revisit the question from a modern perspective.

Because I'm not a Tour pro and my green jacket came straight from the department store, I'm biased against pros involved with design – at least in most cases, knowing that playing golf full time doesn't allow anyone to study golf course architecture full time. I'm even more biased against the credit they receive for their services, which really amount to marketing in most cases. But it's a case-by-case decision that I've based on my experience designing courses – on my own and in conjunction with well-known Tour pros.

The question for owners is: Can I generate X dollars of free advertising out if this additional design fee? The Wall Street Journal published an article detailing which courses sold the most real estate at the highest prices. The list contained a mix of golf design firms, with some headed by Tour pros and other well known names in the industry. This mix alone suggests a Tour pro doesn't sell real estate well unless he is a household name. While the article noted which architect's courses had the highest real-estate values, there was no attempt to prove a causal link between the names and the real-estate values. In other words, did the real estate sell at a higher price because of the golf course architect; or did it sell at a higher price after the developer selected expensive, well-located properties, decided on an upper-end development, and then spent proportionally more on the golf course and other amenities that go with that type of development? In any case, at that point it becomes easy to justify the additional expense of a signature

architect because it's a small piece of the financial picture.

For most projects, the signature designer payoff might not be worth it. The presence of the signature designer hasn't prevented slow sales or bankruptcy at ill-conceived, poorly located and overbudgeted developments. And, for any medium-level development, the signature becomes an additional expense that might push the resulting housing out of the market.

For the golf component, in 2000, the National Golf Foundation and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America surveyed golfers about why they played the courses they did. The biggest factors were maintenance and proximity. Only 2 percent even knew or cared who the golf course architect was. That statistic casts doubt about whether a signature architect even attracts players the first time, as so often assumed, and also suggests the extra signature fee might be better spent buying better land, landscaping a course well or adding to the irrigation, drainage and/or maintenance equipment budgets to

produce the maintenance that attracts golfers long term.

It also mirrors my experience in which I've heard playing partners ask why the back tees were called

the "Bear" or "General" tees. On a course with the "Shark" tees, one golfer wondered what the tie to the movie "Jaws" was for a course so far from the ocean.

Maybe the real reason not to care about a signature designer is that long term, only a few die-hard architecture fans (and I wish there were more of you) remember who designed the course. Sometimes, they don't even remember short term, particularly with renovations.

However, forgetting who designed a course also happens in new course work, as I recently experienced. After a press day golf event in which I was introduced, gave a speech and had my name mentioned several times, a participant on the other side of the buffet line nudged his friend, looked at me and said, "There's 'Dat Effen' golf course architect." Given all the times my name was mentioned, how could he think "Dat Effen" character actually designed the place?

But I started to think about it, and almost every time I've played golf, at least one golfer has credited the design to "Dat Effen" or the "A. Hole" golf course architect. How often have I heard the comment, "I'd like to meet 'Dat Effen' or the 'A. Hole' golf course architect who designed this green." Yet I know they are involved in all aspects of the business because on occasion I've heard people make reference to "Dat Effen" golf course superintendent and the "A. Hole" golf pro almost as often as I've heard references to them as golf course architects.

I guess if I wanted a signature-designed course, I would consider using "Mr. Hole" or "Mr. Effen" because their names seemingly are everywhere, even though I checked industry databases and can't seem to locate either, anyone who knows them, or even a Web page about them or their companies.

If you can't get "Dat Effen" or the "A. Hole" golf course architect, I recommend you hire a golf course architect with proper credentials, generally with experience with your type of project and in your area. You also should get one you like personally because you'll be working with him for a year, or in the case of a long-term renovation, several years.

Perhaps the biggest criterion is to retain a golf course architect who has the time to devote to your project. Assuming you're considering only those with respected credentials, there's no formula to good architecture except to spend a lot of time on your project, which should be the most important project in the world to you and your golf course architect.

And should you, Mr. Green Chairman, decide to try to design yourself, steel yourself for the inevitable criticism that comes with being a golf course architect. Because your fellow members will be nice to your face, you won't get the scathing critiques we do as professionals, but expect faint praise with double entendre phrases such as: "You'll be lucky to enjoy this course" (it would depend on something besides design); "Best of its kind" (the bad kind); "Never seen anything like it" (and hope not to again); "Now, that's some kind of golf hole/course" (what kind?); "I had a hard time believing what I saw" and "It redefines the meaning of a place to golf."

Have fun designing. GCN



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**FOR MOST PROJECTS,
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Golf's n-f-p format



Jim McLoughlin is the founder of TMG Golf (www.TMGgolfcounsel.com), a golf course development and consulting firm, and is a former executive director of the GCSAA. He can be reached at golfguide@adelphia.net or 760-804-7339. His previous columns can be found on www.golf-coursenews.com.

There are more than 40,000 not-for-profit associations throughout America, which includes almost every meaningful golf organization – national and regional. The problem is that golf's n-f-p associations perform inconsistently in today's economically tight, more challenging golf world because the traditional n-f-p format – with its historic inefficiencies and lack of accountability and commitments to excellence – unwittingly ties the hands of our nation's golf associations.

Whenever there's a lack of a commitment to excellence, three situations customarily result: mediocrity becomes an acceptable operating norm; new program development slows; and timely performance becomes a lost art. Examples of these shortcomings follow.

1. Fiscal profile. Without a profit motive, annual expenses are allowed to approach but not exceed revenues. Some might think this is an example of sound management. Not really, because to avoid the issue, n-f-p associations avoid the issue by generating new dues revenues instead of managing expenses better.

2. Staff profile. Because labor costs are the biggest expense for any sizable business, inefficient labor management practices within an n-f-p can get out of hand and result in an oversized staff.

An example of accelerated staff growth is when the GCSAA staff totaled 19 in 1982 doing about 70 percent of the work load (manually without computer/Internet support) of the current staff, outside consultants advised that staff size could be expected to approach 40 through the 1990s. However, by the early 1990s, GCSAA staff size already had grown to more than 100 and is about 120 people presently. This pattern prevails throughout many n-f-p associations. (Estimated current association profiles: GCSAA: 21,000 members with 120 staff, PGA: 27,000 members with 150 staff, CMAA: 6,500 members with 37 staff.)

The more important observation is that n-f-p staffs generally become the power base within their associations. The reason for this is primarily because boards of directors are transient by definition, and association staffs are essentially permanent in nature. This isn't meant to be critical of staff motives because there's no other way for associations to go when boards persistently turn over and many presidents serve

one-year ceremonial terms. The problem that arises, however, is that association staffs develop their own agendas naturally, which can and do differ from "what serves the membership best" agendas. A bureaucratic culture results with staff self-interests often driving association policy.

So should staff leaders be held accountable for not disassembling current overriding n-f-p staff cultures? No more than we blamed Colin Powell when he assumed the leadership of the bureaucratic driven State Department and left eight years later with the same staff bureaucracy in tact – electing not to battle with career staff to effect change. There are better ways.

3. Key issue profile. Amid otherwise noteworthy programming, the following are examples of where lax association thinking is proving to be inherently costly:

- Within the GCSAA, when a change stifling mandatory two-thirds vote of annual meeting attending members is required to amend the bylaws – a situation that seriously impedes the GCSAA's ability to modernize and assume a leadership role throughout a changing golf industry;

- Within the PGA, when the lack of emphasis put on quality teaching results in as many players leaving the game as join each year – a situation that seriously undermines current player development programming, which similarly fails to focus on the priority need to foster a new generation of more and better qualified golf instructors; and

- Within CMAA, when the ill-defined title of general manager is so easily applied and so widely misused throughout golf – a situation that erodes respect for CMAA and the club management profession.

4. Missing programs. There's no need to separate the three golf associations when noting the lack of key program development because they each have the same common failings. First, the career planning needs of their separate memberships aren't being addressed, which positions each association member and family at a serious disadvantage when migrating through career and life's challenges. And second, each association has done little to educate employers (i.e., green, golf and house committees) to the nature of each profession's job culture and mission statement, which continues to minimize job security, leave compensation money on the table, and slow professional growth and recognition.

Recommendations

With all of these unaddressed inherent problems, we're blessed that some n-f-p associations fair better than others. For example, the U.S. Golf Association is a membership of clubs/courses and not professional people. It is free to bring the proven expertise of private sector business people to its board. Consequently, the USGA is a fiscally sound, highly accountable organization that commits to the pursuit of excellence and is respected for this. Accordingly, I recommend that the GCSAA (with the PGA and CMAA to similarly follow suit) consider the following:

1.) Borrowing from the USGA model, expand the GCSAA board of directors from nine to 11 to include five private sector voting members to generally address the following discipline areas: finance, education, association management, program development and communications/promotion. Officerships would remain the sole province of GCSAA members.

In addition to the obvious advantage of bringing needed expertise to the board to assertively address the collective program shortcomings mentioned above, this board reconfiguration also would reposition the power base within the association to where it belongs, i.e., at board level. I believe the GCSAA staff would welcome this change because of the program and people growth that would follow.

2.) To dislodge static staff culture, require key department heads to commit to obtaining certified association executive status to research/publish relative to the profession as the academic community demands of its professorial community. This would enhance staff qualifications and create upward mobility whereby staff members would graduate to more responsible GCSAA or industry jobs after serving the association well.

3.) Relocate the GCSAA headquarters because it's very difficult to ensure consistent high level of constructive staff turnover in Lawrence, Kan.

Every business organization must adjust to changing times, and so must golf's n-f-p associations. Their horizons will be unlimited in service to their members and the game of golf once they acknowledge the need to bring private-sector expertise on board and to mobilize staff flow. GCN

We would like to hear from you. Please post any comments you have about this column on our message board, which is at www.golfcoursenews.com/messageboard.



Work-force success

For many of you, the season is winding down, and next season is a long way off. Or is it?

The answer is “yes” and “no.” It’s “yes” because you need time to slow down, spend additional time with family and friends, and pursue a hobby. The answer is “yes” because the heavy lifting for next season is months away.

The answer also is “no” because some things can’t wait. At the Golf Industry Show, I heard superintendents say: “I had lots of great ideas for next year but no longer remember them.” Now is the time to collect those ideas. Implementing them can wait, but they must be recorded now. The second “no” relates to professional development.

When it comes to ideas, quantity is more important than quality. Collect ideas about all aspects of your business. Focus on improving the quality, performance and job satisfaction of your 2006 work force.

No doubt you have numerous ideas about your work force – recruitment, selection, training, performance, motivation, supervision, feedback, discipline – as you’ve observed and interacted with it during the season. Write them down – no idea is too crazy at this point. Analysis comes later.

Conduct exit interviews. As seasonal employees leave, discuss with them their experience with you and your course. Exit interviews are a proven source of great input. Those leaving are much more open and uninhibited in what they say. Focus on two questions: “What was good about working here?” and “what could have been better?” (This creates less defensiveness and more ideas compared with asking what was disliked.)

General questions, such as “what did you like best and least about your position,” also are valuable. These questions can be supplemented with more specific ones, such as those in the table on the right.

Visit with your employees. They might be filled with ideas and observations they’ll forget. Write down the ideas. The questions “what did you like most about how this season?” and “what could have been better?” should open the door to a productive discussion.

Visit with other stakeholders. Anyone who’s had frequent contact with your course and work force is a potential source

of ideas – suppliers, golf pro and staff, green committee members, club members, etc. They have a different perspective and can bring ideas from other courses and businesses. Again, the questions “what did you see that worked really well?” and “what could have been better?” should initiate a productive discussion. To elicit more information related to the work force, you could ask something like: “How would you compare the productivity and job satisfaction of the employees here with those you observe on other courses or businesses?”

Most of us make our professional-improvement decisions based on whether to attend conferences, workshops, meetings, etc. As demands continue to take up our time and training dollars become increasingly scarce, we must be more proactive and directed. Every golf course superintendent, manager and employee should have a professional-improvement plan developed to focus on the greatest growth and development opportunities for each.

The beginning point for the professional improvement plan is an assessment of your strengths and areas for improvement leading to a delineation of the greatest opportunities for personal growth and development. The assessment should be completed for five areas: knowledge, experience, skills, behaviors and attitudes.

As you develop your plan, keep in mind the greatest opportunities resulting from your self-assessment. Following are ideas to

stimulate thinking about opportunities:

Knowledge. Adult education is an amazing growth industry undergoing revolutionary change. GCSAA seminars are key, but consider GCSAA webcasts, other online opportunities and local educational offerings. Don’t limit yourself. Topics about leadership, management, supervision and customer orientation are available. These opportunities allow you to make your continuing education a process and not just a small number of events.

Experience. Be creative. Consider partnering with another superintendent or manager as a mentor, join a professional or community (nongolf) organization, and work with an executive coach.

Skills. Seek the training you need to learn skills that provide your greatest opportunity.

Behaviors. Behaviors that enhance your leadership, supervisory and coaching effectiveness can be understood and learned better.

Attitude. You lead by example with your attitude. If your attitude needs adjusting, make needed changes in your work or personal life. Maybe this is the time to work on career or retirement planning. Most people who consider other careers learn they love what they do.

Prepare for 2006 by collecting ideas to consider and plan to maximize your investment in your professional development. Enjoy your fall. GCN



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Questions to generate ideas for a better 2006

QUESTION (FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS)	IMPROVEMENT DESIRED
Were the seasonal employees the best we could recruit and select?	Improve recruitment and selection to attract a more highly qualified work force
Was the job clearly described during recruitment and selection?	Improve recruitment and selection to attract a more highly qualified work force and reduce job misunderstandings
Were the initial orientation, training provided, and continuing coaching exactly what you needed to succeed in the position?	Increase job skills and job performance
Were you engaged in the success of the golf course, or was this just a summer job?	Increase engagement in the success of the course/business and correspondingly job performance
Did you receive sufficient positive feedback? Did you receive sufficient corrective feedback in ways that enabled you to improve your performance?	Enhance performance and job satisfaction
Describe your job satisfaction from this job compared with other jobs you’ve held?	Increase work-force motivation and job satisfaction

BY THE NUMBERS

599

The length in yards of the first hole at Shaker Run Golf Club in Lebanon, Ohio, where the 2005 U.S. Amateur Public Links Championship was played in July

3.5

The height of cut in inches of the bluegrass/fescue primary rough at NCR Country Club's South Course in Kettering, Ohio, where the U.S. Senior Open was played in July

\$240 million

The average cost for a chemical company to bring a new product to market, according to Nick Hamon, Ph.D., director of development and technical services for Bayer Environmental Science

0.5

The height of cut in inches of the fairways at Shaker Run Golf Club

3/8 The height of cut in inches of the bentgrass/*Poa annua* fairways at NCR Country Club's South Course

3.5

The percentage increase of rounds played nationally at premium public courses (fees \$70 or more) in June compared with June of last year, according to NGF

618

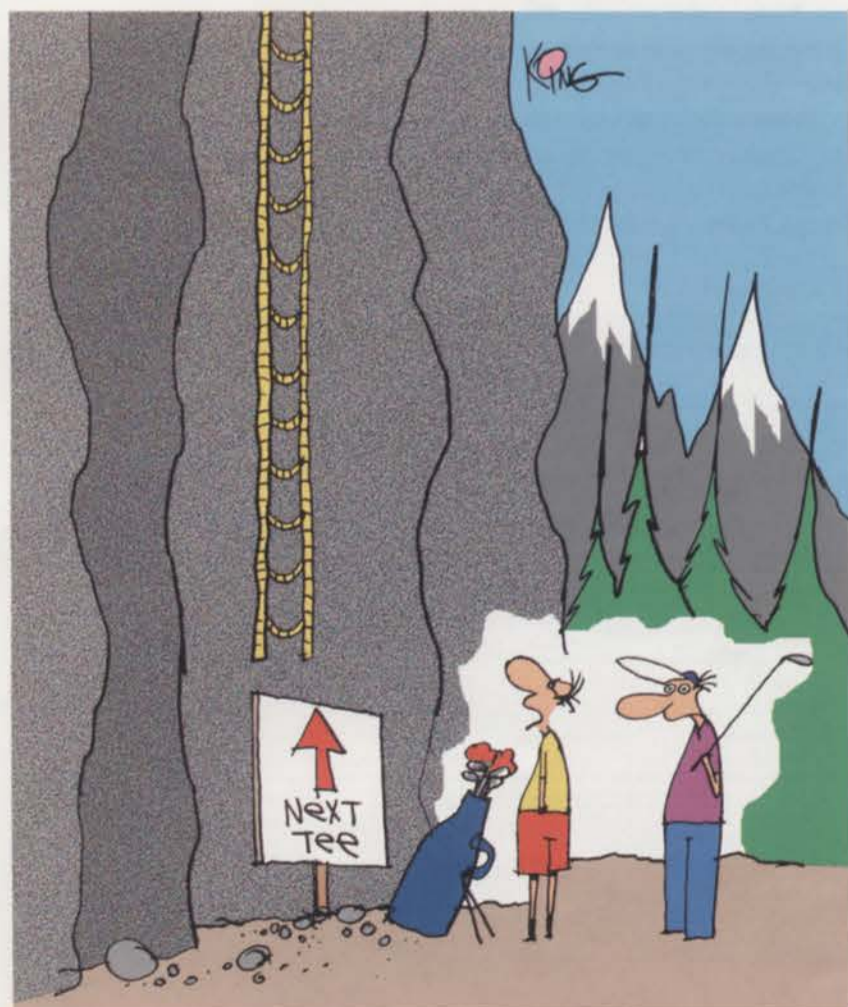
The number of rounds generated July 8 at the Indian Boundary Golf Course in Chicago

0.2

The percentage increase of rounds played nationally in June compared with June of last year, according to NGF

50 The number of golf courses in various stages of development in California, according to the National Golf Foundation

Source: Jerry King



"That settles it. From now on I choose the course!"

QUOTABLES

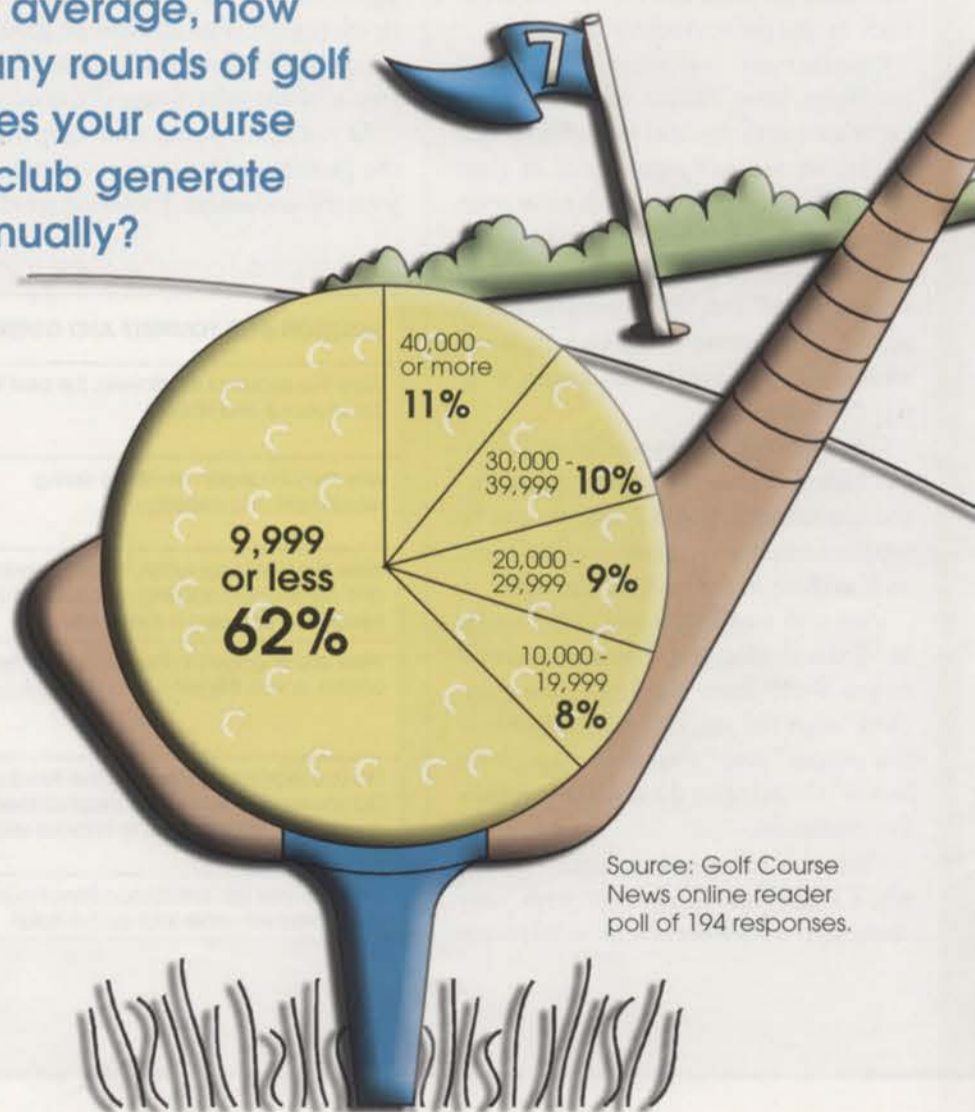
"Become a people person or find another job." — **Joel McKnight**, CGCS, City of Lancaster, Texas, park operations manager, about superintendents managing their staffs

"Superintendents at daily-fee courses don't have the room for error that superintendents at private clubs do but deserve better." — **Keith Ihms**, CGCS, at the Country Club of Little Rock (Ark.)

"Some assistant superintendents jump too quickly to take a superintendent job, and some of them end up saying it was the worst job they ever had." — **Rich Liddle**, assistant superintendent at North Ranch Country Club in Westlake Village, Calif.

"When I first saw the property, I almost cried. There was no redeeming feature, and it was flat with a 1-percent slope." — **Vicki Martz**, senior golf course architect, Arnold Palmer Golf Course Design, about the site selected for The Classic at NorthStar in Palm Desert, Calif., which will host the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic next year

On average, how many rounds of golf does your course or club generate annually?



Source: Golf Course News online reader poll of 194 responses.

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Down on the farm

HOW RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY AT FARMLINKS ARE EVOLVING

by
JOHN
WALSH

GOLF COURSE NEWS
INTERVIEWS JEFF HIGGINS,
PH.D., EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT FOR
PURSELL TECHNOLOGIES.

Q Describe FarmLinks.
FarmLinks is an idea by David Pursell (c.e.o. of Pursell Technologies, which operates FarmLinks) that he conceived several years ago. He had an idea to build a golf course used for research. Eventually, our whole marketing program became bringing customers here and offering education and actually doing research on a real golf course. The problem with most traditional research is it has been done on small plots without traffic. We thought it would be cool to become like superintendents – to know their pain and understand them because we operate a golf course. That was the whole idea behind FarmLinks and where it got started.

Q When was the course built?
Construction started in 2001, and the course opened in June of 2003. The timing of having bentgrass greens versus Bermudagrass greens affected the opening.

Q What attracted you to FarmLinks?
I started out in the industry with Monsanto. I traveled all over the world and did that for a while but got tired of traveling. The company was getting ready to sell Dimension and did. So for a couple of years, I consulted the Rohm and Haas Co., which bought Dimension. Then when I went to academia as an extension turf specialist at Auburn University. That was more out of a passion for turf because when I got out of school, there weren't many academic positions available.

A while back, I was playing in a golf tournament with David Pursell. I've known the Pursell family for years. He asked me how things were at Auburn and if I was going to retire from there. I told him probably not, and he said he needed a director of marketing. So I said OK. It was that easy. I always had a lot of respect for David. It was a good opportunity in which I could

bring some value to the company with my background of product development and testing. I also liked the business aspect of it, so it was a pretty good fit.

Q How long have you been at FarmLinks?

I've been here six years. When I came on board, it was a concept of David's. He asked me what we had to do to grow our business. Coming from academia as a turf expert, I didn't know what Polyon was. I thought it was a polymer-coated, sulfur-coated urea. So I said the first thing you have to do is educate the customer about what Polyon is and how to use it. I said the second thing you have to do, because it's perceived to be expensive, is educate the user about the value of having a fertilizer in which you can make one application that will last all year. That's not traditional thinking for fertilizer use in this industry. Those were our hurdles.

From that, David's idea was to bring customers here because it's much easier to educate a small group in front of them than it would be with traditional means. It's hard to educate in one advertisement, so we decided to bring small groups down here and conduct research. Now it's expanded – there are other partners, such as Toro and Syngenta. And there's much more interest from other companies because they're saying this strategy makes a lot of sense because it's really just relationship building. It's growing into something even bigger.

David's goal is to turn this place into the Epcot Center of golf or turf management so superintendents can come here and see technologies that are novel, new or ahead of their time.

If you look at what influences superintendents' purchasing decisions, the No. 1 influence is trying the product themselves. They get their hands dirty with it. They look at it, touch it, feel it and test it. No. 2 is going to be their peers. Somebody they know and respect. Somebody who has credibility in their eyes, and who has tested it, tried it

and liked it. They value that opinion. From there, it comes down to academics – researchers testing it, third-party testing or sales reps – things that influence them. Seeing it with their own eyes is believing.

Q Do you plan to stay here for a while?

Yes. Hopefully, we'll stay in business.

Q Elaborate about what you did at Auburn.

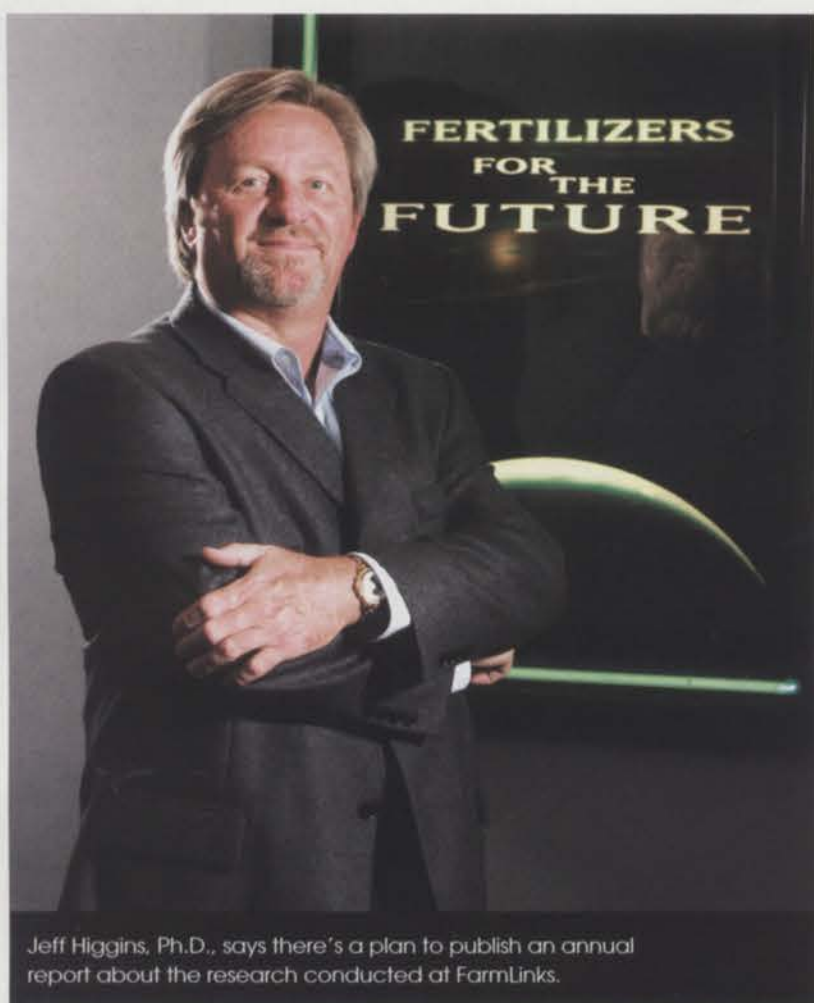
I had an extension research teaching appointment, so I taught a graduate-level advanced turf management class for turf and horticulture students. I also conducted research to define the program about practical applied research for turf management. I conducted any kind of research that applied to turf management. Another part of my job was to disseminate that information to the superintendents in Alabama – drafting extension pieces and giving presentations at chapter meetings to communicate to them what the research findings were to help them do their jobs better.

Q What does your job entail now?

My job has evolved. When I came here, it was director of marketing, which was primarily traditional marketing – product pricing, positioning and distribution. Our marketing program evolved into what we initially called the PTI Tour, which was bringing customers here and conducting the training and education and entertaining. So I moved into a role as director of PTI Tours, managing and running the tour. I helped start the tour, which we now call the Experience at FarmLinks, from scratch. I got it up and running and developed the training materials. I was driving the bus, picking up customers at the airport, taking them to play golf, taking them to dinner, cooking breakfast for them the next morning. I did everything, but eventually I got burned out. I was getting to the point where



Photo: Tim Phillips



I needed some pressure off me. Currently, I still conduct the training, but my job has evolved a little further.

Then, Gary Hargrove, Ph.D., who's our chief research-and-development scientist, and I started to look at polymer-coated pesticides to see if they work. We started playing around with polymer-coated pesticides, and it looked like we had something that would work. So we identified acephate as the first one because it is water soluble and unstable at high pH levels. We formulated that one, commercialized it and sold it. Then there became an interest in the company to expound on this Precise business and develop a business around Precise. Then my role became executive director of business development.

Q What's the relationship like between you and Mark Langner, the director of agronomy and applied research?

Mark oversees the golf course. Mark and I work closely putting out research trials and ideas. I'll ask Mark what he thinks about this or that. Most traditional superintendents would be frustrated in Mark's role because he always has a Ph.D. turf guy looking over his shoulder in addition to 1,000 superintendents criticizing what he's doing. He's under the gun. It's a unique position. But I

tease him all the time and tell him he doesn't know how lucky he is because if he screws up anything he can always say it's research.

Q Explain how the research blends with the operation of the course.

When we first started planning FarmLinks, Mike Hurdzan, Ph.D., and I wanted three or four holes to be one grass type and the next three or four holes another type so you'd have a demonstration of different turf types – cool-season and warm-season turf. We even wanted to do a bentgrass hole. But David Pursell was opposed to that because he was concerned about playability. We finally agreed to do all the greens with the same grass. We then looked at different grasses for fairways and tees.

We have different grasses we demonstrate different fertility and pesticide programs on. Down the road, we'll probably be adding more research areas such as a warm-season green with seashore paspalum or some of the new seeded zoysiagrasses or maybe even different bentgrass cultivars. Even though we conduct some research demonstration on the golf course greens, it'd be nice to have greens that you can be more aggressive with because if you killed something or turned it yellow, it wouldn't affect play.

Q Are you going to add any more holes to the facility?

We talked about adding a nine-hole First Tee facility, which might be a possibility down the road, but before we build another nine or 18 holes, we would probably take some of the existing holes and make conversions if we wanted different grasses or to look at something different.

Whether you're generating revenue from the golf course or you're just doing research on it, you still have the maintenance costs to take care of. So before we expand and build another golf course, we'll probably just increase the research capabilities of the one we've got. We've already done some of that. Last year, we converted several holes to different grasses. We've put in a couple of Tifway hybrid Bermudagrass holes to compare to TifSport. We put in a Zorro zoysiagrass hole because it's a new fine textured grass, and we put in a seashore paspalum hole.

Q Does the course close for testing?

We're closed on Tuesdays, and we try to do all of our test applications then, when there's nobody in. We've had times where some golfers followed treatments, but the number

of players is so small that it's not a problem to work around what few golfers are out there. Most of the play is on weekends.

Q Elaborate about research projects you're working on.

We're looking at the effect of seedbed preparation on overseeding. We're looking at carbohydrate levels in the turfgrass. We're conducting an overseeding transition study. We've got a Primo study we're looking at. We've got a research project looking at subsurface air cooling the greens versus the surface fans. There are a couple of Precise studies in which we're looking at different products. Also, we're doing herbicide and plant growth regulator studies. Some of those are in academic testing as well.

We have a fertility study where we compare all the different nitrogen fertilizer technologies at different rates. Last year, each hole was dedicated to a specific fertilizer. We were looking at economics. How many applications it would take a year. Then we look at the labor cost of those applications. We figure out how many hours it takes and the cost per 1,000 square feet.

The plan is to publish an annual report and send it to the people who have been on the tour. We would probably just give them out free. It would be one of the benefits of coming on the tour.

We've had other ideas about how to disseminate the information. Ideally the best way would be if we had a GPS unit on a select few carts to explain the tests audiowise to the superintendents who play the golf course. Then you wouldn't have to keep track of papers to track what studies are going on because the GPS unit would automatically tell you. That would be the easiest way of communicating all this research. We've been looking into that.

Q What is the biggest research project you've worked on?

The discovery of Precise, figuring out how to control the release of pesticides and reduce applicator exposure, is the biggest thing so far. Most of the research that's occurring on the golf course is more practical, applied things that would help superintendents do their jobs better. Even though we conduct a lot of Precise research, that discovery came about in a laboratory, not necessarily a golf course, but that's where we're proving it. The things you're calling research at FarmLinks would be more applied stuff: looking at mowing heights relative to nitrogen requirements for TifSport; how you manage disease infection on TifSport. We run across problems with these grasses, so our research



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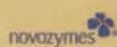
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so our research will revolve around trying to find an answer to those.

Q Is there another controlled-released pesticide on the market?

I'm not aware of any other technology that can do what we're doing, combining pesticides and controlling their release. There are control-release formulations of pesticides that are microencapsulated, taking something that's not water soluble and encapsulating it so you can suspend it in water and spray it. There are controlled-release formulations but not specifically as a delivery system to regulate the release of a pesticide in a timely manner.

Q Do you get feedback from superintendents?

We're starting to do that. There has been an advisory council formed that's comprised of superintendents from all throughout the country, and they'll be the sounding board for all this stuff. The first meeting was already held. They will be our eyes and ears to let us know what we're doing that's on track or what we should consider doing differently. We've pulled them in the loop versus us just doing what we think is right. We're going to let them tell us what's right.

Q How is FarmLinks supported financially?

We have public play, but the course wasn't built for profit. The partners that participate in the Experience at FarmLinks contribute products and/or funding to participate, and the level of participation and funding is different. Our company, PTI, also is a partner. That's how the funding is procured to support the operation of the golf course and for contract research. For example, if company A wanted to do a confidentiality research project, FarmLinks might be a site where they can get those research studies conducted.

Q Is there discussion to let more partners in?

There's some discussion about what that should look like, and that will be an initiative by the advisory council of superintendents. The objective is to introduce novel products, showing new technology that's applicable and valuable to superintendents. It's not really about funding per se, because if it was all about funding, you could just open the partnership to anybody and have a tiered approach, depending on how much exposure a supplier wanted and what it would cost. It's more about making sure the products that are shown are novel, have value and

are of interest to superintendents.

We've tried to keep it where, for instance, Toro is our equipment and irrigation partner. So we wouldn't go to John Deere or Jacobsen as long as Toro is a partner. We give them that exclusive right to be a partner. As you go to the smaller-level players, you might have some overlapping products. We might have more than one supplier that makes a data collection device or a specific aerification tine that's unique or novel.

So far, there hasn't been any overlap between the major players. We've got one irrigation and equipment company (Toro) and one pesticide company (Syngenta). But down the road, depending on what the advisory council thinks, FarmLinks might have the best tools for education for customers. Then we would test several products from various pesticide companies to compare product A, B, C and D beside each other.

Q Are you going to renovate the course?

If we do anything, it would be to add more grass for technical and educational purposes but nothing to be rerouted or changed. There's nothing to change, other than from an educational standpoint.

Q How will FarmLinks expand?

It depends on the advisory council, but the plan is to grow it, to make it bigger and better. Whether that's more partners or taking the training initiative a step further, those are the things that have been discussed as possibilities. Hopefully, the more interest ... the more success the product bears. The fruit of it is more people with innovative products so superintendents can be exposed to these things. The more, the better. If there are enough of those types of products out there, we need to be showing them.

Q Do you foresee the size of the groups that come here increasing?

No. We'll always keep it down-home in small groups because it's hard to build relationships. We put a lot of thought into the number. If you look at everything, the lodge is built around accommodations of 15 people, and the bus is built around accommodations of 15 people. We have brought bigger groups in, but that's about the size group you can get to know on a personal level. At the same time, if you get too big a group, people start to feel less likely to ask questions or get involved.

Q Can anybody showcase a product here?

The whole basis of this thing is novel, innovative products and leaders in the industry. For a company that is just starting up, it would be an easy and quick way to get into the market by becoming part of the experience here. But a company has to be a leader in the industry or the product has to be valuable, because we're not just selling positions or space. It's more about relationships.

Q Explain how the cool-season grasses on the course are in such good shape in the South.

We have bentgrass greens, which have become a pretty accepted practice down here for high-end golf courses. And for that matter, some of our public courses have gone to bent as well. The difference that we're doing is that we have stepped out with grasses – such as thermal blue, which is a new heat-tolerant Kentucky bluegrass – in the rough area that traditionally have been warm-season turf. We established it in a couple places and are evaluating it as a possible rough grass. So far, it looks good. A lot of it is based on credence of prior research done at Auburn.

Q What's done here that isn't done normally at other golf courses?

We were doing a lot of experimental combinations of herbicides that most superintendents wouldn't do because there's a good chance they might damage or kill some turf. We do things that would cost many superintendents their jobs, but it's accepted here.

Q What do you hope superintendents take away from a visit to FarmLinks?

Hopefully, it's better information about how to do their jobs, whether it's fertilizer selection, how fertilizers work, irrigation equipment or mowing equipment. When they leave here, they should be able to go back and have a better understanding of either why they're doing what they're doing or how to do it better. It's really about their education. That's the whole purpose of what we're doing. If we're not doing that, we're coming up short.

Q What's FarmLinks' future?

David Pursell is committed to this being the hub for turfgrass managers who want to see the future now. His vision is that superintendents can come here and see what the turf industry is going to be like in five or 10 years. Superintendents are going to see things here they won't be able to see at a turfgrass field day. GCN

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A changing landscape

SOCIETAL TRANSITIONS INFLUENCE THE EVOLUTION AND GROWTH OF THE PRIVATE GOLF CLUB MARKET

by
**JOHN
WALSH**

Socioeconomic factors and public golf courses are putting pressure on private clubs to maintain memberships and grow their segment of the golf market.

Since 1999, there have been 1,272 public courses and 327.5 private courses (18-hole equivalents) opened, according to the National Golf Foundation. That makes private courses about 25 percent of the golf course market. And, as of early July, there were 96 private courses compared with 233.5 public courses under construction.

These numbers can lead one to question how private clubs have changed throughout the years and what challenges they face in the future.

Steve Cook, CGCS, MG, golf course manager at Oakland Hills Country Club in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., has been in the golf course management business for 20 years, 18 of which have been at private clubs. The main differences Cook has seen throughout the years at private clubs are the improved maintenance practices, increased golf course maintenance budgets and member expectations. Cook says the economy and how members are doing financially affect the club.

Golf course openings (18-hole equivalents)

	Public	Private	Total	% private
1999	312.5	63.0	375.5	17%
2000	339.5	59.0	398.5	15%
2001	226.0	58.0	284.0	20%
2002	164.5	55.5	220.0	25%
2003	127.0	44.0	171.0	26%
2004	102.5	48.0	150.5	32%
Total	1,272.0	327.5	1,599.5	20%

Source: National Golf Foundation

"When the members do well, the club does well," he says.

However, the Internet and increased re-locating and traveling that people do have changed the scene from years past.

"The advantages of belonging to a neighborhood club that existed 20 or 30 years ago no longer exist," Cook says. "It's hard to find a fraternity of people that will stick together when times get tough. There aren't as many emotional ties to clubs like years ago. Now, more of the ties to clubs are with business partners, and members of a club are less likely to be family members or neighbors."

Cook, who has been at Oakland Hills for the past eight years, says the club needs revenue from guest fees and outings. The club generates about 50,000 rounds on two courses annually.

"I used to say that level of play isn't good, but now I'm happy because it shows people want to play the course," Cook says.

Oakland Hills also has mini-outings. Members can reserve 10 tee times so they can bring more than three guests at a time.

"I used to think that was bad, but it's a healthy operation," Cook says. "It isn't like the '90s when we had unlimited spending. We have to document where and how we spend and save money to justify our salaries."

Still, Cook says money is the reason why private clubs are so desirable among superintendents, even though they might be giving up job security.

"Upward mobility is different today than years ago," he says. "There were not as many superintendents in the early '80s with four-year degrees. Now, it's tough to find a job. I have nothing against the last generation, but those guys were uneducated and went

to the school of hard knocks and are moving out of the business now. This generation of superintendents, who have degrees, is staying longer at courses."

A wider scope

The main change Tim O'Neill, CGCS, has seen throughout his career at a private club is increased member expectations. O'Neill, who is the 2005 president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, has been the superintendent at the Country Club of Darien in Fairfield, Conn., for the past 24 years. He has seen the makeup of Darien change. Now it's younger and more family oriented than it used to be, he says.

"When I came here, I thought this job was a stepping-stone position," O'Neill says. "Although I've looked around from time to time, they've taken care of me and have given me the opportunity to improve the course year after year. I have the resources I need, which wasn't always the case. Members realize good conditions cost money. They have a long-term stake in the club, and they're motivated to see improvements."

The club used to be owned by one person, and after O'Neill was at the club for about five years, the owner sold it to the members. Now there are several committees O'Neill participates in and communicates with.

"I've seen all kinds of people come and go," he says. "There's a wide range of expectations and opportunities. I had to adapt to a lot of different boards, leaders and green chairmen. It's not the easiest part of the job, but I've done a good job handling those situations over the years."

Another big change has been O'Neill's responsibilities.

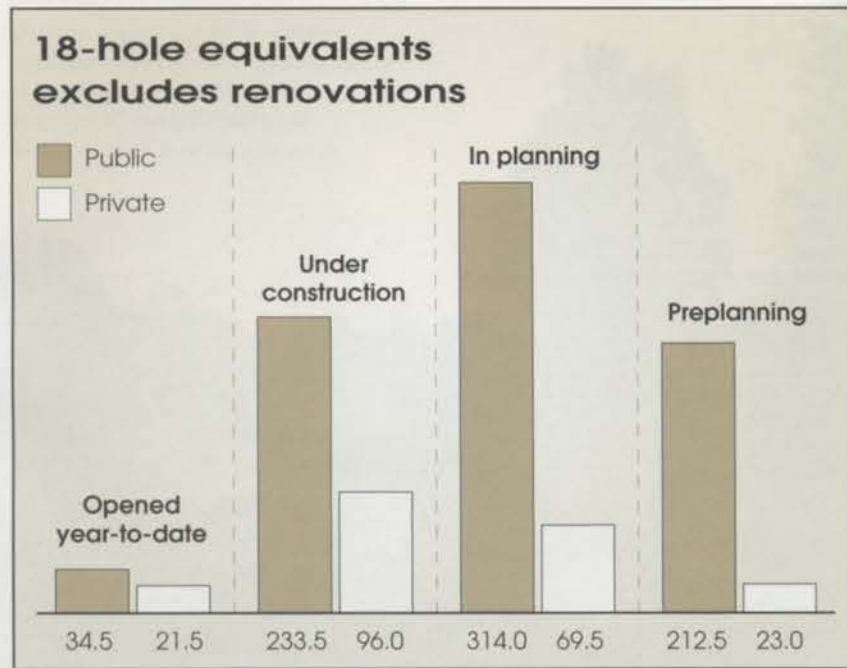
"There was a day when I jumped on a



Increased maintenance budgets and members' expectations are two considerable changes private clubs, such as Westfield Country Club in Westfield Center, Ohio, have experienced through the years.

Photo: Eric Creative Communications

Public/private course development



Source: National Golf Foundation (as of 7/7/05)

mower, but they're paying me way too much money to be on a mower," he says. "The business of golf and the private club is on everyone's radar screen. Superintendents need to become more facility oriented and not just hunkered down in the maintenance of the golf course. A club needs to have a good pool, tennis courts and food-and-

beverage operation. I need to look out for everything at the club, but it wasn't always that way for me."

Time crunch

Mark Jordan, CGCS, general manager of Westfield Country Club in Westfield Center, Ohio, also has spent the majority of his 25-year career at private clubs. One of the big changes he sees is the way golf courses are maintained. For example, lightweight mowing of greens was a new trend when Jordan interned at Elyria (Ohio) Country Club in the early '80s, and now it's common, he says. New equipment and customer needs also are considerable changes at private clubs, as well as what demands members' time, which is considerably different than in years past.

"When I started out, people had more recreation time," Jordan says. "Guys now have five hours to get in a round of golf and a bite to eat. Then they go off to kids' soccer games or work. We have to be more family oriented and casual. As older members move out, we need junior programs and activities that are fun for kids."

Another considerable change has been labor, which is the largest portion of a

superintendent's budget.

"We need good staffing levels to provide a high level of service," Jordan says.

A PR guy

Keith Ihms, CGCS, at the Country Club of Little Rock (Ark.) has been in the industry for 25 years and says quality is the biggest concern of those in charge at private clubs.

"Clubs needed something new and different on a course, such as more fountains and ornamentals, things that aren't related to the playability of the course," he says. "There's more focus on aesthetics. You have to spend more money, which means increased labor and the number of employees, to get that detailed work done."

Ihms says members' attitudes are different now than they used to be.

"They complain and nitpick more," he says. "Younger members are looking at the playability more than the older members. However, members here are more laid back. They're demanding but not in a 'what have you done for me lately' attitude."

"Nowadays, golfers appreciate what the superintendent does more than when I started 25 years ago," he adds. "Now I'm

Private clubs are attractive to superintendents

Even though private clubs make up about 25 percent of the golf course market, they're still attractive to many superintendents who view working at a private club as the ultimate job. Security and money are reasons many superintendents want to work at private clubs, according to Keith Ihms, CGCS, at the Country Club of Little Rock (Ark.).

"You always feel like you can show off your talents, and you're not worried about a management company coming in to change things," Ihms says. "Superintendents at daily-fee courses don't have the room for error that superintendents at private clubs do but deserve better."

Bent Tree Country Club in Dallas, where Ihms worked before Little Rock, is one example of superintendents' desire to work at private clubs and the tight job market. Bent Tree received 105 résumés when Ihms left, he says.



Ihms

"The tenure at private clubs seems higher than at public courses because there aren't as many ups and downs as daily-fee courses, partly because superintendents know the members at private

clubs," Ihms says.

"If you stay in this business long enough, something bad will happen to you, whether it be from the weather or whatever," he adds. "If you know the members, they're more willing to give you a second chance than at a public daily-fee course. It's easier to do something right at a private course than a public one. For example, a superintendent can explain to members at a club in Arkansas that they should stay off bentgrass greens for a few days because of heat stress. You can't do that at a public course. Members have more of a long-term vision of the course at a private facility than at a public one. At a public course, all that matters is that golfer that day. It's the bottom line at a public course. Members at a private course won't let maintenance slide. They'll spend the money if the club didn't generate enough guest fees. That's the luxury of working on a private course."

Professional development is another lure to a private course for superintendents, according to Ihms.

"My club sends me to conferences," he says. "Public courses sometimes don't because of money, when big corporations struggle and can't afford it." GCN

more of a PR guy. The superintendent spends more time educating and communicating to members – because they're spending so much money, they're more interested in what the superintendent is doing."

Ihms says he also spends money more wisely than he did years ago.

"I get more out of the money I spend," he says. "At Bent Tree [Country Club in Dallas], we increased the budget every year because members wanted something different, but there had to be an understanding of why we were increasing the budget and what we were spending the money on."

Hurdles

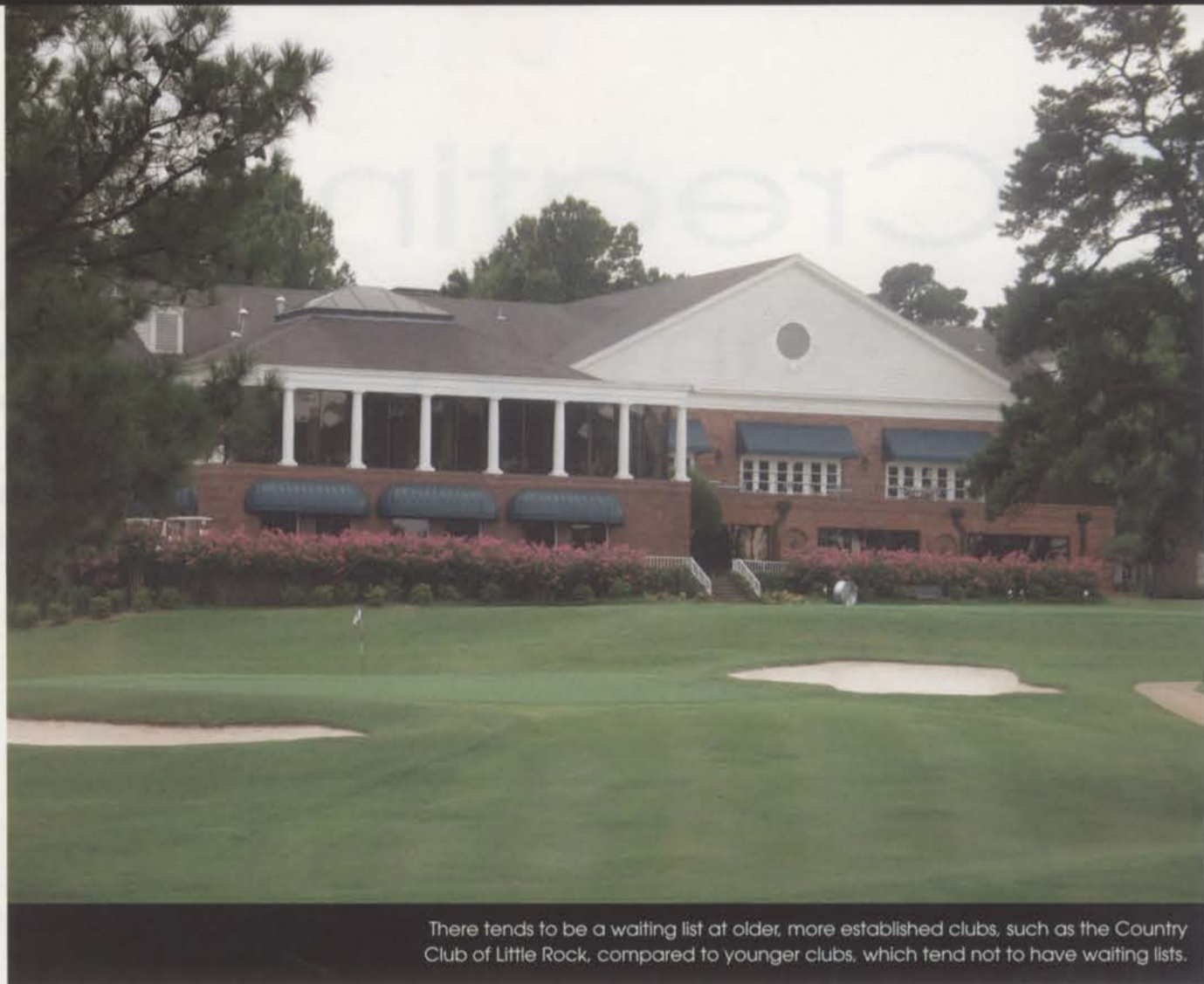
Even though private clubs have changed, there are still pressures on them to thrive.

"Good public courses will continue to put pressure on private clubs, but there will always be those who want to be part of the elite," Cook says. "The thing we can provide more easily than public courses is service. Employees at private clubs know the names of the golfers, what they like to eat and drink, what table they like to sit at and what tee times they like. Name recognition is a huge thing."

Cook says many older clubs are landlocked, which prevents them from expanding. He also says golf equipment has hurt the growth of the game.

"When people are hitting the ball 300 yards, you need more land," he says. "Builders are developing further out from urban areas, and the cost to get to these courses is increasing."

"In today's economy, not many people can plop down the money it takes to be a member at a private club," he adds. "If



There tends to be a waiting list at older, more established clubs, such as the Country Club of Little Rock, compared to younger clubs, which tend not to have waiting lists.

Photo: Country Club of Little Rock

someone plays 30 times a year, which is a decent amount for the average guy in one year, that guy can go to a public course, and it will cost him a lot less than joining a private club."

O'Neill says private clubs will have their share of challenges, such as maintaining memberships.

"Here [at Darien] it's not been a problem," he says. "For the 24 years I've been

here, we've had a waiting list. It may take 10 years to get into the club. It's that way because the towns we live in have a lot of golfers, but there's no place to build golf courses. However, this is not the norm in many parts of the country."

At Westfield, which has 700 members, 500 have a relationship with the insurance company the club is affiliated with, and 200 are outside members. Jordan says that two years ago employee membership declined, so the club tried to attract outside members, who pay an initiation fee and full dues, by a word-of-mouth membership drive.

"There are very few clubs I know of that aren't looking for members," Jordan says.

Ihms says there tends to be a waiting list at older, established clubs; and at the younger clubs that are 20 to 25 years old and middle-of-the-road clubs, there doesn't tend to be a waiting list. There also are many high-end daily-fee courses that compete with private clubs.

"People don't have the luxury to play golf that often, so why would people spend that much money to join a private club when they can go to a nice, high-end daily-fee course and get treated like they're at a private course?" Ihms asks. GCN



One thing private courses, such as Oakland Hills Country Club in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., can provide golfers more easily than public courses is service.

Photo: Oakland Hills Country Club

Creating an Oasis

FLAT LAND AND DUST CONTROL CHALLENGE A DESIGNER AND BUILDER IN THE DESERT TO FORM A TOUR COURSE

by
MARK
LESLIE

Arnold Palmer Golf Course Design and Landscapes Unlimited faced significant challenges when they began designing and constructing The Classic at NorthStar in Palm Desert, Calif. Dust storms cost \$3 million to control; an ugly desert needed major transformation that cost \$5 million in landscaping with a requirement to move 3 million cubic yards of dirt; and the PGA Tour, which will host

the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic on the site next year was a demanding client.

"When I first saw the property I almost cried," says Vicki Martz, senior golf course architect with Palmer Design. "There was no redeeming feature, and it was flat with a 1-percent slope."

When Bill Kubly, c.e.o. of Landscapes Unlimited, was first introduced to the project he was amazed at the commitment the H.N. and Frances C. Berger Foundation was making to the Palm Desert community. The foundation committed \$36 million to the project, donated 240 acres and gifted the golf course to the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic, with the purpose of raising money for underprivileged children and the needy in the Coachella Valley.

"They had put together a team including some of the best land planners, engineers, landscape architects and golf course architects in the business, so I knew that Landscapes Unlimited needed to be a part of this great project," Kubly says.

The course, which is seeded and sodded, is scheduled to open in November.

"We think it's going to be a spectacular venue, especially for television and the gallery and anyone interested in coming out to a Tour event," says John Foster, a member of the board of directors of the Hope Classic and president of West Coast Turf.

"People feel we're going to be one of the top-rated courses in the Coachella Valley and probably in the U.S.," says Douglass Vance, vice president of the Berger Foundation. "Various people, including the PGA, are excited about the quality of this course."

The presence of the Berger Foundation adds unique dimensions such as:

- The Bob Hope Chrysler Classic becomes the only charity-owned tournament.

Foster says the 46-year-old Hope Classic has given away more than \$1.5 million per year for the last decade or so;

- It joins the Masters at Augusta National and TPC at Sawgrass, host of the Players Championship, as the only tournament-owned venues;

- It magnifies the commitment of golf to charity and comes in the wake of the PGA Tour surpassing the \$1 billion plateau in giving; and

- It supplies enough financial support to turn Palm Desert's down-and-out desert into a Tour venue. Besides the 240-acre property, the site includes 240 acres the Berger Foundation plans to sell for a hotel, villa sites and a high-tech industrial campus.

"This venue will help make the tournament more effective to operate, and, in the long run, we will own the public-fee course, which will generate income for the charity," Foster says. "This project helps us raise money better and also gives us a stable home. Basically, we play at the wishes of courses we are visiting. This gift has a stabilizing, long-term effect."

Dusty bottoms

The major impediment to construction was new dust-control legislation imposed on projects in the region. This meant a full-time environmental observer, David Linngren, had to be assigned to the project.


"This is the first project in the Coachella Valley where you have to be certified for dust control," says Landscapes Unlimited project superintendent Brian Vitek, who earned certification through a course offered by the Air Quality Management District. "We're on call 24-7, and I'd say we have gone above and beyond the requirements."

Before construction began, Landscapes Unlimited erected a 6-foot-high chain link

AT A GLANCE

The Classic at NorthStar

Location:	Palm Desert, Calif.
Yardages:	7,474; 7,076; 6,487; 5,965; 5,414
Par:	72
Acreage of golf course:	220
Acres of fairway:	45
Acres of the entire project site:	470
Average size of greens:	6,200 square feet
Tees:	Tifgreen Bermudagrass
Greens:	Tifdwarf Bermudagrass
Fairways:	TifSport Bermudagrass
Roughs:	DeAnza zoysiagrass
Irrigation system:	RainBird Cirrus
Pump station:	Flowtronex
Course superintendent:	Dennis Orsborn
Architect:	Arnold Palmer Golf Course Design
Builder:	Landscapes Unlimited
Owner:	Bob Hope Chrysler Classic (donated by Berger Foundation)
Total cost of project:	\$36 million
Construction started:	January 2004
Construction ended:	July 2005



The Berger Foundation committed \$36 million and donated 240 acres of land to the building of The Classic at NorthStar, which will host the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic.

Photo: Scott Avity

fence with windscreen around the four- to five-mile periphery of the property. Since construction started in January 2004, water trucks with boom sprayers have operated seven days a week, wetting down the sand.

"We constantly run water trucks right next to every piece of equipment that is operating," Vitek says. "By law, we can't generate any dust. During the high season, we had 20 water trucks running to maintain the site at the condition it needed to be. They zigzag back and forth with wide boom sprayers, keeping the roads and any other place we're going to travel, wet."

In some areas, Vitek used chemical stabilizers, which glue the soil in place.

The dust-control chore was made more difficult because of high winds in the region. Whenever the wind escalated, all work was required to stop until the wind subsided. Indeed, the winds were so strong at times that they changed the contours on three golf holes under construction and blew sand back into cored-out bunkers.

The frustrations of starting and stop-

ping the construction because of dust was something Landscapes Unlimited wasn't accustomed to.

"NorthStar lies in what is called the 'wind tunnel' directly north of I-10 here in Palm Desert, and the Berger Foundation made it clear from the start the project needed to slow down the dust, not accelerate it," Kubly says.

Dust control was a huge portion of the budget.

"It astounded me," Martz says. "When you break down the cost, it was all these ancillary items – watering every day, wind fences, installing drip irrigation – that were astronomical."

While operating the water trucks in tandem with other equipment, Martz and Landscapes Unlimited worked with landscape architect Ken Alperstein of Pinnacle Design Co., transplanting 4,800 pine trees and almost 30,000 shrubs around the golf course.

"We have 15 miles of irrigation pipe," says Vitek. "Each shrub and tree gets a hard plastic pipe – not poly pipe – and a small

drip emitter brought up to it. The pipes are laid 12 inches deep. It's all hand work, pick and shovel. You can't use a trencher because they're so close together."

Species and rain

The dust control overshadowed the collaboration of the principles of the project with the Coachella Valley Preserve.

"We were very environmentally sensitive and gave the preserve a 50-foot buffer zone to the north property line to secure the safety of the endanger species, which include the fringe toad lizard and milk vetch plant," Vance says.

Also complicating construction were the drenching rainstorms Southern California receives, which courses must be able to accommodate. Because of this, Landscapes Unlimited built a lake system and created large, deep swales throughout the project to handle drainage.

"We have some strange relationships of greens to water that we normally don't want to have," Martz says. "Mr. Palmer prefers a green right down on the water. At North-



Alternate routes to the greens were created so golfers don't have to go for the green in two.

Photo: Scott Avra

TIRED OF SECOND-GUESSING HANDWRITTEN TIMECARDS?

EMPLOYEE TIME SHEET

NAME: Bill Kemp DATES: 10-14

DAY	START	LUNCH	END	JOBSITE	WORK DONE	HOURS
Mon	5:00	1/2	1:30	Walby	Ext.	8
Tues	↓	↓	1:30	↓	↓	8
Wed	↓	↓	2:00	↓	↓	8.5
Thurs	↓	↓	2:00	↓	↓	8.5
Fri	↓	↓	2:00	↓	↓	8.5

Employee Signature: Bill Kemp Total Hours: 41.5



REALITY?

Employee Report

Bill Kemp

Location Name: **Walby Golf Course** Date Range: **10/10/2005 through 10/14/2005**

Day	Start	End	Activity	Hours
Mon 10/10	5:08 AM	10:05 AM	Placing the pin	4:57 hours
	10:41 AM	1:22 PM	Bunker maint.	2:41 hours 7:38 hours
Tue 10/11	5:12 AM	10:07 AM	Placing the pin	4:55 hours
	10:43 AM	1:23 PM	Bunker maint.	2:40 hours 7:35 hours
Wed 10/12	5:12 AM	10:02 AM	Placing the pin	4:50 hours
	10:46 AM	1:49 PM	Mowing-green	3:03 hours 7:53 hours
Thu 10/13	5:17 AM	10:19 AM	Placing the pin	5:02 hours
	10:50 AM	1:46 PM	Mowing-green	2:56 hours 7:58 hours
Fri 10/14	5:13 AM	10:07 AM	Placing the pin	4:54 hours
	10:44 AM	1:39 PM	Mowing-green	2:55 hours 7:49 hours

Employee total **38:53 hours**

Signature: Bill Kemp Bill Kemp



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Star, we have one hole like that, but the rest that are next to water are up in the air to accommodate these flood flows.”

Because of the elevated greens, the winds and the amount of water on the course, play is going to be challenging, so wide fairways and alternative routes to the greens

were created so golfers don't have to go for the green in two, according to Martz.

While several sets of tees will make the course enjoyable for all levels of golfers 51 weeks a year, NorthStar's permanent relationship with the PGA Tour on that 52nd week made for an interesting collaboration

between Palmer Design, Hope Classic officials and Steve Wenzloff, director of design for PGA Tour Design Services.

“We were out there with many, many people from the Tour – tournament people, rules officials, design people ...,” Martz says.

First, Foster and the Hope Classic officials requested the course be as long as possible so the layout would hold its own for many years to come. The result: a 7,536-yard distance from the tips.

Second, extraordinary spectator areas were paramount.

“We were looking for something superior when it came to viewing and being fan-friendly,” Foster says. “Not only does NorthStar have good access, right off the fairway, but it will have spectacular viewing areas where you can look down on two or three holes.”

Martz says more than 3 million yards of dirt were moved.

“When you create large ravines through the course, you have a lot of dirt to work with,” she says. “There are wonderful spectator mounds. The course emulates the mountains around it and is visually very pretty. You would never dream that it was once flat.”

Tremendous acreage is set aside for spectator amenities to enhance the tournament – from entertainment to food concession and viewing areas.

Third, the team decided to move away

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from the desert look prevalent in the area and transplanted pine trees and desert willow, with pine straw accenting the pine trees.

"I was worried when we decided to do this that the grand scale of this place would make the pine trees look like sticks, but the Berger Foundation budget committed to the landscaping has blown me away," Martz says. "With Ken Alperstein, we created a theme of rocky streams, rock outcroppings and pine trees."

Vital to the success of the course is its maintenance. NorthStar golf course superintendent Dennis Orsborn, a long-time veteran of the desert, is overseeing the Tifdwarf Bermudagrass greens, 328 Bermudagrass tees, TifSport fairways and drought-tolerant zoysiagrass roughs.

Landscapes Unlimited sprigged 95 acres of Bermudagrass and laid 40 acres of sod as well as creating 35 acres of lakes, building 14 bridges, forming 250,000 square feet of bunkers, and punctuating the entire property with dramatic elevation changes.

In the end, Foster says an all-star cast was assembled for NorthStar.

"Arnold Palmer is a perfect fit," he says. "We have a long history with Arnold. He won the tournament five times and lives in the community part of the year."

"We know Landscapes and their reputation and wanted to make sure we got a good job, so we were happy when the Berger Foundation decided to use them," Foster adds, noting Kubly also lives in the community part

of the year.

And Troon Golf, a well-known golf course management company, will operate the facility.

All of this is fitting for a tournament that in four years will celebrate its 50th anniversary.

"What is magical is that this significant gift from the Berger Foundation is one that will keep on giving," Foster says. GCN

Mark Leslie is a freelance writer from Monmouth, Maine. He can be reached at gripfast@ctel.net.



Workers lay sod around a fairway bunker on the fourth hole.

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**SUPERINTENDENTS DEAL WITH VARIOUS HUMAN
RESOURCE ISSUES WHEN MANAGING THEIR STAFFS**



Photo: Raven Golf Club at Snowshoe Mountain

Raven Golf Club at Snowshoe Mountain in Elkins, W. Va., has a staff of 15 workers led by superintendent Doug Dykstra, who tries to balance praise and discipline with his employees.

by
ROB
THOMAS

Keeping a golf course green and healthy is obviously not a one-man operation. A superintendent needs a competent and dedicated staff to help with everything from placing pins to spraying pesticides.

How superintendents manage their staffs can make a big difference. A hardened, brown course can be just a few failed steps away from a rich, vibrant track.

Christopher Smith, CGCS at Hudson National Golf Club in Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y., manages 24 employees at the private facility. Much of the maintenance is done by hand, including mowing the fairways. Smith says it's labor intensive, but the bonus is the quality of cut.

Smith joined Hudson National as superintendent in early 2004, taking over for Gregg Stanley, who became the superintendent at The Bridge in Sag Harbor, N.Y. Smith worked under Stanley from 1995 to 1997 when he was Hudson National's assistant superintendent.

"I can't say enough positive things about what Gregg taught me," Smith says.

One of the lessons learned led directly to Smith's management style – which he describes as hands-on.

"I like to work with the guys," he says. "It's important to show them you're at their level. It's important they know you're management, but also willing to work."

Joel McKnight, CGCS, left Hackberry Creek Country Club in Irving, Texas, in August 2004 and is now park operations manager for the City of Lancaster. While at Hackberry Creek, he managed anywhere from 15 to 22 people. McKnight generally takes the opposite approach when handling his staff.

"I depend an awful lot on delegation," he says. "Unless you're at a very small facility, you have so many more administrative things to handle. You have to have the right people



Golf course superintendent Matt Strader had his staff working toward a common goal when Penn National Golf Club renovated all its bunkers.

you can trust and know it's going to get done right. Let them make decisions because there's no way you can do it all yourself."

McKnight says superintendents have to let people make mistakes, but it's wise to choose which mistakes they'll be in position to make. There's a big difference between a mistake that will be immediately visible to the members and management, and one only the superintendent will notice.

Doug Dykstra, CGCS at Raven Golf Club at Snowshoe Mountain in Elkins, W.Va., is in his fifth year at the 18-hole resort. Dykstra manages a staff of about 15 and says his management style changes every day.

"I'm either outside helping or stuck inside doing paperwork," he says. "They both have their advantages and disadvantages, I suppose, but I prefer being outside."

Problem solved

Matt Strader, golf course superintendent at Penn National Golf Club, a 36-hole resort in Fayetteville, Pa., says getting his staff of 30 to manage their time better is one of his top concerns.

"I ask them to do it on a continuing basis, with encouraging and positive reinforcement," he says about time management.

"I also give them the right tools and equipment to get the job done and make them check to see that they have the right stuff before they leave the building. That gets them involved – when they're involved, you get good results."

The language barrier proved to be difficult for McKnight when he left the Gulf Coast of Mississippi for Irving, Texas. Arriving at Hackberry Creek, he inherited a staff that was primarily Hispanic, but had forgotten the limited Spanish he knew. McKnight took language classes and worked hard to learn their culture. By showing his willingness to relate, he earned their trust.

Smith says he knows enough Spanish to communicate to his staff, which is mostly Latino, and says he's always learning more from his employees while they're learning English from him.

As for dealing with difficulties at Hudson National, Smith says one bad apple can spoil the entire crew and isolation is a good way to motivate employees.

"When you get a group of guys together, you have to have the ability to segregate so they don't disrupt the core," he says of a troublesome employee. "It could be the person is a hard worker, but just a troublemaker. You

put them in a situation where they're working alone. Ultimately, they figure it out and come around. They don't want to work alone."

Dealing with discipline

At Raven Golf Club, Dykstra tries to balance his employees with praise and discipline.

"I try to give positive reinforcement when I feel it's validated," he says. "They get the opposite when things aren't happening the way they're supposed to."

For Dykstra, being a part of a larger company means there are policies and procedures he must follow when reprimanding an employee. Depending on the infraction, steps can begin with a verbal warning, move to a written reprimand and then to suspension prior to termination. He suggests keeping documentation for every reprimand and not calling out an employee in front of his peers.

"Make sure you always do it on a one-on-one basis and never in front of a group," he says. "That can be very demoralizing."

Strader echoes the one-on-one approach when dealing with reprimands at Penn National.

"I talk to them in private," Strader says. "I begin with a compliment of something that they do very well and am sincere about it.

If I begin by screaming at them, they never hear the point of the discussion.

"Let them know what you expect and why," he adds. "To me, it's a discussion about a few things that we can do better."

Strader schedules a follow-up discussion because if an employee can't count on a follow-up, he might not think it was that important.

McKnight also says he looks for ways to make a reprimand meeting positive. He'll start with a positive and finish with a positive. He learned that from the founder of ClubCorp, Robert Dedman. Paraphrasing Dedman's philosophy about dealing with customers, McKnight says, "Give them a warm welcome, a magic moment in the middle and a fond farewell."

McKnight also tries to keep his emotions out of the discussion.

"I sleep on it," he says about a negative event. "I don't react right then so emotion doesn't play a role."

Praise when deserved

Reacting to a negative can be instinctive, but knowing when and how to praise an employee for something positive can be a bit more difficult.

Smith took Stanley's way of encouragement

to heart and practices it regularly.

"You have to let them know they're doing a good job," he says. "The more you do that, the more it encourages them to continue doing a good job."

Hudson National also has a bonus system. If an employee shows up for his shift every day, he receives a percentage bonus on every hour he worked for that month. Excused absences are allowed if they're phoned in, but no-call, no-shows aren't tolerated.

At Raven, which hosted the West Virginia Open this year, the resort arranged two river rafting trips for Dykstra's staff, and Dykstra is looking into hosting a golfing event for them as a reward for all the long hours worked and the extra effort put forth.

McKnight says he rewards good effort with a paid half-day off (when allowed) or rewards an employee with tickets to a sporting event.

"I expect people who work for me to take ownership of their jobs, not just be there to draw a paycheck," he says. "Once they start doing this, it's very easy to give them verbal praise."

To bond with his staff, McKnight would host a cookout once a month and was able to break a lot of barriers with the staff.

Strader says positive and negative communication is beneficial to the course and its employees.

"When the course is in good condition, we tell them," he says. "When we receive compliments from members and guests, we pass them on to the staff. When we mess up or miss something as managers, we share it with the staff. We let them know that we're human, and how we plan to get it right the next time."

Maintaining staff

While at a previous course in Nebraska, Dykstra says it was difficult to compete with many other businesses for his maintenance staff because the unemployment rate was low and fast-food chains were paying well to attract employees. The opposite is true at Raven. Dykstra says the area is very rural and the majority of his staff has been there for years.

Smith also has little turnover. He credits that with a positive work environment and the possibility of advancement.

"I try to constantly elevate them in their abilities," he says, adding that an employee might spend an entire summer weed whacking and then learn how to operate a mower the next season. "We try to create a positive atmosphere and provide them with little

TIPS ON MANAGING A STAFF

- Provide positive reinforcement.
- Keep documentation for every reprimand.
- Don't call out an employee in front of his peers. Meet one-on-one.
- If disciplining an employee of the opposite sex, include another person in the meeting.
- Show employees you'll do the work you ask of them.
- Speak your employees' language and learn their culture.
- Create a positive atmosphere.
- Isolate troublesome employees.
- Schedule to get a set amount of work out of employees every day.
- Get involved and maintain close contact with employees.
- Get the staff involved in a common goal.
- Support employees' ideas and suggestions.
- Give employees the right tools and equipment to get the job done.
- When meeting with an employee, begin with a compliment and finish on a positive note.
- Let employees know what you expect and why.
- Don't stop managing your staff. They look to you to manage.
- Don't let emotion play a role in discipline.



Photo: Raven Golf Club at Snowshoe Mountain

The staff at Raven Golf Club was rewarded with rafting trips for the extra time and effort put forth preparing for the 2005 West Virginia Open.

perks that keep them coming back.”

Along with providing uniforms, some of those perks might be an occasional picnic lunch or extra items the staff has accumulated along the way.

“We try to give them something,” he says for boosting moral. “What seems small to us is a big deal to them.”

Strader says by managing his employees through training, the staff becomes more self-reliant.

“They learn what your expectations are and, as long as you support them, they’ll do the best they can to repeat those expectations,” he says.

McKnight and Smith stress the advancement of assistant superintendents. Working with ClubCorp, McKnight says one of his responsibilities was training assistants to move up within the company. He says three to five years in one location is ideal before moving on to another course to become exposed to several ways of doing things.

“It’s nice to have a comfort level with someone you’ve worked with long term, but if all

a person is going to be is a lifetime assistant, are you really doing your job?” he asks.

Smith’s uncle, Dudley Smith, was a superintendent at Silver Lake Country Club in Orland Park, Ill., for years. Dudley Smith taught his nephew that it’s more rewarding to send assistants on to their own courses than it is to collect awards and accolades.

“I tell my assistants they might not have a \$1.4 million budget at their next course, but their work ethic can make it look like they do,” Smith says. “I’m constantly encouraging them to see what’s out there because it’s getting so competitive,” he says about the job market. “And they see you as recognizing their abilities and potential.”

Ideally, it’s a chain affect at Hudson National, Smith says – one guy moves on and the other moves up to take his spot. They then bring in a fresh assistant to begin the process again.

Important to manage

So how important is management? Smith says it’s very important.

“Scheduling and the timing to get a set amount of work out of the guys every day are the keys,” he says. “It’s amazing how it falls into place if you have a good schedule.”

Dykstra feels a close relationship with employees is needed. While he is clearly the boss, getting to know his workers has great benefits.

“The more you talk to them and involve them, the more pride they take in their jobs,” he says.

Strader says getting the crew involved in a common goal and supporting their ideas and suggestions are important, but one should never lose sight of his responsibility.

“You can’t stop managing your staff,” he says. “They look to you to manage.”

McKnight thinks dealing with people is every bit as important as fertilizer and pesticides. He was told anyone can grow grass ... the hardest part of the job is dealing with people.

“Become a people person or find another job,” McKnight says. GCN

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENTS GAIN EXPERIENCE
AND PLAN FOR THEIR SUPERINTENDENT JOBS

MOVIN' ON UP



After the back nine is completed at the Talons of Tuscany in Ankeny, Iowa, assistant superintendent Dan Schuknecht would like to become superintendent of the 18-hole course.

Photo: Talons of Tuscany

by
**JOHN
WALSH**

At some point in their careers, assistant golf course superintendents get tired of being No. 2 and want to call the shots. They gain experience, learn from superintendents and plan the move to become superintendents of their ideal courses. Yet there are different roles for assistants, and some move on more quickly than others.

John McCarthy, who has been an assistant at Berkeley Hills Country Club in Duluth, Ga., for seven years, says a first assistant's role is more managerial, while a second cuts his teeth on the job and is in charge of things such as chemical applications. McCarthy says his supervisory role came in time and evolved out of necessity and communication.

"I was originally in charge of quality control construction methods and was getting my feet wet on a 27-hole facility," he says. "When construction stopped, that's when my assistant's role changed. Before that, I had probably spent 10 percent of the time supervising. My intent is to take on as much as I can from my boss to overprepare myself for a superintendent position that will put me over the edge during the hiring process."

Rich Liddle is an assistant at the 27-hole North Ranch Country Club in Westlake

Village, Calif. Before that, he was assistant at Hillcrest Country Club in Los Angeles. Liddle says assistants are becoming more hands on with personnel and other department heads at clubs, partly because staffs know how to grow grass and maintain it.

"At North Ranch, the superintendent helps you get exposure to the management end of the business," he says. "At Hillcrest, I was more on the course and was less involved with management, but still got exposure to the g.m. and golf pro."

Liddle says some of the limitations of the assistant position include not working with a budget and managing the finances – duties generally handled by the superintendent.

"It's important to me to be exposed to that for 12 months [before becoming a superintendent]," he says. "Getting the best out of the crew is something I feel comfortable with – I've achieved that. I want to get away from the course a bit more and become more involved with finding out what the membership's goals are. That might mean saving \$200,000 this year to put toward a project next year."

Jason Harrison, an assistant at Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, Pa., has been there

for three years. His first year, he was an intern; his second year, he was the assistant on the West Course; and this year, he's the assistant on the East Course.

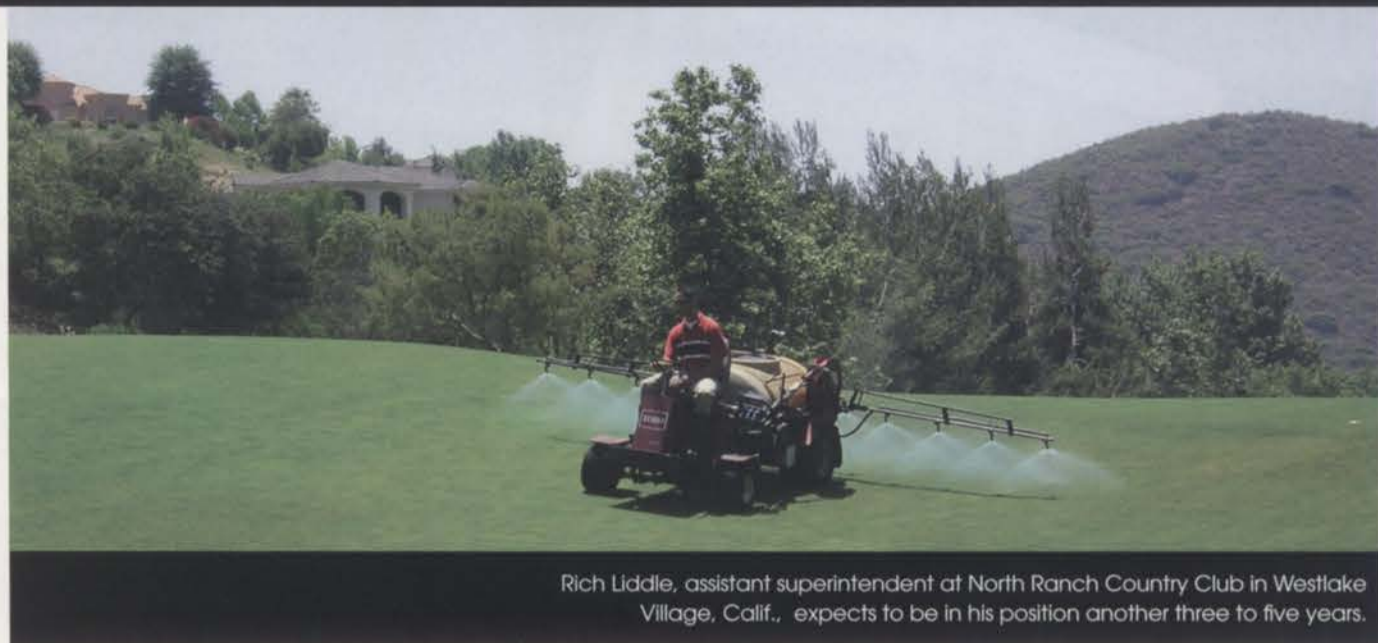
At Merion, Harrison says it's all about hiring from within. The director of golf, Matt Shaffer, has two superintendents under him – one on the West Course and one on the East Course. Additionally, the East Course has two assistants, and the West Course has one.

"I will be the next to jump," Harrison says of a possible promotion. "Matt plans to retire here, so the superintendents are forced to leave. On average, superintendents spend two years at their position, then leave."

Future plans

Dan Schuknecht, assistant superintendent at the Talons of Tuscany in Ankeny, Iowa, is in his first assistant's job. Schuknecht says his plan for the future is basic: move from assistant to superintendent, acquire certification and move up to general manager or director of golf, then into ownership.

"This is the ideal path," he says. "And the ideal golf course is somewhere in the Midwest where the expectations are high and the resources match them. I'd like to work for an



Rich Liddle, assistant superintendent at North Ranch Country Club in Westlake Village, Calif., expects to be in his position another three to five years.

Photo: North Ranch Country Club



At North Ranch Country Club, Rich Liddle wants to become more involved with finding out what the membership's goals are.

Photo: North Ranch Country Club



Photo: Berkeley Hills Country Club

John McCarthy, assistant superintendent at Berkeley Country Club in Duluth, Ga., has a supervisory role that came with time and evolved out of necessity and communication.

owner and develop a relationship with him and not be looked at as another employee.”

Schuknecht, who has worked at public and private courses, says he doesn't have a preference for one or the other.

“I'm flexible and open to the situation,” he says. “Location is most important.”

After building the back nine at the Talons of Tuscany, which is in progress, Schuknecht ideally would like to move into the superintendent's role for the 18-hole facility, which would allow him to accomplish some of his goals.

“I'm blessed because I have duties a lot of superintendents have,” he says. “But I'm looking for the title to achieve certification sooner.”

Schuknecht says that from the assistants he has talked to in Des Moines, the job market is tight, and guys are staying at their jobs longer.

“I've been able to move,” he says. “Right

now, I'm not looking, but it's good to be ready at all times.”

Harrison, too, wants to advance. He would like to move up to the superintendent position on the East Course at Merion. However, he says management might try him out as the superintendent on the West Course first before moving him to that position on the East Course. The superintendent of the East Course has been at Merion for six years and has been the superintendent of that course for the past two, and he might be moving on to another job soon, according to Harrison.

Harrison, who is 24 and has no wife or kids, ideally wants to host a major and stay at a high-end golf course such as a Torrey Pines or Winged Foot, until a family comes along. That's when he might step back to work at a less-high-profile course. But for the most part, he wants to stay at a private club. Although he has mainly cool-season experience, Harrison is willing to move anywhere

and says he wouldn't count out a course with warm-season grass.

“I foresees staying at Merion, but would leave if the right opportunity presented itself,” he says. “I always try to expand my education so I can elevate myself to director of golf someday.”

Harrison also says networking is important for getting his next job.

“Being at Merion, I have done a lot of networking,” he says. “I've met Eric Greytok (Winged Foot) and Paul Latshaw (Muirfield Village) because Matt Shaffer knows a lot of people who come to visit.”

Realistically for Liddle, he expects to be in his position for the next three to five years. He would like to work at a private 18-hole facility that isn't too demanding, but challenging – not a top 100 course because he says he needs time to become certified.

“I'd like to be at a well-established club so I can spend time with my family and as-



Photo: Talons of Tuscany

Currently, Dan Schuknecht is looking to stay at the Talons of Tuscany, but he says it's good to be ready to move at all times.

sociation chapter," he says.

Liddle, who has done golf course construction work, says he needs more exposure to the business side of the job and needs to be comfortable before taking the next step.

"I want to be 100-percent capable of being a superintendent before taking that position," he says. "North Ranch is a good fit for me. I've been here three months, but I need to be here a year to determine if I can take my boss' job. It's all about timing. Some assistant superintendents jump too quickly to take a superintendent job, and some of them end up saying it was the worst job they ever had."

Liddle wants to stay in Southern California, but if the right opportunity came about he wouldn't say no.

"This is an extremely competitive market," he says. "I've worked with a lot of guys from the East. It's difficult to come here, stay here, then go back East. It's easier to stick it out here and wait for the opportunity because moving from one coast to the other puts a strain on your life."

In the Atlanta metro scene, McCarthy says he's at a point in his career where he's pricing himself out of certain positions because he has been an assistant for seven years.

"My tenure here is longer than normal, but I'm more cautious with my decisions because I have other people to think about," he says, referring to his family.

McCarthy, who is originally from New Hampshire, doesn't want to move far for his next job.

"I did an internship at Arizona State, and because I had experience in the Northeast, I felt I needed other experiences in other parts of the country," he says. "It was a good plan back then, but now I'm married with three kids, and moving around isn't so appealing. But I will have to move for my next job, but hopefully not out of Georgia."

"What's appealing to me isn't appealing to some other assistants," he adds. "I'm searching for quality more than the role. Career development for me has been great under [superintendent] Mark Snyder. I'm always learning. I've just taken over the budget, which has been invaluable experience."

McCarthy recently had a job opportunity that fell through – it was working for a project coordinator building a course.

"This guy has been in the industry for 35 years," he says. "I'm in my early 30s, and my boss is in his early 40s, so I was looking forward to working for someone who I could learn from with a different perspective. I have limited grow-in and construction experience, so I'd like to get more of that. But the move

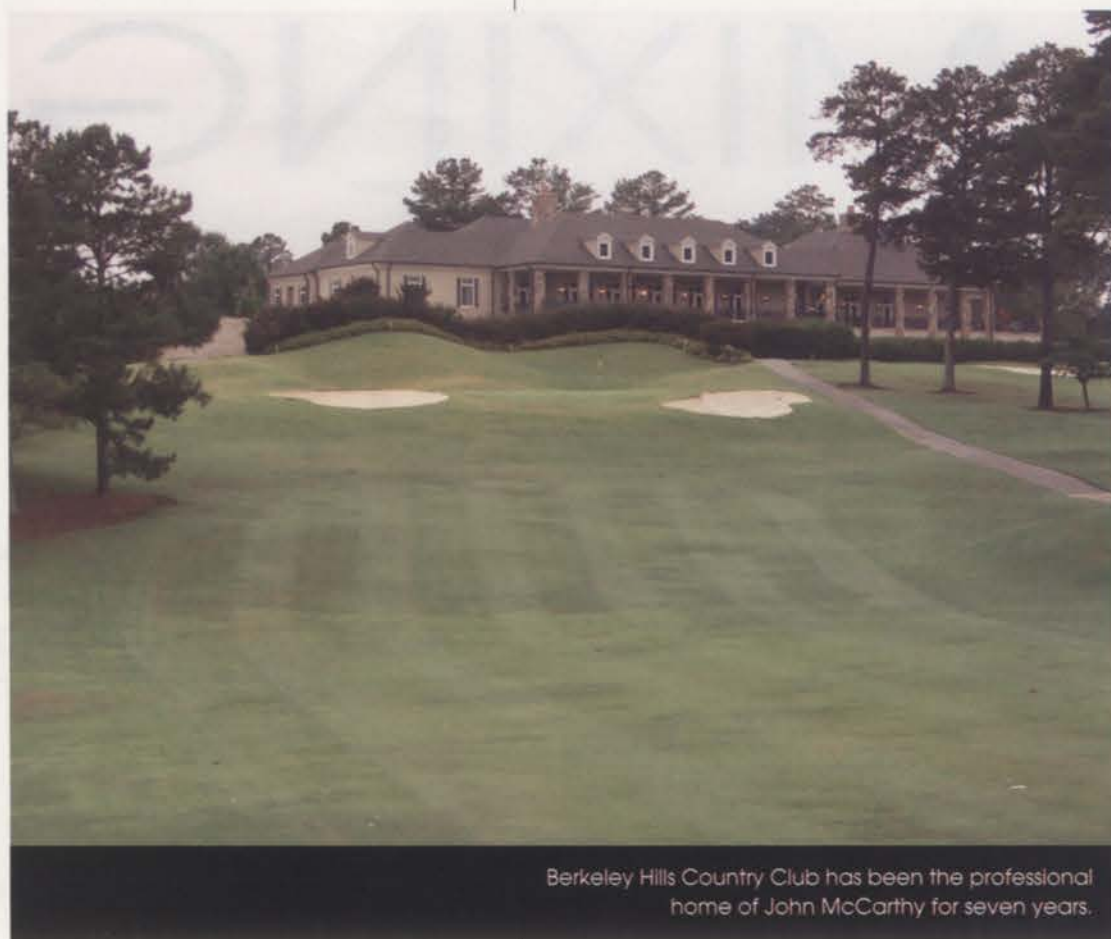


Photo: Berkeley Hills Country Club

Berkeley Hills Country Club has been the professional home of John McCarthy for seven years.

fell through because of owner issues. The guy who was going to hire me left because the owner was difficult to work with. But I couldn't think of a better situation for me."

McCarthy says the next best thing would be to become a superintendent at a private club. But says he needs to know what went on before him before he takes a job.

"I need to know the history of a club and things such as whether they pay their bills on time," he says. "I'd like to know why the guy before me left. I'd like to get a feel for the course because I can't work on something I don't like."

McCarthy says the likelihood of him becoming the superintendent at Berkeley is slim because Snyder isn't going anywhere.

"I don't know how Mark feels, but it's unrealistic for me to move up here," he says. "My support of him is high. I'd follow him out the door if it came to that. He has put a lot of faith in me. He even came with me on an interview. It was wonderful when you give

back like that. If you have a superintendent that doesn't care about you, look for other employment."

McCarthy also wouldn't rule out working for a management company.

"When you have the support of a management company, it's admirable and is worth looking into," he says. "But you never want to put yourself in a position you can't get out of."

Even though McCarthy would leave Berkeley to become a superintendent elsewhere, he doesn't want to be impatient and says patience is a characteristic people overlook.

"It's taken a lot of patience to get to this point," he says. "I get calls from vendors about job opportunities, and recently I had an interview with an architect who's building a course. So when you can integrate yourself in the business, people take notice, and you'll get an advantage. Touch as many avenues in this business as possible." GCN

"When you have the support of a management company, it's admirable and is worth looking into. But you never want to put yourself in a position you can't get out of." - JOHN McCARTHY

MIXING IT UP



Spraying pesticides takes away time from other cosmetic projects, so tank mixing can help make applications more efficient.

Photo: Freddy Bird

by
DOUG
SAUNDERS

"We usually spray three days out of seven, so combining chemicals to get more bang for the buck is a necessity."

- QUENT BARIA

VARIOUS PRECAUTIONS NEED TO BE TAKEN WHEN TANK MIXING DIFFERENT PESTICIDES

The best maintenance practices promote healthy turf, but natural conditions can threaten even the sturdiest stand of grass quickly. The combination of hot temperatures and humid air can set up the perfect medium for an outbreak of pathogens. Warm soils can lead to proliferating pests, and even cool winter weather can promote threats of damaging molds.

When these conditions appear, it's imperative a superintendent recognize them and dip into his arsenal of pesticides to combat their threats.

Pesticides normally are applied with spray tanks of varying sizes, some of which can hold as much as 300 gallons of solution. The spraying of tees, greens and fairways can impact golfers negatively, so developing an effective method of spraying is important to deliver agents efficiently and to limit the impact on golfers. One way to increase spraying efficiency is to blend several agents that can then be applied simultaneously. However, there are certain precautions that should be considered when mixing different pesticides.

Quent Baria, superintendent at Towson Golf & Country Club in Phoenix, Md., gets put to the test every summer by the effects of heat and humidity.

"We get into periods here where I will spray my tees and greens every seven to 10 days and the fairways every two weeks," he says. "We usually spray three days out of seven, so combining chemicals to get more bang for the buck is a necessity."

Compatibility

Baria calls a pesticide mix "witches brew" because as many as nine different chemicals might be mixed. But the creation of these formulas isn't the result of trial and error. It takes careful balancing of agents to create a mixture that will perform correctly.

The first step to develop a blend of pesticides is to read the labels to learn the chemical nature of each pesticide, determine its application rate and understand the safety precautions for each.

"Reading the labels is a critical step," Baria says. "It's also federal law for anyone who handles these agents."

Once a formula is created, it's wise to perform a jar test of the mixture. This consists of making a sample of the formula in its proportions in a quart jar, shaking it completely and letting it set for at least a half an hour to observe the result. Two forms of compatibility, physical and chemical, can be determined by conducting a jar test.

Physical compatibility refers to the ability of the agents mixed to blend together into a liquid that will spray easily. An incompatible mix can become a glutinous mass that won't spray well and can cause delicate machinery to become clogged or damaged, which can lead to expensive repairs and downtime. Some agents might not dissolve properly and precipitate out, which hinders their rate of effectiveness. This can lead to a futile application that can be a waste of expensive products and manpower.

The second form is chemical compatibility. Mixtures need to be created in the

proper amount and order so they don't create a new chemistry. An improper mixture can weaken an agent's effect or change into a phytotoxic mixture that can damage the turf. Even the simplest mistake can lead to expensive mishaps.

Should the jar test show bad results, a new mix can be created by adjusting the formula or adding adjuvants to help the ingredients mix with water. Other additives, i.e., surfactants, can be added to help the mixture disperse as water droplets during the spray application. The stakes are high when dealing with chemical agents, so getting opinions from other superintendents in the area is another way to avoid disaster.

"This is one area of our profession where superintendents want to share information," Baria says. "Finding suggestions and learning about other superintendents' experiences is important. This is one area where a mistake can be very costly. This isn't a task where experimentation comes into play."

There are several other factors that should be checked when mixing pesticides. The water that's used for the mixing should be tested because high levels of salts, iron or magnesium can change the chemistry. The pH level should be checked because many municipal water sources have a wide range. A pH level of 6.0 or below generally will keep tank mixtures stable.

"I found it crucial to keep abreast of the pH level in my water," says John Burke of Westfields Golf Club in Clifton, Va. "I only mix two agents at a time, but I add buffers to the mixture to control the pH."

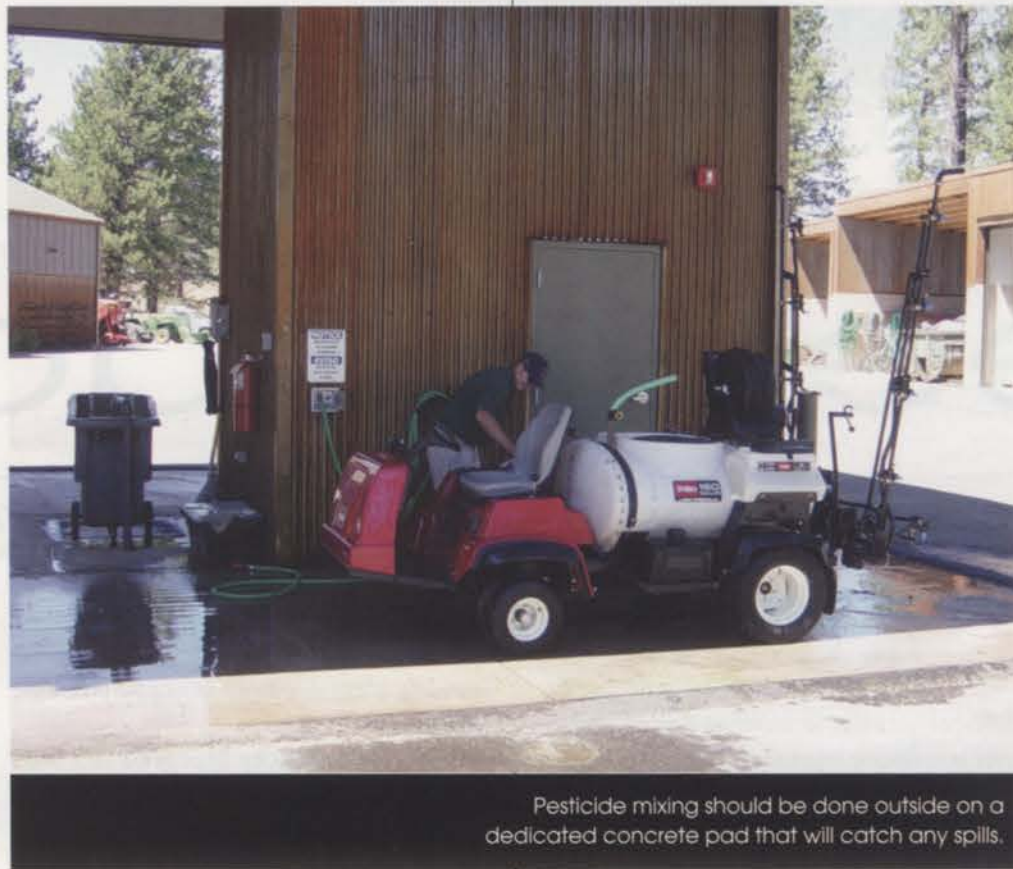
Mixing pesticides should be done outside on a dedicated concrete pad that will catch any spills. The tank should be filled about half way with water and then agitated before adding chemicals in their proper order as prescribed on the labels for each agent.

How much to mix

The number of agents mixed by superintendents varies considerably. Most will mix two agents at a time, usually combining a fertilizer with a fungicide to create a preventive mix to control pathogen outbreaks such as pythium and brown patch. Others will push the envelope by mixing five or six agents to apply them in one spray session.

James "Hud" Haas, superintendent at The Links at Waterchase, an 18-hole course in Fort Worth, Texas that opened in 2000, has been at the course since the grow-in phase and reduced his budget 22 percent since then.

"I've found many ways to squeeze out a



Pesticide mixing should be done outside on a dedicated concrete pad that will catch any spills.

bit more to control costs," he says. "The cost of chemical agents is substantial, and you can't save money by diluting the products. Therefore, I look past certain issues the average golfer won't be bothered by. We're always working right on the edge, but you want to limit your applications to not impact the golfers."

Spraying takes away time from other cosmetic projects, so mixing can make for a more efficient application. Haas' course is planted with ultradwarf Bermudagrass, which is more disease resistant. His mixing involves fertilizer and a fungicide or an insecticide to control cut worms, army worms and Bermudagrass mites.

"It's important to know the makeup of your fertilizer," he says. "The phosphorous level can have a major effect when mixing, so I always do a jar test when I use a new product."

Keeping track

When tank mixing pesticides, keeping complete documentation is important. In many states, it's a requirement to keep records of pesticide use. Also, documentation is an excellent way to keep a record of different chemical mixes for future reference.

Peter Schmidt, superintendent at the 27-hole Shenandoah Golf Club in Front Royal, Va., finds himself in a difficult two-month window during the summer and

documents the mixes he uses, the weather conditions when he sprays and the results of his applications.

"Keeping track of all these factors keeps me in compliance but also helps me determine what has worked well for me in the past," he says. "You don't get second chances when you make a mistake with these agents, so having the documentation as a reference is crucial."

Schmidt's records also help determine how many pesticides to mix at a time. This is important because all of the mixed solution should be applied on the turf, and nothing should be left over. Federal regulations state superintendents can do two things with chemical agents: apply them and store them. Disposal can be costly, and in many cases illegal, so using all of the chemicals that are mixed is critical.

"After application of some materials, I'll rinse the tank, but I'll spray that rinsate out in the rough areas of the course," Schmidt says.

Schmidt also has mixed six agents at a time.

"I'm a believer in the old joke that you can't mix 10 items at once," he quips.

GCN

Doug Saunders is a freelance writer based in Truckee, Calif. He can be reached at dougs@sierra.net.

Seed update

CHOICES ABOUND FOR SUPERINTENDENTS AS VARIETIES MULTIPLY

by
ROB
THOMAS

Golf course superintendents have many choices when selecting turfgrass. Researchers are working on different varieties to improve drought tolerance and disease resistance. The following are descriptions about newer varieties.

Barenbrug USA

Barimpala bluegrass is a new class of Kentucky bluegrass that is bred for rapid germination and establishment. Under ideal conditions, it can be established at the same rate as tall fescue (1.5 to two times faster than average bluegrass). The quick establishment helps crowd-out weeds. It also has high traffic tolerance, early spring green-up and medium green color.

For more information, visit www.barenbrug.com.

Burlingham Seeds

Buena Vista perennial ryegrass features enhanced gray leaf spot resistance and improved overall turf quality. Buena Vista has a more-than-90-percent endophyte level that enhances turf performance. The endophyte is a naturally occurring fungus that works together with developing and mature plants to enhance stress tolerance and improve insect resistance.

Turbo tall fescue has been selected for its performance and brown-patch-disease resistance in various conditions. Turbo maintains high turf quality through late fall, when other varieties can look dormant from late season frost. It performs well when mowed short or maintained taller. Using higher fertility, Turbo was screened for the newest improvements in brown patch disease tolerance. Under low fertility and tall mowing, it maintains a high turf quality. Turbo has good disease resistance versus

pythium and typhula blight. It is endophyte enhanced for added stress tolerance. Turbo is widely adaptable and has improved traffic tolerance.

Dynamo Kentucky bluegrass is a fine-leaved turf variety that's a cross of Blacksburg and Unique turf varieties developed by Pure-Seed Testing. Dynamo thrives under short-cut, high-maintenance applications. The variety has traits that also offer good low maintenance performance. With improved shade tolerance and powdery mildew resistance, it mixes well with Midnight types to give a nice genetic balance for turf and sod mixes. Classified as a compact America type, it was developed to provide a medium, dark-green plant with high shoot density. It has a short growth habit, good wear tolerance and color retention. The variety greens up in early spring and retains its color later through the growing season. It has good seedling vigor and high sod strength and is widely adaptable to use in mixes. It shows resistance to powdery mildew, summer patch and dollar spot diseases. Dynamo will perform well when cut as low as one-half inch, but is easily adaptable to a 2.5 inch height of cut.

For more information, visit www.burlinghamseeds.com.

DLF International Seeds

PhD perennial ryegrass blend contains three varieties, such as All-Star2, Top Hat II, Esquire, Keystone, Essence, Gator 3 and Derby Supreme. PhD provides a broad genetic background for a range of adaptation and improved horizontal disease resistance. It's a good choice for winter overseeding on greens, tees and fairways where rapid transitioning is desired. Its main features are: dark green color, quick establishment,

strong wear tolerance, strong cold tolerance and disease resistance.

Sabre III *Poa trivialis* was developed to provide golf course superintendents who overseed with a denser and darker green turf. Benefits of overseeding with Sabre III included rapid establishment and a good level of resistance to leaf spot caused by *Drechslera* spp. Initial testing shows improvement of turf quality, density and color over other commercially available varieties. Sabre III was developed for winter overseeding turfgrass mixtures. It is also recommended in mixes designed for cool-season, shade-tolerant, mild-climatic zones. In winter, overseeding benefits include: rapid transition, low height of cut and low temperature tolerance at establishment.

For more information, visit www.dlfs.com.

Jacklin Seed

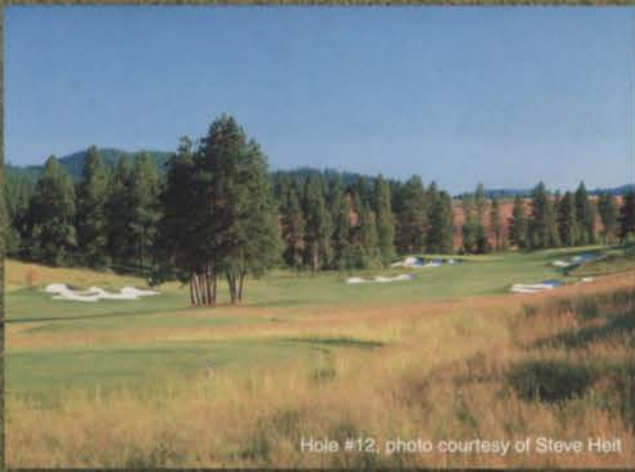
In national independent trials on greens of 26 commercially available and experimental bentgrass varieties, **T-1 creeping bentgrass** ranked No. 1 in genetic color and showed a significant difference above other varieties. T-1 can heal ball marks and repair divots rapidly and make visible gains against *Poa annua* each year. T-1 germinates quickly and fills in aggressively.

Alpha creeping bentgrass offers ground cover under difficult growing conditions. Alpha's aggressive growth and turf density help quickly establish a uniform, dark green playing surface that will recover quickly from ball marks and divots. Alpha is a good choice for interseeding into existing *Poa annua* or bentgrass stands on greens, tees or fairways.

For more information, visit www.jacklinseed.com/turf/jacklin.

For more information about turfgrass testing performance, results of the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program trials are available at www.ntep.org.





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Brian Woster, Superintendent
L-93 Bentgrass Greens



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In five years of NTEP trials, **Riviera Bermudagrass** was ranked first overall for early green-up; turf quality; rich, green color; texture; uniformity and density. Riviera also is exceptionally tolerant to cold and is drought and disease resistant. It has high wear tolerance and divot recovery rate. Riviera planted in mid-May as far north as Kansas City is playable in seven to eight weeks after seeding. It's available in sod.

For more information, visit johnsonseedco.com.

Lebanon Turf

New varieties scored well in the new NTEP bentgrass trials. In the fairway height trial, **Declaration creeping bentgrass** ranked No. 1 for overall turf quality and No. 1 for dollar spot resistance. **Independence creeping bentgrass** ranked high for brown patch resistance and *Poa* encroachment. In the greens height trial, Declaration tied for No. 1 for overall turf quality and ranked near the top in most tests. Independence ranked high for overall turf quality, brown patch, copper spot and pythium root rot resistances. **Legendary Velvet bentgrass** ranked high for fine leaf texture and brown patch resistance and was one of the top velvets overall. All three varieties ranked high for seedling vigor.

For more information, visit www.LebanonTurf.com.

LESCO

Authority creeping bentgrass is a new variety rated No. 1 in 2004 NTEP trials for bentgrass greens. It has dollar spot and brown

patch resistance, improved density, an upright growth habit, wilt resistance and heat tolerance. It's ideal for seeding new greens, tees or fairways or interseeding existing bentgrass turf for improved quality and disease resistance.

Grand Prix creeping bentgrass exhibits good tolerance to brown patch and excellent performance in hot, humid climatic conditions. Other features are: upright growth habit, reduced grain, increased density, improved disease tolerance, medium green color, increased resistance to *Poa annua* invasion and a preferred low mowing height (1/8 inch).

For more information, visit www.lesco.com.

Scotts

Thermal Blue, formerly HB-129 Hybrid Bluegrass, keeps quality with less maintenance and minimal water and nitrogen inputs. Thermal Blue shows rapid germination and establishment, a trait uncharacteristic of Kentucky bluegrasses. With a medium genetic color, it's similar to varieties Coventry, Jefferson, Limousine and Baronie and slightly darker than Eagleton. Leaf texture is somewhat broad, similar to Abbey, Moonlight, Blackburg II and Raven. Thermal Blue also offers: highly rated density, top statistically rated spring green, top performing percent living ground cover during summer months and high-rated drought tolerance. It's adapted to regions where Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue are used. It can be used as a monostand, in mixes with Kentucky bluegrass, and/or in mixes with perennial ryegrass, or at 10-20 percent by weight in mixes with turf type tall fescue. The spreading nature of Thermal Blue will allow turf stands to repair from drought and mechanical injury.

For more information, visit www.scotts.com.

Seed Research of Oregon

Cheetah (SRX 26370) Kentucky bluegrass is one of the highest rated Kentucky bluegrass varieties for sod strength. It has high levels of cool weather or winter growth activity. It performs well at various mowing heights and in a wide range of climates. Other qualities are: good summer patch resistance and excellent stem rust resistance; superior disease resistance – typhula blight and stripe smut; developed for ultra fine texture and dense growth; early spring green-up; great shade and low light tolerance, and very wear tolerant; medium dark green color; stress tolerant for heat and drought; excellent performer in the Pacific Northwest; and blends well with fine fescues and perennial ryegrass.

Ulysses (SRX SRX 27832) Kentucky bluegrass is noted for its high wear tolerance throughout the season. A Julia type, Ulysses has high turf quality ratings under all types of use and good leaf spot and stripe smut resistance. Other qualities are: maintains quality when stressed; maintains well at short mowing height, as low as 1/2 inch for fairways; texture and density blends well with other grasses; and noted performance on sites in the mountain West.

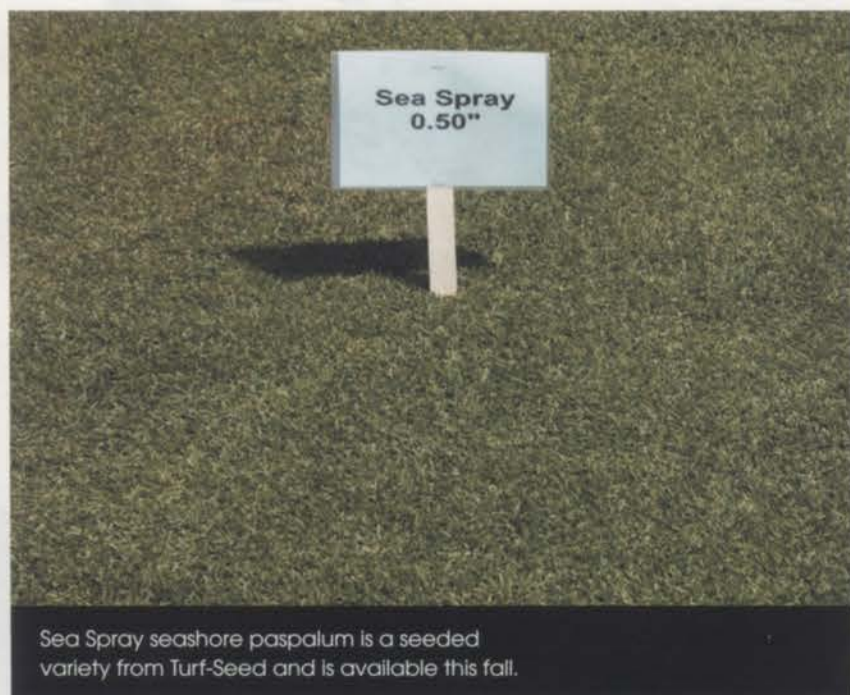
Orfeo Kentucky bluegrass consistently produces high levels of rhizomes, contributing to great sod strength and better sod harvest. The aggressive type bluegrass has the highest ratings for wear tolerance and has good rust tolerance. Other qualities include: rapid germination and fast establishment for sod production; good performance under cloudy conditions of spring and fall; excellent recovery from wear and use.

Scaldis II hard fescue has good shade tolerance and lower thatch development. It blends well with other fine fescues, Kentucky bluegrass or perennial ryegrass. Other qualities include: good summer patch and red thread resistance; excellent spring and winter color; and high seed yield potential.

Peregrine (APR 1425) perennial ryegrass has improved resistance to gray leaf spot and is an excellent choice for use on all ryegrass projects, from southern winter overseeding to areas of permanent ryegrass turf use. Peregrine's seedling salt tolerance is as good or better as other salt tolerant varieties. It also blends well with Kentucky bluegrass for sod production. Other qualities include: good resistance to crown rust and red thread; highly stress tolerant for drought and heat conditions; excellent cold weather performance, great for southern winter overseeding; dark, green color and compact, dwarf growth habit; and a high density that provides superior performance at low mowing heights.

SR 4550 (APR 1557) perennial ryegrass has exhibited good seedling salt tolerance for good growth under effluent irrigation conditions. This variety has improved resistance to gray leaf spot, has good crown rust and red thread resistance, and has high seedling vigor and fast establishment. Other qualities include: dense, compact, wear-tolerant growth; good insect resistance from endophytes; and dark green color.

SR 7150 (SRX MODD) colonial bentgrass is dark green with fine texture and high density for quality turf. It blends well with fine fescues for high quality sod production. It has a high wear tolerance with early spring green-up and has better heat and drought



Sea Spray seashore paspalum is a seeded variety from Turf-Seed and is available this fall.

Photo: EPIC Creative Communications



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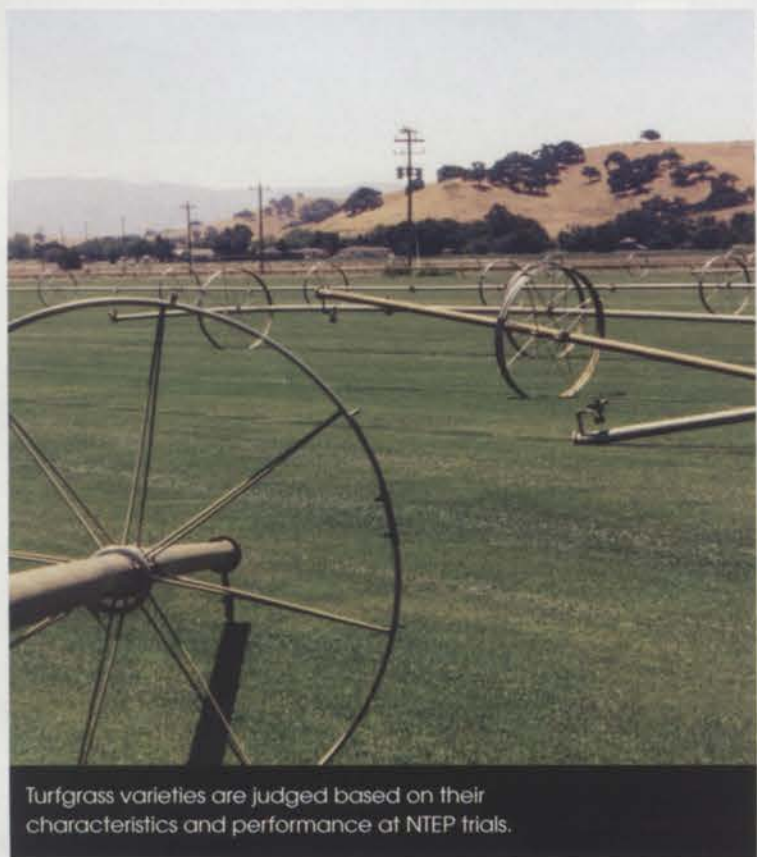
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tolerance than other colonial bents. Other qualities include: improved brown patch resistance, dollar spot resistance, and good germination and establishment.

007 (experimental DSB) creeping bentgrass has high dollar spot resistance and is well suited for tees and fairways with low fungicide input. It also has moderately high turf density; was highly rated in the NTEP trials; has bright, dark green, good winter color; and maintains well under reduced mowing height greens maintenance.



Turfgrass varieties are judged based on their characteristics and performance at NTEP trials.

SR 1200 creeping bentgrass is a dense variety well suited to use on greens, tees and fairways of high-end courses, either planted alone or overseeded into existing creeping bentgrass to upgrade and improve quality. It has a stress tolerant germplasm for performance in tough conditions. Other qualities are: no excessive thatch buildup; dark green color; high dollar spot resistance; highly rated for fall color retention; and high resistance to brown patch.

Companion zoysiagrass has a high wear tolerance with medium leaf texture, performs well in varied climates and management levels, and has significantly early spring green-up. Other traits are: good seedling vigor and establishment; dark green color with good density; good resistance to brown patch and zoysia mite; and superior spring and summer density ratings.

For more information, visit www.sroseed.com.

Tee-2-Green

PennLinks II bentgrass was bred naturally for superior resistance to dollar spot. PennLinks II also provides a grainless playing surface and upright, semi-aggressive growth habit. Medium dark green in color, it offers excellent heat and drought tolerances.

Developed by Pure-Seed Testing, **Penneagle II bentgrass** was bred systematically to provide an increased natural resistance to brown patch. Penneagle II's medium fine, semi-erect growth habit makes it an ideal fit for fairways. It has a darker green color than other bentgrasses, and its early spring green-up helps it compete effectively against *Poa annua*.

For more information, visit www.tee-2-green.com.

Turf Merchants

Benchmark DSR creeping bentgrass became available after the new crop harvest in August. The new variety comes from a multiple-year breeding project at Rutgers University that focused its selection on dollar spot, brown patch and red thread resistance. Benchmark DSR has a medium leaf texture and can reduce the need for fungicides. It also displays excellent summer density and spring green-up.

For more information, visit turfmerchants.com.

TurfOne

Argos (A99-2168) Kentucky bluegrass is derived from a cross of an America-type and Shamrock-type cultivar, resulting in a dark green color and early spring green-up, as well as improved heat and drought tolerance. Argos has demonstrated high leaf spot resistance. Compact in nature, Argos will perform under a variety of cutting heights including one-half inch, which makes it extremely versatile for a variety of turf applications. It has a fine texture and mixes well with other species.

Headstart 2 (PRG HS-07) perennial ryegrass is ranked in the top 1 percent in recent screening trials for overall performance and genetic color. It demonstrates superior density even under lower mowing heights and recovers quickly from traffic and summer stresses. Improved disease resistance includes rust and red thread. It establishes rapidly, is dark green in color, has extremely fine texture and is extremely wear tolerant.

Firebolt (PRG HS-09) perennial ryegrass was developed to exhibit fine leaf texture and a compact form resulting in a dense turf suitable for a variety of applications where an attractive and durable turf is desired. Firebolt

has demonstrated good resistance to rust diseases and moderately good resistance to gray leaf spot. Heat and drought tolerant, Firebolt shows good recovery from a variety of summer stresses. Other features include rapid establishment, dark green color and low-mowing tolerance.

TransCend (LHTT-1) intermediate ryegrass is the latest result of the Pickseed Group patented development process, resulting in an intermediate ryegrass with perennial ryegrass features such as fine texture and darker color but the quick transitioning of an annual ryegrass. TransCend also has demonstrated improved salt tolerance. It can be used wherever a temporary high quality turf is desired, such as in overseeding or as a nurse crop for other species. Other features include a compact form and heat and drought tolerance.

For more information, visit turfone.com.

Turf-Seed

Gray Hawk is a gray leaf spot tolerant blend anchored by the new Silver Dollar perennial ryegrass variety. The blend also will include Graystar and Citation Fore varieties. The blend will be available for fall and spring in limited quantities.

Sea Spray seashore paspalum is available from seed and will be widely available this fall.

Some enhanced varieties also offered by the company include:

Quicksilver perennial ryegrass is glyphosate tolerant and stem rust, crown rust resistant.

Silver Dollar perennial ryegrass provides high gray leaf spot and dollar spot resistance, and is crown rust and stem rust resistant.

Silverado II tall fescue provides high gray leaf spot resistance, as well as good heat tolerance and brown patch resistance.

Silverstar tall fescue is brown patch and pythium blight resistant.

Tar Heel II tall fescue provides excellent brown patch and gray leaf spot resistance and is heat and shade tolerant. Its salt tolerance equals 85.7 percent at 25,000 ppm NaCl.

Aurora II fine fescue is a hard variety that provides excellent red thread resistance. It also is pythium blight, dollar spot and leaf spot resistant.

Florentine GT strong creeping red fescue is glyphosate and salt tolerant.

Moonshine Kentucky bluegrass is a Shamrock hybrid that provides good stem rust and stripe smut resistance. Its seed count per pound equals 1,180,020.

For more information, visit www.turf-seed.com. GCN

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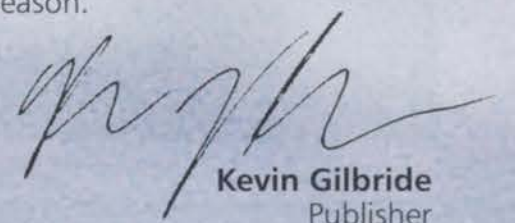
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Kevin Gilbride
Publisher

NATURE of the BUSINESS

WEATHER CAN AFFECT MAINTENANCE, BUDGETING AND PROPERTY VALUE

by
SHAUN A.
HENRY AND
LAURENCE
A. HIRSH

Superintendents and course managers in the Mid-Atlantic region were dealt a bad hand this summer with extreme weather. The area has been subject to relentless high temperatures and humidity without much of a break. Low temperatures dipped only to the periodic normal low for the area several times. Many courses received overabundant rainfall because of scattered thunderstorms, while neighboring courses received little or no rain.

The extreme weather impacted maintenance practices and course conditions at many facilities. Increased disease pressure, saturated soils, wet wilt/scold injury, mechanical damage and thinning turf lead the list of problems plaguing superintendents.

Properties most affected seem to have a combination of the following:

- Abundant rainfall;
- Poor drainage;
- Heavy soils;
- Limited airflow;
- Shaded areas; and
- A significant percentage of *Poa annua*.

Even predominantly bentgrass courses with adequate drainage and sand greens that have been lucky enough to avoid untimely thunderstorms haven't gone unscathed by this season's vicious weather. By most accounts, however, such courses have fared better than older courses without such benefits.

While at the mercy of Mother Nature,



The problems from heat, humidity and excessive rainfall highlight the importance of drainage. This fairway exhibits poor drainage.

Photo: Golf Property Analysts



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area superintendents have pulled out all the stops to get their courses through this stressful period in the best conditions possible under budgetary constraints. Some of the programs include: modified control products, fertilizer applications, precise water management (including increased hand watering) and temporarily conservative cultural practice decisions.

Many courses have resorted to increasing the amount of hand mowing to alleviate the mechanical damage associated with larger riding mowers, while others are pruning (and removing) trees and installing fans to increase airflow around problem areas. Some courses are keeping staff members on the property after hours to squeegee puddles from critical areas of the golf course to prevent scolding of the turf.

While all of these additional maintenance practices might aid the turf during high-stress periods, they often are unanticipated expenses in an already tight maintenance budget. Increased pressure to improve the bottom line has left many courses with maintenance budgets that won't withstand additional expenditures necessary to limit effects of extreme weather. While worst-case-scenario budgeting is unaffordable and inappropriate for most golf properties, course managers and owners need to consider the cost to prevent turf loss versus the cost not to during extreme situations – namely the cost

to reverse the damage, the cost of lost revenue and, in some cases, a blemished reputation.

Unfortunately, this also can result in certain areas of the golf course being neglected because greens, tees and fairways get all the resources available for survival. Eventually, areas such as bunkers, roughs, plantings and landscaped areas become eyesores and require repair or are sometimes eliminated.

All this impacts a course's bottom line from several perspectives:

Damage repair. This amount varies from course to course, but one should count on higher seed budgets in the fall, along with increased labor costs for those projects able to be completed in-house. Additionally, those courses with more severe damage might require outside contractors to fix some of the damage. This increases operating expenses beyond budgets for the year.

Correcting problems. Often, some of the damage reveals problem areas requiring correction, such as the installation of additional drainage, irrigation upgrades, tree removal and trimming, or in some cases, green, tee or bunker renovation. A prudent buyer for any course will view these as immediately required capital improvements and will evaluate purchase pricing accordingly. Thus, additional monies need to be included in the capital improvements budgets, at least for the short term.

Lost revenues. Several courses have closed greens, and some have shut down for periods of time because of damage. Revenue loss is in the form of no play or reduced green fees for courses with temporary greens. With most courses reporting improved performance during the previous two years, any such interruptions will impact those gains.

While it's difficult to estimate the revenue loss for each course because of the varying levels of damage, this season's weather could impact the value and potential sale price of those courses slow to recover or make repairs. Given an expeditious program to return the facilities to their prior condition (or improved), long-term performance

and values shouldn't be impacted because this year's weather in the region has been abnormal (characterized by some superintendents as a 10-year occurrence). For budgeting purposes, it would be prudent and proper for operators to consider their unique costs and expenses incurred this season and budget 10 percent of same to prepare a sinking fund for the next time similar conditions occur. These funds could be used to make improvements that would alleviate some of the damage incurred this season.

There are several things that can be learned from the challenges of 2005:

Preparation. Operators shouldn't be surprised with conditions like they've experienced this summer. If this is a 10-year occurrence, then they should plan accordingly with appropriate sinking funds. It's not like these conditions don't occur, the question is how frequently.

Drainage and irrigation. While there have been problems from heat, humidity and excessive rainfall, they highlight the importance of drainage. Despite the high temperatures, courses with adequate irrigation are experiencing problems in their low areas compared to the higher spots, which might not hold water. Water doesn't always cure the problems of tough summers, sometimes it causes those problems. Adequate irrigation is obvious and, without rain, will always be needed to be applied precisely with modern systems.

Trees. Trees often are the objects of considerable debate at many clubs. Everybody loves trees. The recent removal of almost 1,000 trees at some of the nation's greatest courses (Oakmont and Merion to name a couple) wasn't without good reason. As these trees grow, they deprive other parts of the course, especially greens and tees, of sunlight nutrients and water. Trees require trimming (and in some cases removal) as they grow to ensure adequate air circulation. This should be part of any course's long-term plan. This isn't without cost and should be planned for.

Budgeting. It's difficult for many to budget for unforeseen circumstances. Therefore, natural shortsightedness suggests operators normalize their budgeting, often to make it attractive. The suggestions above should be incorporated into an accurate annual budget in the form of a sinking fund for occurrences that, while not annual, are foreseeable and somewhat periodic. GCN

Shaun A. Henry is a former golf course superintendent and a staff appraiser-consultant with Golf Property Analysts. Laurence A. Hirsh is the president of Golf Property Analysts.

Photo: Golf Property Analysts

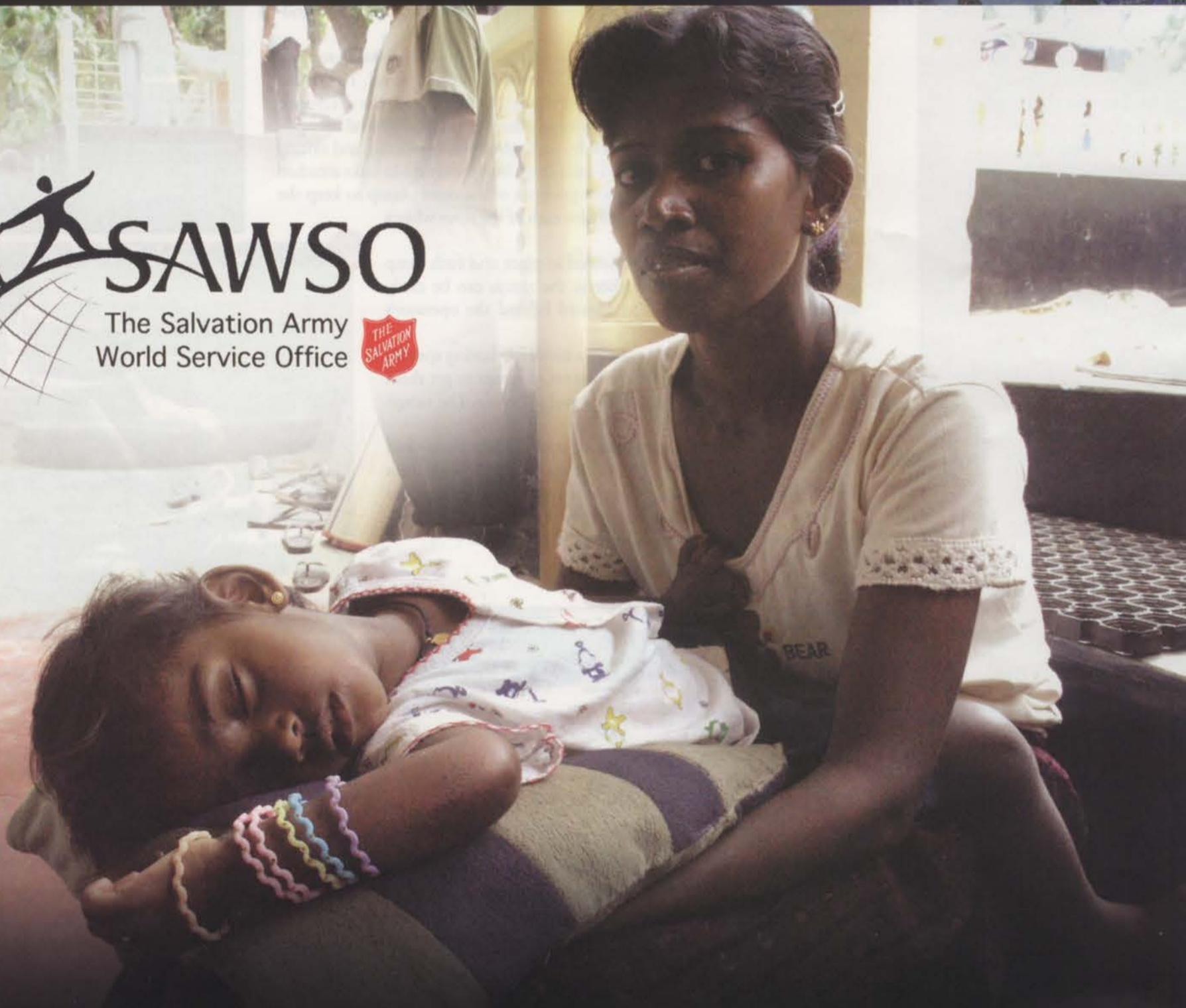


High temperatures and humidity have contributed to turfgrass damage on greens in the Mid-Atlantic region.



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travels with  **TERRY**



Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He's a 35-year member of the GCSAA and can be reached at terrybuchen@earthlink.net.

Globetrotting consulting agronomist Terry Buchen visits many golf courses annually with his digital camera in-hand. He will share helpful ideas relating to maintenance equipment from the golf course superintendents he visits – as well as a few ideas of his own – with timely photos and captions that explore the changing world of golf course management.

Ramp it up

It's always an interesting challenge for a riding bunker rake to get into and out of a bunker without damaging the top lip of the bunker during the process. It's difficult to enter and exit some bunkers because of steep faces, capes and mays. Getting in and out of these puts strain on a riding bunker rake's engine and hydraulic system.

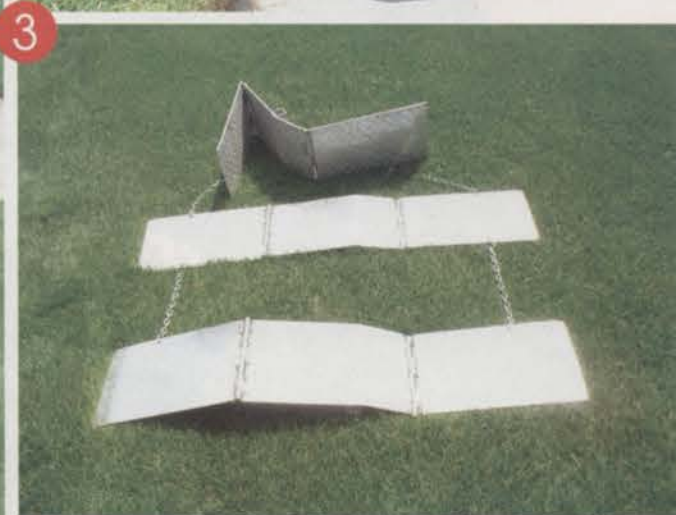
The bunker designs and routine maintenance practices shown in photos two and four show a 2-inch lip all the way around each greenside and fairway bunker for added aesthetic appeal in addition to providing a challenge for golfers and bunker rake operators.

This portable ramp uses three individual 10-inch-by-16-inch ramp sections that are $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch-thick, diamond plate aluminum for each wheel. The center ramp section for each wheel is pitched about 20-degrees and has a 1.5-inch square piece of aluminum tubing welded in place for added structural strength, providing a better angle of approach by each wheel when entering and exiting each bunker. There are two sets of 1-inch-long, heavy-duty chain links attached on either side of the top and bottom portions of the center ramp to keep the ramps on either side spaced properly for each of the three wheels when driving on them.

The heavy-duty hinges are welded in place and each ramp section folds back onto each other so the ramps can be easily transported in a storage basket located behind the operator's seat (photo one).

The ramps were made locally by a metal fabricating specialist. It took extra time to build the first set of ramps to get them just right, adding to the cost of time and materials. The ramps cost \$400.

Ted Fist, golf course superintendent at the Wynstone Golf Club in North Barrington, Ill., came up with this novel idea after first making a prototype out of wood. The prototype was researched and tested by his maintenance staff before the aluminum finished product was conceived and built. GCN



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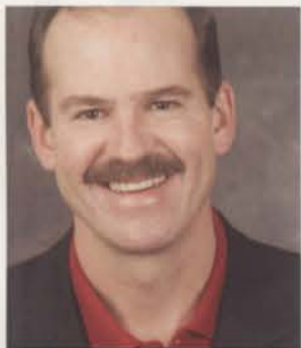
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Pat Jones is president of Flagstick LLC, a consulting firm that provides sales and marketing intelligence to green-industry businesses. He can be reached at psjhawk@cox.net or 440-478-4763.

Golf goes 'all in'

Unless you've been living under a rock, don't have cable or have been flirting with the Amish lifestyle, you might have noticed there's been a teensy, tiny upswing of interest in poker.

We live in a country where Chris "Jesus" Ferguson, Annie Duke, Doyle Brunson and even nerdnik ESPN commentator Norman Chad are rock stars. It is, in short, a phenomenon. You could even call it a poker boom.

Hmmm ... where have we heard that word "boom" before? Sounds familiar to me for some reason.

Statistics are sketchy, but as many as 50 million Americans are playing poker of some kind right now. It's a huge industry by any account. Major newspapers and magazines are writing about it. Does that sound familiar, too?

Quite simply, poker is the new golf. Just when we thought the soccer dad trend had sucked all the wind from our sails, along comes poker to drain us further like a hungry vampire snacking at a blood bank.

But, rather than lament our fate, let's compare and contrast ourselves to poker and find out what we can learn from our friends in the smoky casinos and online sites that comprise the latest, greatest leisure explosion.

Poker vs. golf

Poker is incredibly easy to play for the average schmuck. Like golf, poker is a deceptively simple game. It combines skill and luck to varying degrees at various levels. The better you are, the less important luck is to your success. And, just as a high-handicap hacker will hole one out for an ace occasionally, an idiot amateur potentially can win a big pot against a great poker player.

The difference, however, becomes clear throughout time. A duffer could never win the U.S. Open playing four rounds over 72 grueling holes. Conversely, an amateur walked away with more than \$5 million in the World Series of Poker in 2004. Our game just isn't as accessible to Joe Sixpack as poker.

Our great opportunity to bring the aura of accessibility back to golf is the handicap. We seem to have forgotten to promote the basic idea that in regular

play, a first-time duffer could actually take money from a scratch player if she plays better than her handicap and he plays worse. We should go back to the idea of promoting golf as the only egalitarian sport that uses handicapping to make play between any two individuals – no matter what their skill level – relatively fair and even.

Poker has personalities who seem like folks who could be living next door. In golf, we have Tiger, Ernie, Phil, Annika and Jack. Do you live in the same neighborhood as any of them? Aside from the random Cinderella story like Ben Curtis or Calvin Peete (Whatever happened to him, anyway?), our leading figures seem like untouchable Hollywood celebrities. Even Tiger, our poster boy for attracting minorities, grew up in a stable, middle-class Southern California household.

Poker, on the other hand, seems to put the spotlight on guys with a three-day growth of beard, bad personal habits and a potbelly. Watch any given night on ESPN, and you'll see some doofus at the final table of a big tournament wearing a wrinkled T-shirt and \$6 sunglasses winning big stacks of cash.

Why can't we spotlight more unlikely folks playing golf and having a ball? Well, maybe we can if we consider that.

Poker doesn't put on a false front about itself. This contrast in styles really came home to me recently when I was watching golf on TV and saw one of the commercials for the well-intentioned but ill-fated "Play Golf America" campaign. In case you haven't seen these, they are a slickly produced series of promos featuring deliriously happy people playing golf. At the end of each, a celebrity (Roger Clemens, Ray Romano, etc.) comes on and hollers, "Play golf America!" at the camera. OK, we get it.

This particular spot featured a foursome of upscale, extremely well-dressed, racially balanced people playing golf. At the end, zillionaire actor Samuel L. Jackson comes on and tells us (kind of creepily) to, "Play golf America!" Yeah, there's a good spokesman: a low-handicapper movie star who could be doing any damn thing he wants

with his spare time. How exactly does that appeal to the blue-collar, lunch-bucket toters we need to attract?

A great alternative to this approach would be to produce documentary-style commercials featuring real guys playing at some muni course in Hackensack, N.J. They'd be topping balls, gambling, smoking cigars and burping during each others' backswings. At the end, John Daly would come on and drawl, "Hey you mullet-haired, tank-top-wearing, cheap-beer-drinking clowns: Play some damn golf already!" Now that might bring some new dollars to the market.

It's easier to successfully sneak off to play poker. The old "I need to go to the hardware store for a couple of hours" excuse rarely works when your wife hears the rattle of golf clubs being placed in the car trunk and you arrive home with the telltale untanned left hand from your glove. Poker? No problem (except for the empty wallet).

Cheating has very different consequences. Shave a couple of strokes off your score or use the old foot wedge, and you'll probably

get a dirty look from your opponent. Slip an extra king into your hand to fill out a straight, and you might be facing the business end of a sawed-off shotgun. The advantage goes to golf on that one, I guess.

Stiff competition

All right, gentle reader, I've had my fun with the poker vs. golf question today (It's been on my mind because my brother is actually a professional poker player who competed in the World Series of Poker in Vegas this year.), but believe it or not, there's a point:

When it comes to our business success, we are no longer competing for share of mind, share of wallet or share of market. We are competing for share of time. Poker – like Little League, pee-wee soccer, increased work loads, church, dance recitals, books, reruns of "Hee Haw," etc., etc., etc. – is one more thing golf must out-compete for the 24 precious hours a day each consumer is given. How can your course win that big game? GCN

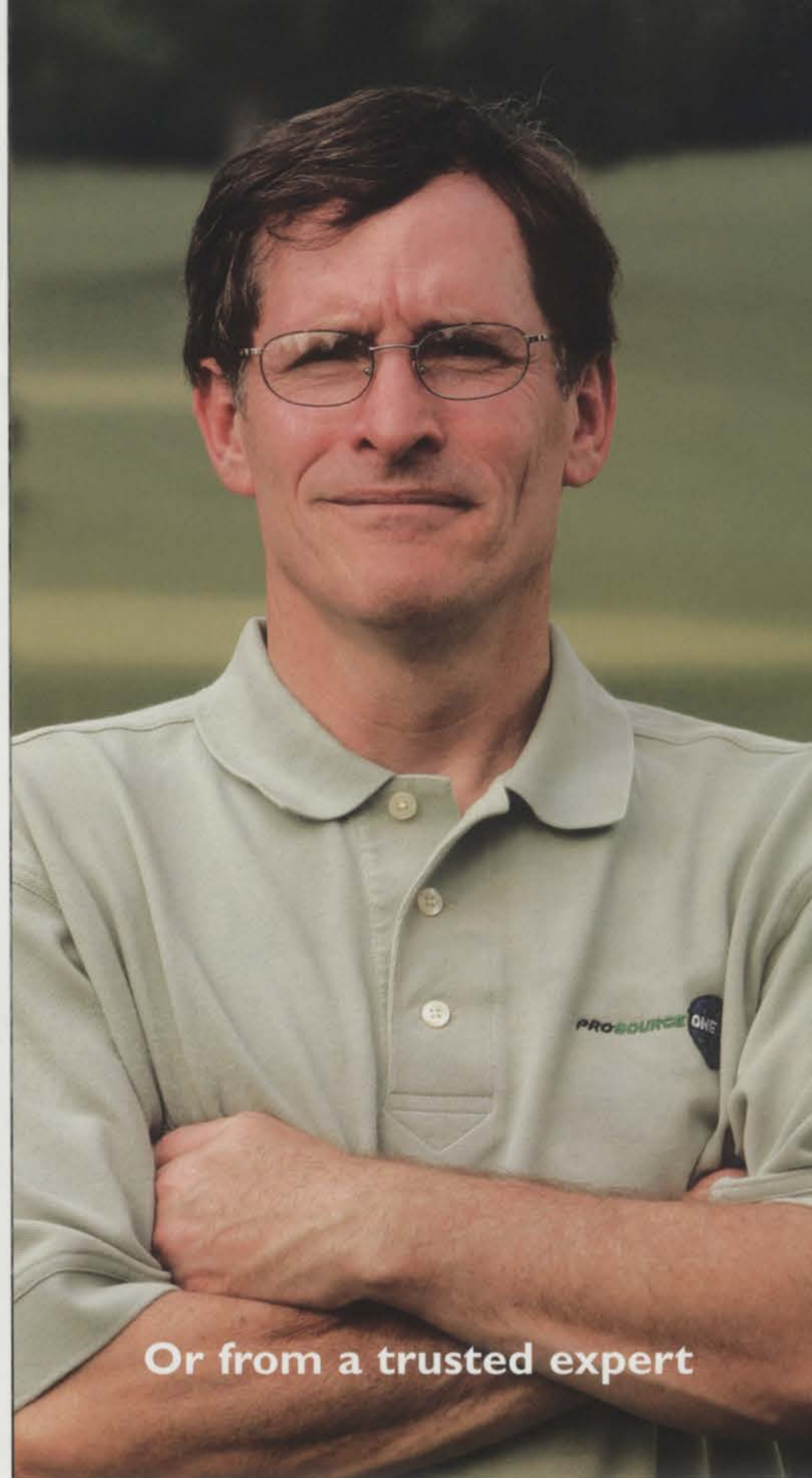
POKER ... IS ONE MORE THING GOLF MUST OUT-COMPETE FOR THE 24 PRECIOUS HOURS A DAY EACH CONSUMER IS GIVEN.

We would like to hear from you. Please post any comments you have about this column on our message board, which is at www.golfcoursenews.com/messageboard.





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