

May 2006

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GOLF

COURSE NEWS

Serving the Business of Golf Course Management

Holes 18 and 9, Hazeltine National Golf Club, Chaska, Minn.

INSIDE:

- Organic maintenance
- Seashore paspalum update
- Be more business savvy
- Maintenance facility renovation

TOURNAMENT TIME

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TIME**

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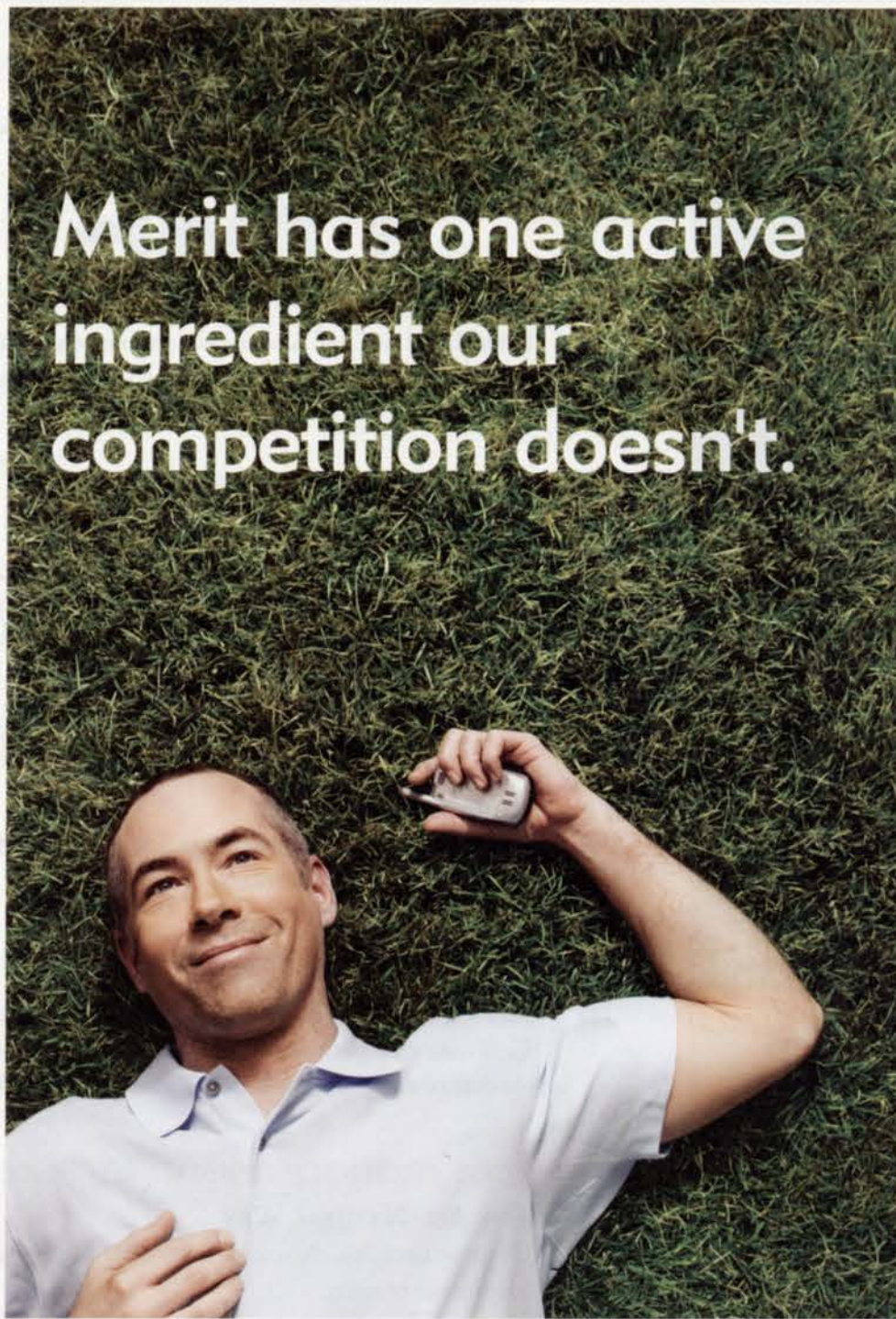
Cover photo: Hazeltine National Golf Club



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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ONLINE-ONLY FEATURES:

A LIFE LESSON

Lehigh University students - some of whom have never stepped foot on a fairway - designed a course that might be built some day.

TURNING IT AROUND

Golf course superintendent Matt Yount helps prepare English Turn Golf and Country Club in New Orleans for the Zurch Classic.

GROWTH PLANS AND GOVERNMENT WORK

At its media summit in Washington D.C., in April, BASF outlined its growth plans and discussed pesticide regulations and registration.

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John Walsh
Editor

Playing politics

The political atmosphere in this country can be summed up in one word: polarized. Because of that, not much is getting accomplished in Washington – other than a lot of bickering, whining and obstructionist tactics. But hey, what do you expect from politicians anyway.

Despite all the divisiveness about almost every issue, there's one topic that really isn't on the radar screen inside the beltway: pesticide use. Environmental lobbies seemingly have abandoned efforts to restrict pesticide use at the federal level, and instead, are preferring to slowly – and effectively – chip away at the issue at the state and local levels. A few years ago, Allen James, the president of Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment, called these hard-to-win local fights "death by a thousand tiny cuts."

Well, that bleeding continues, and the battle to retain the tools you need to do your jobs effectively should be top of mind for golf course superintendents, owners, managers and everyone else who makes a living in this wonderful business.

It's clearly top of mind for pesticide suppliers and organizations such as RISE that support them. Recent trips to Cleary Chemical in Dayton, N.J., and a BASF media event in Washington, D.C., made it clear to me chemical companies are working quite hard to develop and provide the market tested, proven and effective pesticide products. They're also working hard to retain the products you already use. For example, Rick Fletcher, director of product development for Cleary, says the company has had to spend a lot of time and money recently to defend the use of thiophanate-methyl, mancozeb and thiram.

However, I understand you might be thinking more about the increasing price of fuel, fertilizer and pesticides, as well as the expectations of golfers, than the efforts of various pesticide suppliers who are continually fighting for the right to make, sell and use the products that are vital to your job. You might have more pressing issues to deal with. But, you should know about these efforts and be thankful for them because there are plenty of environmental activists that want to severely restrict, or even ban, the use of pesticides in the United States. You

should pay keen attention to the politics surrounding pesticide use in your area and state because it will directly impact your livelihood.

James and RISE say strict regulations in Europe and Canada are proliferating and activists are trying to establish similar regulations here in the States. One case – although not directly involving pesticides – was in Wisconsin in which a local government wanted to ban the use of certain fertilizers that contained phosphorus, which activists claim were deteriorating the water quality.

To hamper the momentum of environmental activists, you should work more closely with pesticide suppliers to help disseminate valuable, scientific evidence – and common sense – that supports pesticide use to help educate and inform legislators at every level of government – local, state and federal – because those who make the laws seem to lack this information, which counterbalances the emotion-based claims activists make. It seems the smaller the level of government, the more education and information is needed.

Lately, I haven't talked to too many of you who seem to have a good pulse on pesticide legislation or that seem concerned about it. If you're one who has or is, please drop me a line to let me know what's going on in your region or state. If we can share your stories with your peers throughout the country, they might begin to understand how serious this situation is for the industry.

Politics is a dirty job, but someone has to do it. Fighting for pesticide manufacturing and use can be an unnoticeable and thankless job. So let your pesticide suppliers know it's needed and you appreciate the work they do on your behalf.

Join the fight for the continued manufacturing and proper use of safe pesticides. Because if you don't, you soon may have fewer tools in your tool box to help you manage the turfgrass on the golf courses you're in charge of maintaining. And then what would you do? 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.



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Growing the game

I enjoyed reading "Poised for growth" in the February issue (page 30). Getting more juniors to play golf is a big issue for our industry. I own/operate three private clubs in Birmingham, Ala., and, without a doubt, we're one of the quiet leaders creating affordable, family-oriented, private country clubs. I've been helping create ways to get more children active in our clubs for more than 15 years.

We're renovating the golf course at Inverness Country Club and asked the architect to design a set of junior tees. From those tees, the course will play about 2,800 yards and is designed to give juniors a chance to make par or birdie from their own tees, rather than hitting from the 150-yard marker or from mom's or dad's drive. This has been a big hit in our marketing program.

We also emphasize the construction of a great practice facility because quality instruction is necessary for children to have success on the course and results in them being repeat players.

We feel a club's policies can promote or discourage junior golfers. We waive cart fees for children younger than 16 when they're accompanied by a parent. We charge junior guests only \$10 to play at our clubs and offer free junior clinics and parent/child events regularly. We promote the idea that there are few, if any, activities parents can do with their teenage children in which they spend four hours of uninterrupted time with them in a quiet setting.

Please keep the focus on this important issue. Our industry is in trouble if we think the next 20 years of baby boomers reaching retirement is the answer. We need to get more

children playing golf successfully because it's a sport they can enjoy their entire life.

Bill Ochsenhirt
Owner
Inverness Country Club
Birmingham, Ala.

A big thanks

I want to thank Jim McLoughlin (consultant and founder of TMG Golf and GCN columnist) and Dick Haskell (retired executive director of the Massachusetts Golf Association) for their time, talent, and enduring love and respect for the International Association of Golf Administrators.

I read with interest McLoughlin's retrospective on the IAGA history and his articulation of the many contributions to the game by our underappreciated and unrecognized organization ("Golf's unknown acronym," March issue, page 22).

I've learned much by watching and listening to McLoughlin and Haskell. It's obvious I selected good mentors.

Gene Westmoreland
Assistant executive director/
tournament director
Metropolitan Golf Association
Elmsford, N.Y.

Meet lightning

John Walsh had a great piece about tree removal ("Cut 'em down," March issue, page 6). Communication seems to be a common theme. It reminds me of the superintendent who told his green committee lightning took out the big, well-loved tree near the green. Then, when around his peers, he held up a chain saw and said, "Boys, meet Lightning."

Craig F. Zellers
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Industry news

Gray leaf spot, rapid blight results unveiled to group



San Diego – At PACE Turfgrass Research Institute's 10th Annual Turfgrass Research Seminar April 7 attended by 145 turf managers, research results for gray leaf spot on turf and a new annual bluegrass disease were discussed by Frank Wong, Ph.D., of the University of California. Wong says there were several areas in which his research yielded unexpected results:

- The genetic diversity of gray leaf spot isolates from the western United States is much higher than had been expected, possibly indicating the disease has been introduced many different times or it has been present in the West longer than previously believed.

- Gray leaf spot resistance to QoI fungicides (Heritage, Compass, Insignia) has been detected in the West, though it's not widespread.

- For optimal control of gray leaf spot, Wong saw the best results when planting resistant varieties of perennial ryegrass (such as Paragon), as well as tank mixes of contact fungicides (such as chlorothalonil or mancozeb) with systemics (such as Banner, Bayleton, Cleary's 3336, Compass, Heritage, Insignia).

- A new *Rhizoctonia*-like disease has been causing problems on annual bluegrass in the West recently. The symptoms are similar to those caused by yellow patch, but unlike yellow patch, this disease occurs during warm weather. Genetic analysis indicates the disease might be caused by *Waitea circinata*, a fungus that's closely related to *Rhizoctonia*. In preliminary lab tests, it was controlled best by Banner, Chipco 26GT and ProStar.

Additionally, Mary Olsen, Ph.D., of the University of Arizona, gave an update about rapid blight. Olsen's research concluded that on overseeded fairways, fungicide programs that were triggered preventively and were based on the high labeled rates of products such as Insignia, Compass or Fore were most effective. The disease has long been linked with high soil salinity, but Olsen's data shows it's probably sodium, rather than salinity in general, that's responsible for increased disease incidence. Other

salts, such as potassium chloride, didn't increase the incidence of rapid blight.

Findings, presentations and handouts from the seminar are available on the PACE Member Edition's Web site. Nonmembers can sample the Web site through a free three-week trial membership available at www.paceturf.org.

Superintendents receive insight from researchers

Hilton Head and Charleston, S.C. – Fifty superintendents from South Carolina's coastal region attended the 2006 Coastal Research Seminar held at Bear Creek Golf Club in Hilton Head and the Country Club of Charleston in Charleston. Sponsored by Bayer Environmental Science, the seminar featured presentations by Bruce Martin, Ph.D., and Bert McCarty, Ph.D., of Clemson University, and Rick Brandenburg, Ph.D., of North Carolina State University.



Bruce Martin, Ph.D., Bert McCarty, Ph.D., and Rick Brandenburg, Ph.D., talk about turf pests with superintendents.

Focusing on issues specific to the coastal region of South Carolina, the program covered topics such as mole crickets, billbugs, and spring transition of Bermudagrass fairways and greens. Presenters provided strategic insight on the best ways to address these issues while avoiding associated pitfalls.

The seminars concluded with Martin, McCarty and Brandenburg conducting a roundtable discussion with attendees. Superintendents asked questions ranging from effluent water to the best strategy for overseeding.

EWGA chapters mean business

Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. – The economic impact of an Executive Women's Golf Association chapter is \$577,000

in annual golf-related spending, according to a study by the PGA of America. There are more than 115

EWGA chapters throughout the United States.

Since the EWGA started in 1991, more than 75,000 women have benefited from membership in the organization, which is dedicated to providing opportunities to learn, play and enjoy the game of golf for business and life.

The study found EWGA members spent, on average, \$3,993 for golf fees, lessons, equipment and food and beverage during the past 12 months. And 63 percent of this membership segment also reported annual spending of \$2,212 on golf-related travel. To determine an EWGA chapter's economic impact, an average chapter size of 163 women was used.

EWGA chapters provide a wide range of golf, social and networking activities for new and experienced golfers. A welcoming environment, golf education and player development, and organized play programs are some EWGA membership benefits. The significant economic impact of an EWGA chapter reflects the survey's finding that 61 percent of EWGA members are avid golfers, playing 25 or more rounds per year.

The study also found that women who are new to the game and the EWGA have a 93 percent retention rate after their first year.

Herberton Group acquires asset, starts company

Atlanta – Herberton Group LLC acquired Lighthouse Golf and launched its new company, Herberton Lighthouse Golf, which derives its name from the heritage of the development and operation of the golf courses at Sea Pines Plantation on Hilton Head Island, S.C. The Harbour Town Lighthouse is a symbol of the golf courses and surrounding community they represent.

"Being part of the Herberton organization allows us to provide our clients and business partners access to a broad range of services, expertise and private investment," says Arthur Jeffords, partner and director of golf operations.

Visit the GCN Web site to read more news about: Project Evergreen, the Irrigation Association, The Environmental Institute for Golf, the New York State Turfgrass Association, as well as various golf course renovation and development projects.





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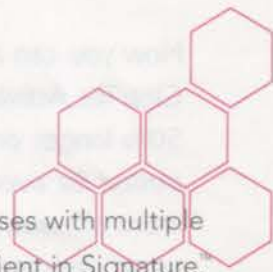
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Lighthouse Golf is a management, development and consulting firm that merged with Herberton Group earlier this year to form Herberton Lighthouse Golf. A full acquisition by Herberton will be completed this month.

West Coast group encourages play

San Francisco – The Northern California PGA put on a Welcome to Golf Day Open House at golf facilities throughout Northern California and Northwestern Nevada April 22.

The one-day event supported the national initiative Play Golf America (www.playgolfamerica.com) and was designed to welcome local residents to nearby golf courses and practice facilities so they can learn more about golf and what it has to offer. The event also encouraged former players to get reacquainted with the sport.

PGA and LPGA club professionals provided facility tours and gave free minilessons for those interested to learn



more about golf. They shared tips about new equipment and proper club fitting. Practice clubs were available for those who didn't have a set. Visitors learned about scheduling tee times, golf tournaments and corporate outings at nearby courses.

In conjunction with the Welcome to Golf Day held at public facilities, some private golf clubs also opened their doors April 22 to showcase new membership opportunities and inform current members about new player development programs at clubs. PGA Club Professionals provided members with complimentary minilessons and received information about new programs for the 2006 season.

Golf equipment: fact and fiction

Far Hills, N.J. – The U.S. Golf Association regulates equipment so skill remains the most important tenant of golf. The USGA is often asked to address the needs of a game that appears to be changing. Facts and opinion need to be considered when the USGA makes important decisions about golf equipment. Dick Rugge, senior technical director at the USGA, separates fact from fiction:

1. Golfers with faster swing speeds get disproportionately greater distance benefits from new golf balls that were introduced after 2000.

False. Physics, scientific tests and results on the PGA Tour confirm that faster swinging players haven't gained a disproportionate amount of distance from modern golf balls. An example: Corey Pavin, the shortest hitter in 2000, gained about the same amount of distance from 2000 to 2005 (7.4 yards) as the longest (John Daly at 8.7 yards).

2. Golf ball distance isn't currently limited.

False. Golf ball distance has been regulated since 1976 and golf ball rebound characteristics have been regulated since the 1940s. In 2004, the USGA updated its testing methodology to reflect the athleticism and clubs of today's Tour pros more closely. All golf balls played on Tour and the vast majority of golf balls sold have passed the USGA's distance limit test.

3. Driving distance on Tour is increasing rapidly.

False. While average PGA Tour driving distance significantly increased during the past 10 years, it has leveled off during the past three. The average increase since the level of 2003 to the current level in 2006 is only about 1 yard per year.

4. The longest hitters on the PGA Tour finish higher on the money list.

False. While some long-driving professionals have been successful, on average, the top 10 driving distance players have been falling down on the money list during recent years. From 1980 to 1985, the average rank was 64.2. From 2000 to 2005 it was 77.1. The second worst-year average rank on the money list of the longest 10 drivers was 2004 with an average rank of 103.3.

5. Most of the PGA Tour professionals swing at 120 mph or faster.

False. The average swing speed on the PGA Tour is about 113 mph. There are some who swing at or higher than 120 mph, but they're in the minority.

6. The USGA ball test doesn't control ball distance well enough because actual pro golfer swings are different than the test method.

False. The test method employed by the USGA, using a 120-mph swing speed, is representative of the swing conditions used by the longer PGA Tour professionals. The USGA tests balls like the PGA Tour pros hit balls.

7. The average distance for 5 irons on Tour is more than 200 yards.

False. The PGA Tour Shotlink system, which records virtually all shots throughout the season, shows the average 5-iron shot from fairway to green is about 185 yards. From the tee on par threes, the average 5-iron distance is about 197 yards.

8. You get more distance when you put topspin on a drive.

False. Every normally struck drive has backspin. Backspin generates lift and keeps the ball in the air. One can put topspin on a ball – but only when the ball is topped. It will go a short distance and dive into the ground.

9. Accuracy off the tee isn't as important as it used to be on the PGA Tour.

True. During the 1980s, driving accuracy was almost as strong a predictor of money-winning as putting. Presently, it has fallen to the lowest level ever.

Course news

PGA Golf Club to get facelift

Port St. Lucie, Fla. – The PGA Golf Club, The PGA of America's golf facility at PGA Village, began a two-year, multimillion dollar capital improvement program. As The PGA Golf Club celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, the improvement program will touch on all elements of the facility, which features one Pete Dye-designed course and two Tom Fazio-designed courses.

The program features a conversion of all putting surfaces to Champion ultradwarf Bermudagrass, refurbishing bunkers, improved drainage, a clubhouse expansion and a major addition to landscaping.

Tartan™ Reviews are in.



"We got a month of disease control from it, which is outstanding in my book!"

J. Craven, Golf Course Superintendent, Vanderbilt Legends Club of Tennessee and The Little Course, Franklin, TN

"The Tartan green was a brilliant green."

L. Breedlove, Golf Course Superintendent, Kansas City Country Club, Shawnee Mission, KS

"Tartan performed really well under severe weather conditions. The Tartan greens definitely looked a lot more vigorous and healthy."

J. Zimmers, Golf Course Superintendent, Oakmont Country Club, Oakmont, PA

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J. Volk, Director of Golf Facilities, Chagrin Valley Country Club, Chagrin Falls, OH

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The club is the only PGA-owned-and-operated public golf facility. All three courses – The North, South and Dye Course – carry Audubon International Signature status.

Lederach opens

Harleysville, Pa. – Lederach Golf Club, a championship layout designed by golf course architect Kelly Blake Moran, is open. The course features undulating bentgrass fairways; sloping bentgrass greens; an array of native grasses including fescues, blue stems and Indian switch grasses; elevation changes and other natural obstacles; collection areas; uniquely shaped greens and strategically placed bunkers.

The course measures 7,023 yards from the tips and has three other sets of tees and teeing grounds for juniors on each hole. The course, which features an all-grass driving range, is municipally owned by Lower Salford Township and managed by Billy Casper Golf.

Bryan Park to host USGA tournament

Greensboro, N.C. – The U.S. Golf Association selected Bryan Park Golf & Conference Center as the site of the 2010 U.S. Amateur Public Links Championship July 12 to 17.

Rees Jones designed the Champions Course at Bryan Park, which opened in 1990. The course, which is hosting its first USGA championship, features 97 sand bunkers and numerous grass bunkers and hollows. It has seven holes that border Lake Townsend.

Prior to 2010, the U.S. Amateur Public Links will be played at: Gold Mountain Golf Course in Bremerton, Wash., July 10 to 15 2006; Cantigny Golf Club in Wheaton, Ill., July 9 to 14 2007; Murphy Creek Golf Course in Aurora, Colo., July 14 to 19 2008; and the University of Oklahoma's Jimmie Austin Golf Course in Norman July 13 to 18 2009.

People news

The San Diego Golf Course Superintendents Association selected its board of directors for 2006. **Sandy Clark**, CGCS, of Barona Creek Golf Club was elected president, **Troy Mullane** of StoneRidge Country Club was elected vice president and **Steven Brochu** of The Vineyard at Escondido Golf Course was elected secretary-treasurer.

KemperSports appointed **Tony Roberto** director of golf at Gillette Ridge Golf Club, an 18-hole championship course crafted by Palmer Course Design. Gillette Ridge is in Bloomfield, Conn.

Officials at Bergen Hills Country Club in River Vale, N.J., appointed **Heidi Larsen** director of sales.

Marriott Golf named **John Kajfasz** senior instructor at The Faldo Golf Institute at Seaview Resort & Spa in



Galloway Township, N.J.

Malcolm Stack, founder and president of Bell Laboratories, died April 16 from cancer. He was 80.

Mark Phipps, a sales manager for Nufarm Americas, died March 25 from pancreatic cancer. He was 46.



Stack



Phipps

Supplier news

In the agriculture and turf and ornamentals markets, **BASF** has four fungicides, three herbicides and one insecticide in the launch phase of bringing products

to market. The company also has two fungicides, two herbicides and two insecticides in the early stage. Additionally, the company continues to monitor opportunities for a nematocide that other companies might discover and potentially license to it.

E-Z-GO joined the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute.

Jacobsen was awarded a three-year contract with WCI Communities to serve as the exclusive supplier of turf-care equipment for its golf facilities. WCI will purchase 14 pieces of equipment for its 22 golf facilities in Florida.

LESCO added four Stores-on-Wheels vehicles to its fleet. The vehicles will serve superintendents in central Virginia, Minneapolis, Vermont, western Iowa and eastern Nebraska. The company, which now has 115 vehicles, also opened six service centers. They're in Ashburn, Va.; Lynchburg, Va.; Newport

News, Va.; Lanham, Md.; Brooksville, Fla.; and Lecanto, Fla.

Nufarm Americas moved into new corporate facilities but remains in Burr Ridge, Ill.

Phoenix Environmental Care LLC made a donation to the turfgrass pathology research program headed by John Kaminski, Ph.D., at the University of Connecticut. The company also added Avatar insecticide to its line of products

Turf-Seed is a co-sponsor of the Ginn Clubs & Resorts Open, one of the events on the 2006 LPGA Tour. It's at Reunion Resort & Club in Orlando April 27 to 30.

Golf course architect Peter Harradine selected **Western Pozzolan's** Lassenite ATS soil amendment for a new golf course at the Al Hamra Golf Resort in the United Arab Emirates. GCN

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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.

Electronic marketing

It used to be that golf course owners could just open their doors, and golfers would come. But during the early '80s, things changed. Now owners must be good operators, personnel managers, food-and-beverage experts, customer-service experienced, and advertising and promotion savvy.

During the '90s, most golf course owners realized they needed to do more than open the doors, present a respectable product and provide extraordinary player service. They needed to be proficient in all forms of marketing, too.

Most owners and management companies that weathered the financially competitive times from the early '90s through 2002 are safe. However, there are still a few owners who know their courses are in serious trouble but haven't succumbed to the financial pressure yet. Last year, 123 courses opened in the United States, and 96 closed, according to the National Golf Foundation. And we can expect similar attrition the next few years.

What happened? As some course owners increased their business, management and marketing acumen the past 15 years, they stayed ahead of the curve needed to survive and thrive in the new golf course economy.

However, the next marketing opportunity, or hurdle, for owners and managers to deal with is here, and it's in the marketing and customer service area. It's referred to as e-marketing or Internet marketing. Owners are deluged with supposed electronic opportunities to enhance their businesses. Electronic tee sheets, third parties selling tee times and coupon advertising are just a few. But what is e-marketing? Is this new marketing form something that golf course owners need to be involved with?

E-marketing is a combination of Internet applications used to communicate directly with customers or prospective customers. This need for affordable and targeted communication applies to practically every segment of the golf industry – golf club retailers, daily-fee golf courses, resorts, private golf and country clubs, and even wholesalers. Every segment wants to communicate with current and prospective customers in a targeted, cost-effective manner.

The two main applications of e-marketing are Web site and e-mail programs. As recently as five years ago, most golf course

Web sites were little more than static billboards that closely resembled an electronic version of a traditional printed brochure. Presently, most successful Web sites are interactive, offering detailed information and online solutions to capture valuable visitor information, make tee times or reservations, and collect money online securely.

In highly competitive golf markets, consumers have more choices than ever, so it's imperative for owners to stay connected to their current customer base while attracting new customers. This takes communication; and e-mail marketing, perhaps, is the most targeted and cost-effective way to accomplish this. Whether an owner's golf segment is daily-fee, resort or private, effective e-mail communication is vital to his success and growth.

It's also important to understand the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003, which went into effect Jan. 1, 2004. It's against the law to send unsolicited e-mails to anyone. Even though we know how wholesome and wonderful golf is, sending an unsolicited e-mail about a golf offer is illegal.

The good news is there are dozens of creative ways to encourage customers to opt to receive newsletters and offers. Here are some:

- **Be aggressive about collecting names and e-mails.** Have your staff hand the golfer at the counter a sheet to fill out name, e-mail and zip code while he's waiting for change or a credit card receipt to be printed. Get the starter and cart girls in on it, too. Make a contest out of it for the staff.
- **Keep your Web site updated and provide multiple registration points for visitors to sign up for your newsletters and offers.** Your Web site is often the first contact point for a new customer. Image is everything, and you don't get a second chance to make a first impression.
- **Acquire e-mails from golfers when they call for a reservation.** Tell them you want to send them a confirmation of the reservation via e-mail.
- **Tournament groups.** Obtain e-mails through the golfers or charities setting up tournaments or outings. Send them their tee times for the tournament in your e-mail blast back to them with special e-coupons to

return after the event to play your course. To make sure you capture the maximum number in the group, add a raffle prize of your own, maybe a free foursome, a stay-and-play package or something where the participants will have to fill out a card with name, e-mail and zip code to be entered.

- **Digital photo page on your Web site.** Take pictures of tournament or regular groups on busy days on your signature hole and set up a page on your Web site where a person would have to enter a name and e-mail to see or download the photos.

- **Birthday specials.** Add a place on your e-mail capture sheets or Web site where golfers can enter their birthday information so you can send out a special offer to them ahead of or on their birthdays. This can be set up to send automatically a few days prior to customers' birthdays.

Let's assume you have an aggressive strategy to collect e-mail addresses of your customers, members or resort guests. What are you going to do with the data? Here

are a few success stories I've been involved with:

1. A private club with 1,000 members converted its monthly newsletter from print to electronic and saved

\$12,000 annually on printing and mailing costs while improving communication and revenues with members. In addition to a monthly newsletter, weekly reminders are sent each Thursday to remind members about the week's activities.

2. A semiprivate course sends weekly e-mails to sell infrequently used tee times to local golfers and tracks more than \$140,000 from coupons in one year.

3. A 36-hole private club with 1,200 members created a members-only section on its Web site with password protection and uses the Web site to post member directories, by-laws, rules and regulations. This club also uses e-mail marketing to drive daily revenue in all retail outlets of the private club.

Remember, your Web site often is the first contact point for new customers, so keep it, along with your e-marketing plan, updated, and you can improve your chances of landing new customers and retaining existing ones. GCN

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Jeffrey D. Brauer is a licensed golf course architect and president of GolfScapes, a golf course design firm in Arlington, Texas. Brauer, a past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, can be reached at jeff@jeffreybrauer.com.

Is your course too long?

Many are staggered by driving distance stats from the PGA Tour:

- 21 PGA Tour players average 300-yard tee shots;
- 42 Nationwide Tour players average 300-yard tee shots;
- The average PGA Tour drive is 288 yards;
- 15 percent of PGA Tour drives exceed 345 yards; and
- 0.25 percent of PGA Tour drives exceed 400 yards.

What's most staggering is the exaggerated influence those drives have on course design. The 63 long-driving players represent 19 percent of tour players, and about 0.00025 percent of the U.S. golfing population. If there are 100 times that many other golfers matching that length, their combined tee shots would amount to only 0.1 percent of annual U.S. tee shots.

Ball manufacturers sell hope to the other 25 million golfers, but most aren't hitting the ball farther. Yet, golf courses keep getting longer to accommodate this miniscule portion of golfers, when achieving proper total playing distance for the masses is critical to two key elements of enjoying golf: scoring and speed of play. If average players can't reach greens in regulation even with their best shots, they must play additional shots, which lengthens the time to play by 10 to 20 minutes.

The extra time and strokes diminish a course's popularity, profitability and even home sales, according to John Wait, a golf operations consultant for Sirius Golf

Advisors. Wait consulted with a senior-oriented, residential golf course in Florida where the forward tees measured more than 5,700 yards. Wait told the owners they wouldn't sell many lots or memberships – if women were responsible for the home-buying decision – with a course that played like a 7,152-yard course for men. He recommended adjusting the tees.

Many courses could benefit from tee adjustments. Any course built to the modern standard of 7,000/6,700/6,400/5,600 yards often play at unsuitable yardages for almost everyone because the back tees are too short and the middle and forward tees are too long.

Shot distances for common skill levels are fairly well known, based on research by many, including American Society of Golf Course Architects member Bill Amick, who published his research in 1996. Amick's data is summarized, with updates, in the table at the bottom of the page.

I recommend five distinct tee areas for championship courses for peak popularity. I combined groups, as shown by the colors, and calculated average shot distances, favoring the shorter group of each combination and leaving Mal by himself as a representative group. (See table below.)

Assuming each player wants to reach greens in regulation using various clubs:

Tee areas for championship golf courses

Tour Pro (Tiger tees)	Gary Good/Pam Pro	Mal Middle	Sam Senior/Gail Good	Maude Middle/Sally Senior
291 drives	255 drives	212 drives	190 drives	137 drives
226 max second	214 max second	185 max second	149 max second	121 max second
135 min second	105 min second	98 min second	96 min second	51 min second

Golfers want a course that's not too hard but not too easy. Men gravitate to tees they enjoy, and the 6,000- to 6,400-yard tees are the busiest among males typically. Male ego plays a part in tee selection. Most men won't play courses marked below 6,000 yards, yet seniors prefer course yardage well short of that figure. At many courses, those choices aren't often present or combined together, which subtly forces players to play yardage too long for their games.

- Par 3s range from wedge to about 90 percent of driver distance;
 - Par 4s range from a potentially drivable hole (110 percent of typical tee shot distance) to the maximum distance reachable in two shots; and
 - Par-5 holes range from reachable in two to driver, wood, 5 iron.
- One might debate some assumptions, such as long par 3s that some don't like or the need for all players to reach all greens. However, it's not as important to get to an ideal yardage as it is to judge how each hole plays and fits the land.

If your course is unpopular, you might look at adding and relocating tees where possible to achieve a better length balance for your clientele's enjoyment. If you're rebuilding tees, you also might consider sizing them to accommodate the play of the three largest groups of players, making sure the tees that play from 6,000 to 6,400 yards get more than half of the overall total tee space.

Originally, tees were a functional afterthought but gradually evolved designwise, which should continue to afford enjoyment to the increasing skill levels of those who choose to play the game. GCN

Shot distances for various skill levels

Club	Perry Pro		Gary Good		Pam Pro		Mal Middle		Sam Senior		Gail Good		Maude Middle		Sally Senior	
	Carry/Roll	Carry/Roll	Carry/Roll	Carry/Roll	Carry/Roll	Carry/Roll	Carry/Roll	Carry/Roll	Carry/Roll	Carry/Roll	Carry/Roll	Carry/Roll	Carry/Roll	Carry/Roll	Carry/Roll	
1W	269	291	248	268	219	242	196	212	183	198	170	184	149	161	116	125
3W	250	261	228	237	195	208	178	185	--	--	156	162	137	142	107	111
5W	--	--	--	--	--	--	166	169	161	167	151	154	128	131	100	102
7W	--	--	--	--	181	189	--	--	154	157	142	145	120	122	96	98
11	236	242	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	111	--	91	93
2I	229	233	212	216	--	--	--	--	153	156	144	147	--	--	--	--
3I	220	224	200	204	168	175	160	163	148	151	137	140	109	111	90	92
4I	210	214	196	206	158	165	156	159	144	147	128	131	102	104	86	88
5I	200	204	190	201	153	159	151	154	135	138	113	115	96	98	83	85
6I	192	195	183	193	146	152	146	149	126	129	104	106	89	91	76	78
7I	179	180	168	178	133	139	141	144	117	119	95	97	83	85	71	72
8I	163	165	159	169	122	127	133	136	105	107	87	89	78	80	64	65
9I	155	157	144	147	110	115	118	120	88	90	64	65	59	60	46	47
PW	134	135	122	124	91	96	96	98	78	80	54	55	49	50	36	37



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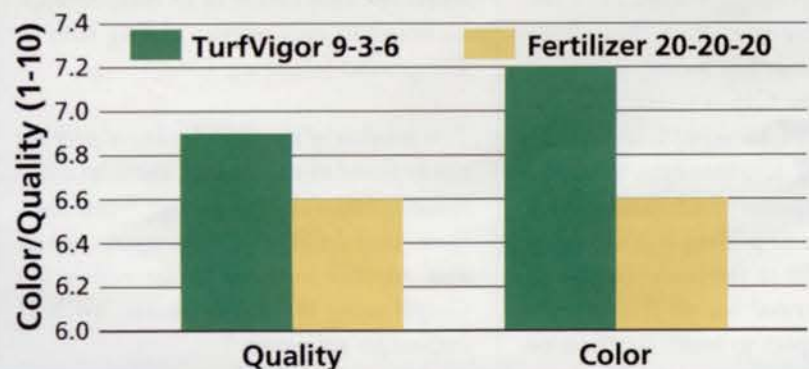
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GCSAA board perks



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.golfcoursenews.com.

One of the more enjoyable things I do each year is walk the floor at the annual Golf Industry Show, talking to people I know, meeting new people and listening to the grapevine talk circulating that week. I did exactly this at the recent GIS in Atlanta and got the usual rewarding results. However, this year there was a buzz circulating in hotel lobbies and on the show floor about a growing concern by some GCSAA members: the nature of perks the GCSAA board of directors has adopted to support the manner in which it conducts business.

Of course, negative comments will always be exaggerated when those who are willing to support an issue don't feel the need to speak out. Because industry publications, GCSAA members and other interested parties are calling around spreading fact and rumors about perk policy, I have elected to address this topic here, not to act as judge and jury, rather, to bring accurate reporting and balanced perspective to this mounting intramural debate. The cost to provide provisions within the perk list has not been a considered factor when developing this commentary. Rather, my thinking is presented with the belief that GCSAA should tighten this benefit package to serve itself and its members better.

Looking at the positives

The first observation worth noting is that there is a great deal of merit and necessity built into the perk list. For example: providing board members with laptop computers and all the communications support needed in today's fast-paced world; recognizing the work of crew members who assume added responsibility during superintendents' tours of duty on the board; rewarding board member families for their sacrifices; recognizing the role of board members' home facilities; and striving for diverse participation within the board. While each of these approaches is well intended, the devil often lies in the details.

Industry observation

One of the long-standing issues permeating the golf industry has been the misguided sense of responsibility national golf organizations feel each year to send teams of representatives to attend each

other's key events and annual meetings, including those in Canada and Europe. Is all this hand-holding necessary in an era where industry-planning meetings prevail and technology facilitates every kind of communication?

Too much of a good thing

A primary concern about many present perk provisions is that even with the best intentions, there's often too much of a good thing, which suggests there's a need to repackage these provisions in a more palatable manner to eliminate their adverse impact. For example, the pressurized, time-consuming, presidential-travel load would be lightened if, each year, the association's three officers each attended one of the three U.S.-based major professional golf tournaments and one of the three association (USGA, PGA and CMAA) annual meetings. This travel policy also might be applied when visiting international venues in Canada and Europe.

The problem with the present GCSAA policy of inviting spouses to attend two board meetings (50 percent of the annual schedule) and the GIS each year is it tends to convert what should be tight, get-it-done board meetings into time-extending semisocial agendas.

Clearly, the GCSAA should express its appreciation to board members' families, which can be done effectively in a number of ways. For example, in addition to continuing to attend the GIS each year, spouses would be given the annual opportunity of selecting a meaningful personal or house gift from a catalogue brochure created solely for this purpose.

The GCSAA tries so hard each year to show its sincere appreciation to the home facility of its president that the process borders on presenting the association and its president in a defensive light. How else can the collective impact of the following be interpreted: The facility president is invited to the GIS, to visit GCSAA headquarters and to attend one of the three major golf tournaments, all at the association's expense; and the GCSAA c.e.o. will fly in to present a grant for as much as \$10,000 to the home facility?

There's little need for all this because golf facilities expect to make sacrifices on

behalf of the game and out of respect for their superintendents. Veteran GCSAA members want the association to back down the process. The GCSAA would be seen in a truer light simply by continuing to invite the employer to the GIS, to play in the supporting GIS golf tournament and by continuing to present a grant for a meaningful facility purpose.

Money dilutes sacrifice

The game of golf has been built on the foundation of volunteerism, i.e., people and facilities always willing to make the necessary sacrifices to serve the game and make it better. The GCSAA negates the concept of sacrifice and goes directly against the traditions of golf when it makes money so readily available to its board members, i.e., the \$200-per-trip, get-around-town money, as much as \$4,000 for clothing and travel accessories, and the \$10,000 honorarium given to outgoing immediate past presidents, a practice that might be better received if the outgoing past president was given the option of contributing this \$10,000 to a charity of his/her choice.

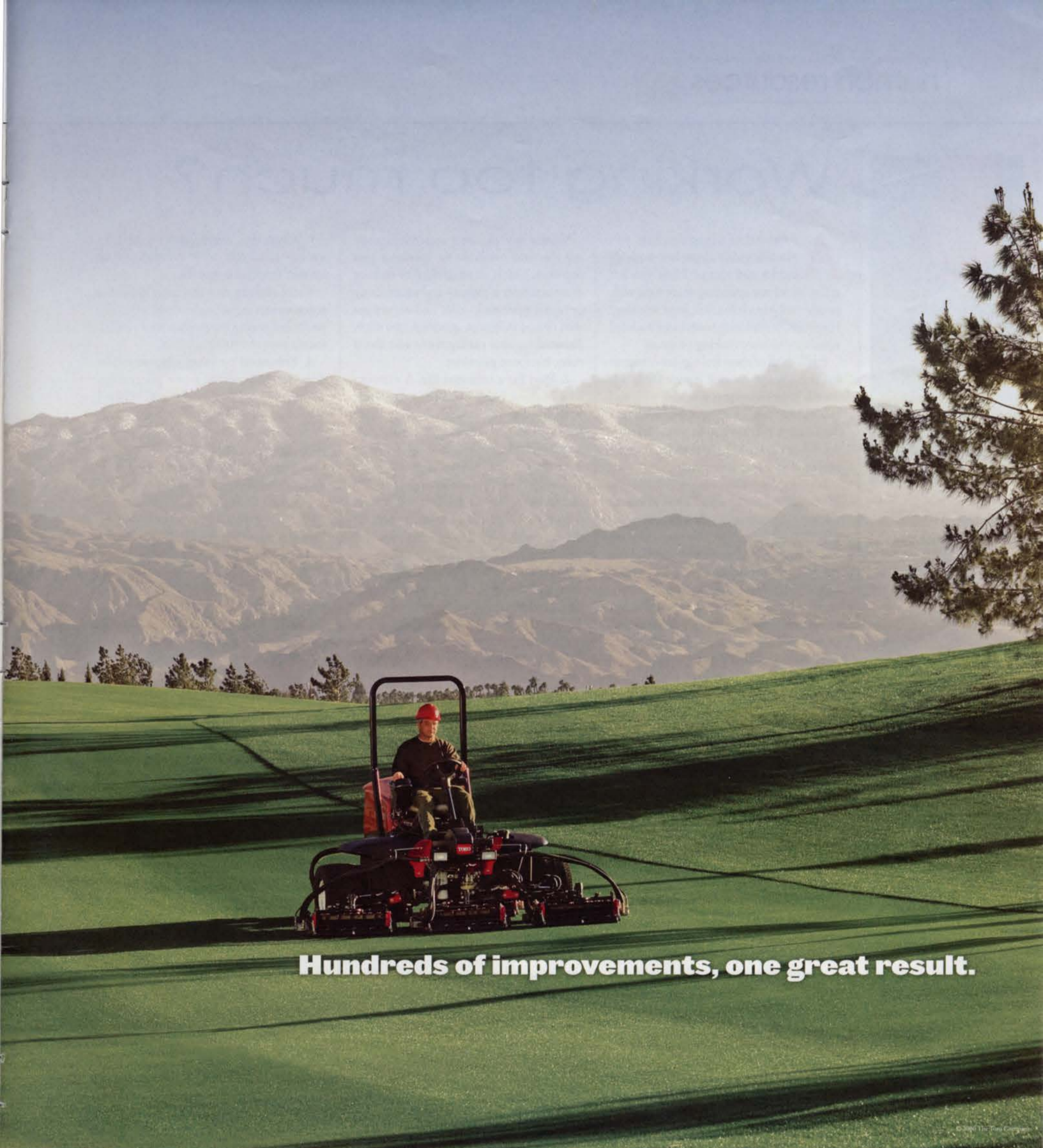
No one should be asked to serve on the GCSAA board without a complete understanding that the tour of duty will involve opportunity, responsibility and sacrifice. If a candidate isn't able or ready to accept this, either he/she is not the right candidate or is being asked too early in his/her career to consider board service.

The leadership of every societal group should reflect the culture and economic profile of its constituency. Present GCSAA policy doesn't allow for this, rather, it sets board members apart from the general association membership. The GCSAA should follow industry precedent less and take the lead to create a model, transparent, board-benefit package that would reflect the true nature of its membership. It's better to earn respect leading than to lose ground following. GCN

Two versions of the GCSAA board perk list can be found on the Internet, one with dollar values at http://www.gcsaa.org/Chapters/delegates/chapdell/2005/2005delegates_4.pdf, and another without dollar values via Google using the search phrase "GCSAA support for volunteers."

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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Working too much?

At the end of a long day, have you ever felt guilty about not working harder and longer? Have you felt guilty about not spending more time with family and friends but still kept working? Have you worked long hours but wondered whether you were making progress?

If any or all of these feelings are common in your life, ask yourself if your life is balanced. Many managers working with turf believe their job is a seven-day-a-week one. Turf health is critical to business productivity, but so is the physical and emotional health of you and your family.

Let's explore why we get into tough life-balance situations and ideas to ensure outstanding course conditions and a satisfactory balanced life. Start by thinking about why people work too much. Four possible reasons emerge:

1. The facility's financial status or maintenance budget doesn't have enough funds to hire sufficient labor to support the superintendent and/or assistant superintendent working reasonable hours.
2. No one else is capable of doing the work.
3. Time working on the course is more urgent even though not more important.
4. There's nothing important to do during nonwork time.

The fourth reason is rare, but for those it fits, my response is simple: Get a life. The first is, at least partially, an easier justification to oneself and others for second and third reasons.

Those who work too much do so because they believe consciously or subconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally they must be present or the necessary work won't get done. People try to work less, unfortunately trying isn't sufficient. One informal definition of insanity is continuing to do the same thing and expecting the results to be different. Consider the following four suggestions:

1. Make balancing life a priority. In Stephen Covey's book, "Seven Habits of Highly Successful People," he popularized a focus on quadrant two. (See chart above.) Quadrant two includes everything that's important but not urgent presently. For you, this quadrant includes many of the work activities of leadership, management, training, coaching and professional development. It also includes much of your personal and family time.

Success as a manager requires expanding the time available for quadrant two activities. This is accomplished by making these activities a priority and establishing personal operating rules and structures that ensure sufficient quadrant two time. Remember, time management isn't about time, it's about priorities.

2. Plan for a balanced life. A manager in a business I consult with is struggling with life-balance issues resulting from the birth of a first child. Bill consistently has expressed the need to finish work no later than 5 p.m. several nights a week. Although his supervisor is supportive, Bill almost never leaves work before 6 p.m. or 6:30 p.m. Why? Bill's answer is there are always uncompleted tasks remaining that only he can do.

Many are like Bill. They work too much because they don't have a plan to do otherwise. Here are some ideas:

- Outline what needs to be done;
- Determine what can be completed reasonably in the time available;
- Complete high-priority tasks only you can do first, even if they're tasks you tend to avoid;
- Delegate tasks to others; and
- Become more efficient during your work time.

3. Train others to complete some of your tasks. Several years ago, I listened to a small business owner talk about his success managing employees. He said 90 percent of the difficulties with employee performance is a result of something he did or didn't do. Failing to recognize this possibility, managers underestimate the capabilities of their employees too often.

Stop focusing on the weaknesses of your employees and look for the strengths and potential in each of them. Based on these strengths and potential:

- Select one task you do that one or more of your employees could complete successfully;
- Develop a plan to create excitement about the new task for the employee(s);
- Provide the training required;
- Establish performance expectations;
- Coach and provide feedback including comparing actual and expected performance expectations; and

- When this employee(s) is well on his way to success, select another task to transfer from your task list.

You're making time for more quadrant two activities including personal time, and you're enhancing the productivity and job satisfaction of your employees.

4. Enhanced personal efficiency. The demands of graduate study present significant life balance challenges. When I was completing my Ph.D. course work, many in my class had a policy of getting away from our studies on Friday night. Our hope was to return refreshed early Saturday morning. One classmate invariably would be at the office Friday night. As we were getting back to our studies on Saturday morning, he would drag in, tell us how frustrated he was that he had to study on Friday night, how little he accomplished and how little motivation he had to study.

Do you feel burnt out and inefficient?

Balancing life through habits

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	I: Quadrant of Crisis Reduce	II: Quadrant of Quality Expand
Not Important	III: Quadrant of Deception Eliminate	IV: Quadrant of Waste

This is when you get an "F" in balancing life because you're accomplishing little or nothing at work. Reschedule work so you have sufficient personal and family time to avoid being inefficient at work.

Here are suggested habits to relieve the stress of work and create quality time for yourself, family and friends:

- Schedule time during the day when all family members are together. Talk about the day. Ask each person to share one or two positives from their day – a new friend, an accomplishment, something learned, an exciting experience with an old friend.
- Go for a walk. Don't look for weeds in the turf or problems with the greens. Listen to a bird sing, watch a butterfly flit by, marvel at a beautiful flower or the quiet of the countryside.
- Read something you enjoy. You need not spend a long time. A chapter or a few pages a day adds up. A short period of reading or reflection is important to many successful people. GCN



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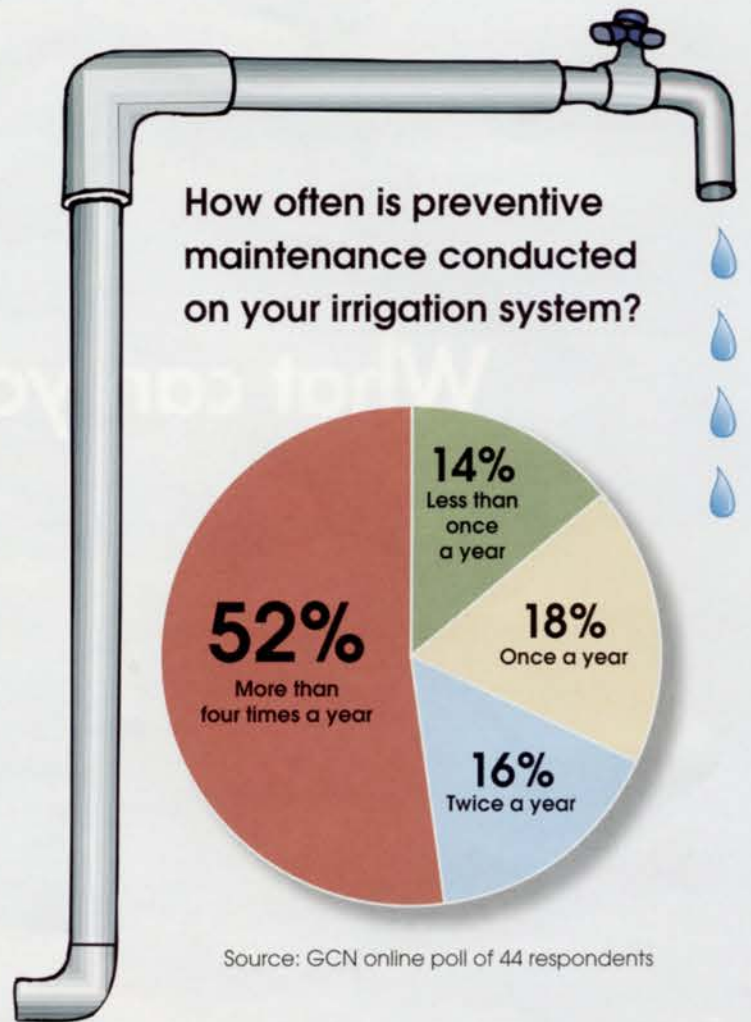
BY THE NUMBERS

Regional rounds played report

Percent change in rounds, 2006 vs. 2005

		Jan.	Feb.	March	YTD
1	Northeast	122.7%	109.4%	149.0%	137.0%
2	Mid-Atlantic	90.1%	-7.2%	37.2%	38.1%
3	Southeast	17.6%	-7.8%	16.5%	9.3%
4	Central/South Florida	5.3%	-2.3%	9.4%	4.2%
5	Gulf Coast	14.7%	4.4%	8.5%	9.1%
6	South Central	37.6%	-1.9%	-9.4%	3.4%
7	Lower Midwest	517.4%	28.5%	-3.8%	34.8%
8	Upper Midwest	443.5%	27.6%	58.2%	79.5%
9	Mountain	15.1%	-8.1%	-22.4%	-10.6%
10	Southwest	14.1%	17.2%	-13.7%	4.0%
11	Northwest	-16.7%	-33.0%	-20.5%	-24.5%
Total U.S. facilities		29.8%	3.6%	3.1%	9.9%

These figures represent same-store sales or facilities that have submitted rounds data for both time periods. Source: National Golf Foundation.



Source: Bob Zahn

"Wow! This is an expensive golf course ...a free drop costs ten bucks!"

// QUOTABLE //

"Generally, the golf course industry as a whole is riding on the backs of a few really great golf course superintendents who are truly committed to golf and the environment." - **Ron Dodson**, president and c.e.o. of Audubon International

"Our jobs cover the whole matrix of communications skills, people skills and financial management - and that might only be the beginning of the expertise required." - **Tommy Witt**, CGCS, director of golf course operations for Northmoor Country Club in Highland Park, Ill.

"There's so much about the position of superintendent you can't teach in the classroom. I'd classify it as 90 percent experience and 10 percent education." - **Cleve Cleveland**, CGCS, owner of Newark Valley (N.Y.) Golf Club.


"We don't see any lessening of public and potential regulatory pressure that will limit the amount of chemicals that can be used on a golf course." - **Jeff Howard**, marketing manager in the Roots Care Group at Novozymes



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Good to Mother Earth

A LOOK AT WHAT IT TAKES FOR COURSES TO BE CERTIFIED BY AUDUBON INTERNATIONAL AND TO IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

by
JOHN
WALSH

Q Why is sustaining and enhancing the environment on and around golf courses important?

The future of the game depends on it. It's not going to get easier to manage existing golf courses or acquire permits to build new courses without a serious focus on protecting and enhancing the environment on and around golf courses.

And because we all depend on resources for our lives and work, golf can and should play a leadership role in communities. It's good for the environment, good for golf, and in the end, it makes good economic sense.

Q What percentage of the organization's work deals with golf courses?

About 50 percent of everything we're involved with is connected to golf in some way.

Q Which Audubon programs are suitable for golf courses?

For existing golf courses, the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program is the prime program. It has been sponsored by the U.S. Golf Association since its inception in 1991.

Additionally, we've recently launched the Audubon International Classics Program, which is a step beyond Cooperative Sanctuary certification and is great for those courses and course managers who want to go beyond the minimum certification requirements associated with the ACSP.

For courses in the planning stages, the Audubon Signature Program is the only

program available. The Signature Program has three levels of certification: bronze, silver and gold. Gold is the highest level of certification offered by Audubon International.

Q How many golf courses in the United States have an Audubon designation?

In the ACSP, there are 573 certified golf courses. In the Signature Program, there are 53 certified golf courses – 29 of those are bronze, 16 are silver, and eight are gold.

Q How often are you contacted by golf course management inquiring about Audubon programs?

We're contacted daily by someone or some company interested in our programs and various levels of Audubon certification.

Q What does it take to be Audubon certified?

It takes a commitment to including environmental stewardship as an equal focus to making a profit. Our organization provides the support, educational materials and hands-on guidance that can lead to certification. We have enough experience that we can prove it doesn't cost money to become Audubon certified, it makes money. It takes some time, and a golf course superintendent can't do it alone. Various projects must be delegated to others.

Q How long does it take, typically?

It depends on what shape an existing course presently is in when it joins the program. For planned courses, it depends on where they're at in the permitting process when

they join the Signature Program. But for most courses, it typically takes two to three years from start to certification. They also have to be recertified annually or every other year depending on what program of which they're members.

Q What are the costs related to receiving an Audubon certification?

For the ACSP, the cost of membership is \$150 per year. What the course spends in connection to becoming certified is based on the condition of the course when they join. But again, our members have documented substantial monetary savings beyond any program-membership costs when comparing before-and-after costs associated with water bills, electric bills, pesticide bills, etc.

The Signature Program registration and annual membership fees range from \$9,500 to \$12,500 – \$500 of that is the annual membership fee. Additionally, a requirement of Signature certification includes the requirement to have a written natural resource management plan, which is an additional expense, the costs of which vary from project to project.

For development companies that are seriously committed to sustainable development and join the Gold Signature Program, Audubon International prepares a sustainable development master plan for the entire project; and we interact with the entire project team, the government-permitting agencies and so forth. Again, the total cost depends on the size, complexity and location of the property. But in most cases, the total paid to Audubon International to help these companies normally is below

Photographs by Gary David Gold

GCN INTERVIEWS
RON DODSON,
PRESIDENT
AND C.E.O.
OF AUDUBON
INTERNATIONAL





Generally, the golf course industry as a whole is riding on the backs of a few really great golf course superintendents who are truly committed to golf and the environment, according to Ron Dodson.

the price of one building lot being sold on the property.

Q Why is it worth it to receive Audubon certification?

That might be a better question to ask our members, but what they have reported to us includes: greater acceptance by local community and government agencies, which equals faster permitting times; large monetary savings when following the “soft engineering” approaches prescribed by Audubon International; and faster real-estate and club-membership sales at higher profit margins. Most people want to play golf and see nature and wildlife, too, so this leads to enthusiastic and supportive golfers.

Q What types of courses have the best chance to become Audubon certified?

All golf courses can become certified by Audubon International. There isn't one good reason for every golf course not to join an Audubon program and become certified. It's not the money. We have a great example of a par-3, nine-hole golf course that has a \$21,000-a-year maintenance budget that's not only certified in the ACSP, but is the only golf course in the United States that's participating in the Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Performance Track Program. That's Colonial Acres Golf

Club in Glenmont, N.Y. There's only one reason why a golf course can't become certified in an Audubon program: The golf course management doesn't care.

Q Can courses increase their green fees because they're Audubon certified? Is it justifiable?

The answer is “yes,” and many have increased fees and sales. More and more, people who are planning vacations are asking us for lists of Audubon certified golf courses.

On the other hand, while it's great we can use environmental stewardship as an income source, some question charging people more to do the right thing. In other words, if a course is wasting water,

the courses that are doing less environmental stewardship?

Q What would you tell superintendents who think it's too difficult to do the things to become Audubon certified?

The first thing I would tell them is not to try to do everything themselves. We will give superintendents all the materials and help they need, but they need to delegate to others to get the job done.

However, I feel for superintendents, too. Most golfers have no clue what it's like to be a golf course superintendent ... actually most golfer don't have a clue about much of anything. They just want to sink every putt, hit every fairway and can't understand why their courses can't look like the course they saw on television last weekend. Superintendents are under considerable pressure of losing their jobs, and many do every year.

Q Have courses lost their Audubon certification because they didn't keep up with the requirements?

Yes. Since the inception of the ACSP, two courses have closed and aren't certified anymore, and 20 additional courses have been uncertified for not maintaining the program minimum requirements. In the Signature Program, 55 have been deactivated because they requested to be released from the program or it was obvious they wouldn't be certified. One course that was certified was uncertified for not maintaining minimum requirements of the Signature Program.

Q Aside from trying to be Audubon certified, what should superintendents be doing to improve the environmental aspects of golf courses?

Identify golfers that care about the environment and make them allies. Identify areas

All golf courses can become certified by Audubon International. There isn't one good reason for every golf course not to join an Audubon program and become certified.

energy and overusing chemical products, and management charges X to play, and another course is committed to environmental stewardship but charges more to play, then aren't we giving a “cost edge” to

that are presently managed in turfgrass that can be transitioned slowly to another form of vegetation that requires less input and maintenance without affecting play. Participate in the USGA Turf Advisory

Service. Develop a written integrated pest management plan. Clean up and organize maintenance facilities. Most maintenance facilities I see are a disgrace to golf and the people who work out of them.

Q Do golf courses get a bad rap from the general public about their impact on the environment?

Properly sited, designed and managed golf courses are good for the environment, wildlife, people and recreation. But most golf courses aren't properly sited, designed and maintained. Generally, the golf course industry as a whole is riding on the backs of a few really great golf course superintendents who are truly committed to golf and the environment. Those golf courses and golf course superintendents are getting a bad rap, but the others are getting a free ride to a degree.

It should be remembered the most committed golf course superintendent and the most stellar golf course is only as strong as the weakest golf course, and all will be brought down by the next chemical spill or the next fish or bird kill on a golf course.

Q What's your view about pesticide use on golf courses?

Pesticides are just one tool in the management tool chest. They can be used appropriately, or they can be used in a way that will be harmful. Some pesticides are worse than others from an environmental point of view and the "bad" ones, even if labeled for use on a golf course, should be used sparingly or not at all on some locations on golf courses. But most often, it's the design, chosen turf-grass, location, trees, wind (or lack of wind), heat, or the antiquated irrigation systems that lead to various management practices and the use of various products. Personally, I'm not phobic of pesticides. Many of the courses we work with use all chemical products very sparingly. This isn't only because of their concern for the environment but because they are expensive.

Q How well are golf course superintendents doing as stewards of the environment?

The golf course superintendents we know and work with, by and large, are doing great things and are committed to being stewards of the environment. But we're working with only a small percentage of all the golf course superintendents in the United States. Throughout the past several years, new membership in our various golf programs have either held steady or

have slightly decreased. However, during the past couple of years, we have seen an increase of memberships on an international basis.

Therefore, given the continuing support of the USGA, the visibility of golf and environment issues, and the concerted effort being made by many to get more superintendents involved in environmental stewardship programs such as the ACSP – with little or no success – I'd have to say that as an industry golf course superintendents aren't doing a great job as stewards of the environment.

Q How do you encourage more superintendents to become better environmental stewards?

We need to create a "Golf and Environment Club" for golfers to join that will visibly show course managers a large number of golfers support environmental stewardship on golf courses. We also need to have golf courses monetarily reward superintendents and include environmental stewardship as an important and visible part of their management activities. GCN

Ron Dodson can be reached at rdodson@aduboninternational.org.

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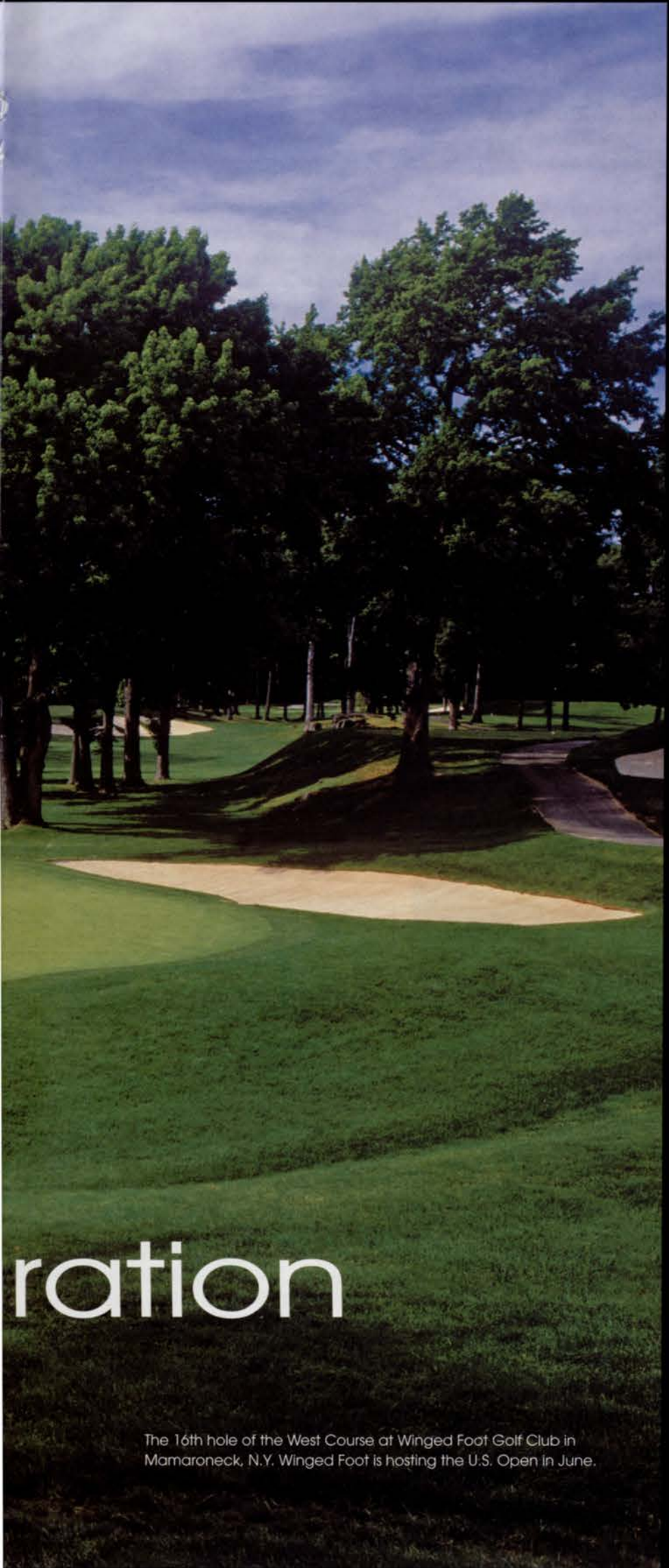
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Selection and prepa

HOW THE USGA CHOOSES CHAMPIONSHIP SITES AND WHAT SUPERINTENDENTS DO TO ACCOMMODATE THE EVENTS



by
JOHN
WALSH

That time of year is approaching – the heart of golf season. For some facilities, that means preparing to host one of the 13 USGA national championships that take place between June and October. Sites are selected based on how challenging the course is, the room it has to accommodate spectators and geographic location. Once sites are selected, golf course superintendents prepare the courses for the scrutiny they will receive during these events. That preparation varies.

“If it’s a U.S. Open, there’s a fair amount of preparation,” says Mike Davis, senior director, rules and competition for the U.S. Golf Association. “Most of the time, when we visit a U.S. Open site, we look at new tees, fairway widths and grass preparation.

“When selecting a site, we take the course as is, generally speaking,” Davis adds. “The first thing we need is an invitation from the host club in writing. But it’s all about the golf course – it has to be good enough to test the players. If we’re looking at a site, say, for the U.S. Amateur or U.S. Open, length becomes more of an issue. If a course is 6,400 yards from the tips, it isn’t enough golf course for those players.”

The USGA also checks to see if a course has a nice balance of par 3s, a nice mix of par 4s and par 5s and what the green complexes are like – if they have undulations, are they large and flat or relatively small and elevated.

The USGA looks at the club, too.

“Will they be enthusiastic?” Davis asks. “How will the players be treated? Is there enough room? But no one site is perfect for any championship. For example, the course might be hard to get to or have limited accommodations.”

The USGA receives between 300 and 400 invitations annually to host its national championships, according to Davis. Some are specific about which tournament they want to host, and others are specific about the year in which they want to host a championship.

The minimum amount of time needed to select a site for a tournament is two years, according to Davis. However, for the bigger championships, such as the U.S. Open, sites can be planned as far in advance as seven years.

Long and narrow

For clubs that host USGA national championships, tweaks to the designs of their courses need to be made before the tournament – mostly making them longer and narrower. Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minn., which will host the U.S. Amateur Aug. 21 to 27, planned to make changes to its course before it was chosen as the host site, according to golf course superintendent Jim Nicol.

“When USGA officials came out to the site for the first time, they didn’t ask for much,” he says. “The only changes the USGA asked for was the narrowing of holes nine and 11.”

At Hazeltine, the landing zone on the ninth hole was narrowed by sod and bunkers; a new bunker was installed short of the green on the 11th hole to narrow the landing zone; the tee on the par-3 13th was extended so the hole plays 247 yards instead of 204 yards; the bunker left of the green on the 13th was rebuilt; the landing zone on the 14th was narrowed by adding bunkers; a new tee was built on the 15th

ration

The 16th hole of the West Course at Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, N.Y. Winged Foot is hosting the U.S. Open in June.

hole and it was extended from 586 yards to 637 yards; and the championship tee on the 18th was lowered and moved, extending the hole from 457 yards to 472 yards.

"These changes will give us better ideas of what we need to do for future championships," Nicol says.

Similarly, at Prairie Dunes Country Club in Hutchinson, Kan., which will host the U.S. Senior Open July 6 to 9, changes to the course already were planned with design firm Coore and Crenshaw, and implementing them was accelerated in 2004, according to golf course superintendent P. Stan George. Changes include a few new tee boxes, five new bunkers, aesthetic improvements of other bunkers and an expanded practice tee.

"We were looking for more length and strategy," George says. "We narrowed the fairways in the spring of '05 with USGA recommendations."

Additionally, Newport Country Club in Rhode Island, which is hosting the U.S. Women's Open June 29 to July 2, lengthened its course from 6,700 yards to 6,800 yards by moving the tees back on four holes.

Conditioning tweaks

In addition to the design changes for the championships, the course conditions change a little, too. For example, the USGA requires certain green speeds for the national championships. Determining them is based on the caliber of players and the architecture of the greens. The green speed at Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, N.Y., for this year's U.S. Open (June 15 to 18) are required to be 11.5 going into the tournament and no faster than 12 during the tournament, according to Davis. Flatter and larger greens than the ones at Winged Foot might be required to roll at 13.

There are several ways to achieve a cer-

tain green speed. Davis says it's preferable to achieve green speed without rolling because greens that have been rolled will be noticeably faster in the morning than in the afternoon, more so than if greens were just cut.

"We're telling clubs to slow down green speed," he says. "Superintendents are able to get greens faster and firmer than ever. But we need six or seven hole locations, and if the greens are too fast or firm, it reduces the number of hole locations."

For the Senior Open, the USGA requires green speed to be 10 or slightly more on the Stimpmeter.

"I didn't roll the greens when we hosted the Women's Open in 2002 and don't anticipate rolling them for this tournament," George says. "I won't do it because of green speed. There's a concern of getting greens too fast. Our greens are small - 4,700 square feet. If the greens are too fast, that reduces the number of hole locations that are available on the green. If we mow and the greens are at 9.5 feet, we'll mow it again instead of rolling. We'll double cut the greens in the morning and single cut them at night for the Open and during all other championships."

But Nicol says Hazeltine's course has developed a problem with anthracnose on the greens, so he developed a program that includes a higher height of cut and more frequent rolling to achieve desired speeds.

"Prior to the event, I hope we'll be able to provide the USGA with what they want," he says. "The USGA officials are pretty happy with what we have."

For the Women's Open, Newport golf course superintendent Bob Reynolds says the USGA wants the greens rolling at 11.

Firmness also is a factor in green conditions. For example, greens for the U.S. Open are required to be firmer than the greens for the U.S. Girls' Junior.

A little different than greens, fairways are more consistent. The USGA requires the height of cut to be 0.5 inch for the championships.

"We want the fairways low enough to where golfers can nip the ball to get spin," Davis says. "We have had fairways down to 0.25 inch, but that height of cut gives players too much distance and balls tend to roll into divots too much."

Cultural practices change a bit, too, when preparing for a USGA championship. At Prairie Dunes, George won't aerate this spring or topdress too close to the tournament. But he will aerify three weeks before the tournament and brush and groom the turf.



Members of Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minn., had planned to make changes to its course before it was selected to host the U.S. Amateur.

Photo: Hazeltine National Golf Club



Photo: Prairie Dunes Country Club

At Prairie Dunes Country Club in Hutchinson, Kan., the design changes to the course were accelerated because the club is hosting the U.S. Senior Open this summer.

"You can't groom it to death before the tournament, especially in July in Kansas," he says. "We'll groom the course a bit more than normal in preparation for the tournament. We'll drag a broom on the fairways once every three weeks before mowing. It stands up the grass a bit more and gives a better cut, but the average golfer won't be able to tell."

For the Senior Open at Prairie Dunes, the rough is required to be 4.5 inches high. It was 3 inches before tournament preparation started.

For the Women's Open at Newport, the rough requirements are:

- Immediate rough - 1.5 to 2 inches;
- First primary cut - 2.5 to 3.5 inches;
- Second primary cut - 3.5 to 4.5 inches; and
- Outside the gallery ropes - 6 inches

Reynolds narrowed Newport's fairways and says the maximum width is 25 yards, except for one of the fairways on a 450-yard par-4 hole that was kept as is so golfers could be aggressive off the tee.

Reynolds says he's topdressing much more than usual to prepare for the tournament. He's topdressing the approaches once a month. Before tournament preparation started, he wasn't topdressing them at all.

"The USGA officials really liked the place when the Amateur was here in 1995," he says. "The course played hard and fast then because the Amateur was in August. This time around, the course will be more soft and lush."

Those conditions are a result of Newport

not having any tee or fairway irrigation.

The biggest impact

Even though there can be a lot of stress involved preparing to host a USGA national championship, there's a lot of satisfaction, too. Nicol says the USGA tournaments are fun and exciting to host even though there's self-imposed pressure to try and keep a certain level going into the tournament – and there's probably some let down afterwards.

For George, it's just as important to him to have the course in as good condition for the members as it is when the club hosts tournaments.

"When hosting a tournament, there's more work, more stress and more scrutiny," he says. "I'd be fine if, during my career, I never hosted a major. It's not something I always wished for."

Reynolds says the entire state of Rhode Island will be impacted by the Women's Open.

"This is a world-class event that's good experience for everyone involved including college students, the club and the state. It will be the biggest event the state has ever seen."

In the end, Davis says golf course superintendents are the key to the tournaments.

"It doesn't matter which championship is conducted, but when you talk about the success of a championship, it's about the superintendent and the grounds crew," he says. "They have the biggest impact on our championships." GCN

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Northern exposure

A RETIRED MEDICAL DOCTOR BUILDS A MINIMALIST GOLF COURSE IN ALASKA FOR THE COMMUNITY, NOT PROFIT

by JOHN WALSH

Photographs by Bob Adkins

Haines, Alaska, a community of 2,500 people, is a popular stop for tourists visiting the southeastern part of the state. The city is north of Juneau and south of Skagway. It doesn't have a strong demand for golf, and the terrain isn't exactly conducive to building a golf course.

But that didn't deter Stan Jones, a retired medical doctor, from building The Valley of the Eagles Golf Course and Driving Range. Jones' golf course was built to provide an alternative source of recreation for tourists and provide them an opportunity to experience the native environment and surrounding scenery.

The 74-year-old Haines resident, who retired from practicing medicine in 1989 and is now a commercial fisherman, thought a golf course would be good for the city because it has no industry other than a bit of tourism and commercial fishing.

"I thought the golf course would attract some people from other parts of Alaska," he says. "I had the property and thought it would be good for the environment and kind to the earth because we're not using herbicides or pesticides to maintain the course."

The 50-acre site is low and flat, has little topographic relief and is just above sea level. Natural drainage channels run through the site and feed into a primary stream. A portion of the site is influenced by tide activity and experiences partial flooding during high tides. The surrounding views from the site are of coastal mountain ranges. The majority of the property is open and vegetated with low native grasses growing in sandy, silt clay loam soils. Stands of willows and evergreens border the existing waterways on portions of the site and serve as natural vegetative buffers between some of the fairways.

Jones walked the property many times

The Valley of the Eagles Golf Course was built as an alternative source of recreation for tourists visiting Haines, Alaska.



The site of The Valley of the Eagles Golf Course is a wetlands and is inundated with water two or three times a year.

to get an idea of how to lay out the course. He also visited several other golf courses to see how they were laid out. Jones decided to lay out 18 holes, but then scaled back to nine holes because of cost and the amount of land. He applied for a permit and 7.5 years later received one from the Army Corps of Engineers. Then, in the fall of 2001, he contracted golf course architect Mark Miller to help him lay out the golf course and make it more professional.

There are no golf course architects in Alaska, according to Miller, so, out of the blue, Jones flew to Seattle and stopped in Miller's office to show him aerial photos of the site.

"He said 100 percent of the site is a wetland," Miller says. "I had just finished working on the Creek Course at Moose Run, which is on the Fort Richardson

military base in Anchorage and dealt with wetland issues there, but nothing like what's in Haines. I told him not to waste his time, but he continued to contact me, and eventually, I agreed to look at the site.

"On the way up there, I met people who spoke highly of Stan and said he was going to build the golf course to benefit the city," he adds. "When I found out his intentions and the type of person he was, I got more excited about the project."

When Miller visited the site for the first time, it flooded three- or four-inches deep at high tide at 1 a.m. The next day, when the tide receded, the site wasn't that wet, Miller says. The site is inundated with water from the high tide only two or three times during the golf season for less than two hours and drains promptly.

"A few times a year a high tide will flood

90 percent of the course, but as the earth continues to rise, the flooding won't be as big an issue," Jones says. "There are very few tides that flood the course during the summer, and when that occurs, it's usually in the middle of the night."

Schematics

Jones had some idea about the routing of the course, but there was no way to develop a regulation golf course, Miller says. So, Miller tweaked the layout and helped Jones with distances and the separation needed between fairways. Miller says a golf course always should be routed in a clockwise rotation so golfers slice into the course, not out of it.

"The only way to obtain the permit was to show the Army Corps of Engineers how we weren't going to impact the site,"

AT A GLANCE

The Valley of the Eagles Golf Course and Driving Range

Location:	Haines, Alaska
Course type:	Nine-hole, public
Golf course architect:	Mark Miller
Owner:	Stan Jones
Golf course builder:	Turner Construction Co.
Golf course superintendent:	None
Yardage:	2,086; 2,566; 2,906
Par:	36
Fairways:	Arctar red fescue, Bering hairgrass, Kentucky bluegrass
Greens and tees:	5234N (greens) and 2P (driving range and tee boxes) artificial turf
Construction started:	July 2003
Course opened:	May 2005
Project cost:	About \$750,000 (to this point)

Miller says.

The intent of the design wasn't to have emerald green fairways and perfectly manicured bentgrass greens, but a naturally inspired, playable nine-hole golf course that's in harmony with the native environment, according to Miller.

One thing Miller insisted doing while designing the course was to research the artificial turfgrass that was going to be used on the greens and tees. He visited three places that had artificial turf to see how the turf reacted to a golf ball landing on it that was hit from 150 yards. Eventually, Miller decided on and Jones purchased artificial turf from Dalton, Ga.-based Universal Industries.

Raise 'em up

Construction of the course started July 22, 2003. Jones hired Haines-based Turner Construction Co. to shape the course, which still isn't completely grown in but improved tremendously last summer, Jones says.

"I was there every day moving dirt," he says. "Turner had one or two people to run the equipment. During construction, Mark had been here three or four times to suggest changes. For example, he didn't like the steepness of the greens."

The biggest impact to the land took place at the green and tee sites, which were contoured as much as five feet above the existing elevation. About 1,000 yards of dirt was moved to build each green, which took two years to form and shape. Most of

the work shaping the greens and tees was done with a backhoe/excavator and earth shaper. Jones says the soil underneath the greens was mushy, and because of that, Miller and Universal Industries wanted a well-compacted area. But Jones didn't want

to use any foreign soil because he says it's impossible to run equipment on the soft ground without building a major road to haul in the material.

"We wanted to raise the greens and tees so when the high tide came in, they'd be safe," Miller says. "We used fill near the greens to build up the greens and tees."

During high-tide conditions, these areas might be inundated with water, however, water will always recede back to within the banks of the existing drainage channels, leaving few pools or isolated water pockets.

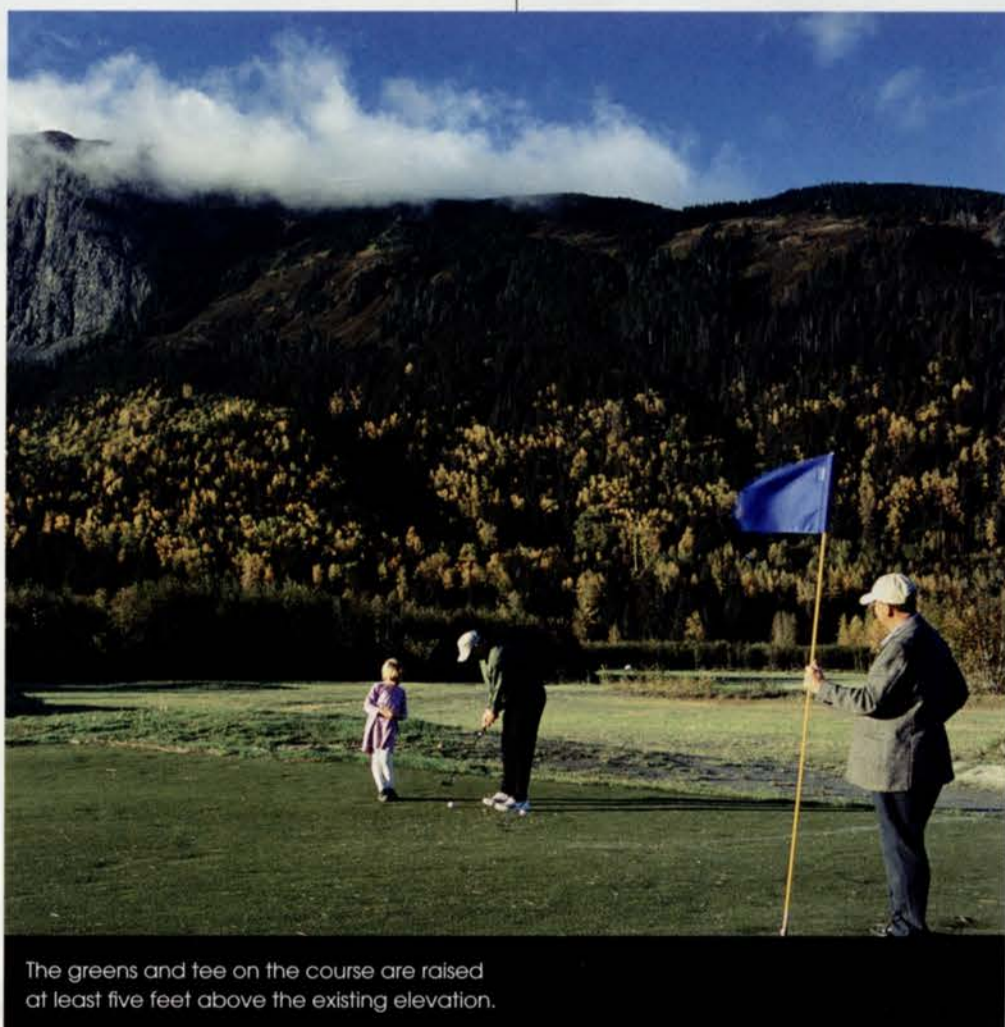
The course includes a practice putting green, 27 separate teeing areas and a driving range tee. The tees are all 10 feet by 12 feet. Some of the greens are 100-feet long, and some are 60-feet wide.

"They're not all that big," Jones says, adding that he purchased 36 1,500-square-foot rolls of artificial turf for the greens and five 720-square-foot rolls for the tees and driving range.

He has two or three rolls left over.

Working with limitations

Because of the minimalist approach to designing and building the course, it has no fairway grading or changes to the naturally existing topography. However, the existing



The greens and tee on the course are raised at least five feet above the existing elevation.



Because no foreign soils could be used to build the golf course, the turf on the greens is artificial.

surface for the fairways was leveled and grass was planted.

"We wanted to till the surface to smooth out the land and plant native turfgrass," Miller says. "One of the big hurdles was to till the land but not change the grade."

Presently, the height of cut of the turfgrass on the fairways is experimental.

Because the course has no man-made underground irrigation system, a native grass blend of Arctar red fescue, Bering hairgrass and Kentucky bluegrass was selected for the fairways by a professional agronomist familiar with the region.

"The Army Corps of Engineers wouldn't let us put underground drainage or irrigation in because the site is a wetlands area," Miller says. "But the site gets enough rain that it doesn't need irrigation, and there are wells nearby in case above ground irrigation is needed."

Work in progress

In addition to the nine-hole golf course, the

facility features a driving range and maintenance building. Eventually, a clubhouse will be built. The driving range tee, which is about 6 feet by 125 feet, accommodates 13 to 15 golfers and is covered with an open roof structure. A small building structure for dispensing golf balls is located next to the tee. The driving range "fairway" was prepared the same as fairway preparation for the rest of the course. There's also a practice putting/chipping green that's part of the range.

The maintenance building is a 40-foot-by-60-foot, barn-like structure that's designed to be as visually nonobtrusive to the entrance as possible. Native trees will be preserved around the building and wherever possible around the entire entrance and clubhouse for screening and site aesthetics.

The proposed clubhouse will be a two-story building that will be located in an area overlooking the ninth green and first tee. The clubhouse will contain a small pro

shop, snack shop, office space, living quarters for the superintendent and possibly a banquet room.


Not driven by profit

The first round of golf played at The Valley of the Eagles Golf Course was in late May 2005, and there were between 200 and 400 rounds played last year, according to Jones.

"We only had six holes that could be played, then we cut three holes in as the summer progressed," he says. "It's been pretty much the way I thought it would go."

Jones says he has spent about \$750,000 on the project so far.

"I did it on the cheap," he says. "I didn't build this course to make a lot of money. I built it because I wanted to. I don't know if the golf course will ever pay for itself, but it has kept me involved and thinking. It's a labor of love. I had a lot of support from the community. The golf course will bless this community forever." GCN



Keys to being a
well-rounded manager

SUPERINTENDENTS SHOULD WORK ON NONAGRONOMIC ASPECTS OF THEIR JOBS TO BECOME MORE BUSINESS SAVVY

by
STEVE AND
SUZ TRUSTY

Face it. Today's golf course superintendent is a business professional. Though demands for premium conditions on golf courses are escalating, more superintendents' time is focused on the business aspect of facility operations. It's no longer enough to have a sound agronomic background and excellent skills in all turf- and grounds-related aspects of golf course management.

Looking at employment postings, well-rounded is the description often given by those seeking superintendents. If superintendents haven't brushed up on their business skills lately, they're probably falling behind. How many new products and types of equipment are they seeing daily? Technology moves as fast in the green industry as it does in the business world.

Know what you don't know

The first step to become more business savvy is a hard-hitting, honest assessment of one's skill levels. Many employers expect golf course superintendents to have an almost complete set of business skills, according to Tommy D. Witt, CGCS, director of golf course operations for Northmoor Country Club in Highland Park, Ill.

"It extends far beyond developing an effective course management program and hiring, training and supervising personnel," Witt says. "Today's superintendent is expected to be competent at writing proposals, developing spreadsheets, monitoring inventories, developing and delivering PowerPoint presentations, addressing committees, interacting with members and other golfers, educating green committees/employers, and working with the media and the public. Our jobs cover the whole matrix of communication skills, people skills and financial management – and that might only be the beginning of the expertise required."

In which of these business practices are one's skills sufficient to allow him to hold his own in a meeting, committee or one-on-one situation? In what areas could he use a little or a lot more expertise? How can he gain it?

"There's so much about the position of superintendent you can't teach in the classroom," says Cleve Cleveland, CGCS, owner of Newark Valley (N.Y.) Golf Club. "I'd classify it as 90 percent experience and 10

percent education. Agronomically, every golf course is different in terms of conditions, grasses, microclimates and dozens of other variables. Many of the business aspects involved will also vary with each position. The broader the experience superintendents gain in areas of business management, the more effective they can be for their courses."

There are two basic concepts that relate to all aspects of the golf course superintendent position, according to Richard N. Eide, CGCS, principal of Golf Club Consulting in Glenwood Springs, Colo.

"First, think like the person you're serving, and second, use common sense," Eide says. "What we do is complex, but it's not brain surgery. We can have good success if we build on the fundamentals and use common sense."

Like a bean counter

Superintendents often manage the biggest budget within a golf course operation, so strong financial skills are essential. Yet, most superintendents start their first job with little background in this area. Because of Cleveland's expertise in golf course and financial management (he's a certified public accountant), his seminars about the financial skills superintendents need are a good resource.

"Superintendents without previous educational background in accounting should take a basic college-level principles of accounting course, pick up a good book such as 'Accounting for Dummies,' or tap into GCSAA's financial seminars," he says. "Basic accounting will help them prepare a budget that's more consistent year to year, so they're more likely to have it approved rather than wrangling over line items. They'll be better able to read a financial statement and understand why it doesn't match their budget figures."

There are many areas where financially savvy superintendents can allocate their budgets better and contribute to the bottom line.

"Superintendents need to be aware of what hidden costs figure into their labor budgets," Cleveland says. "The employee's salary is just part of the picture. If employees work more than 1,000 hours per year, they must be included in the course's benefits package. All related taxes and benefits will

Business items golf course superintendents should focus on

1. Personnel management
2. Presentation skills
3. Financial skills
4. Project management
5. Time management

Big areas of communication

- Ownership, boards and committees
- Other course supervisory personnel
- Staff
- Golfers
- Media
- Public



need to be factored into the true cost of each employee.”

Superintendents also should understand leases and why a capital lease is different than an operating lease. They should be able to compare lease options to purchase options, negotiate where possible, choose the option that's the most beneficial to the course and explain why that decision was made.

Building blocks

Communication skills and people skills are significant building blocks for all aspects of management, and superintendents should be able to communicate effectively, in speech and writing, to build relationships and get along with people. These elements come together when special projects, such as building new facilities or renovating existing ones, are involved. Superintendents can easily spend 60 percent to 75 percent of their time on the business aspects of these type projects.

Recently, Witt went through a renovation that involved much of his time the past three years. His responsibilities included formulating budgets, proposals and various mediums

detailing the issues, challenges and need for undertaking a major course renovation. He met with the city council, zoning board of appeal and design review commission.

Witt also helped educate members about the renovation to prepare them to vote on it.



Witt

That entailed explanatory tours of the golf course for members. “I took photos of different areas on the course to document existing conditions,” he says. “I prepared and delivered a series of PowerPoint presentations for five or six different groups of our membership, such as the ladies, seniors and low handicappers. Each presentation focused on the issues of special interest to those groups. I also participated in town-hall meetings along with the golf course architect and green chairman.”

Financially, Witt detailed the cost using a Band-Aid approach to problems on the course compared to the overall costs of the

proposed renovations. He detailed how both approaches would affect ongoing costs immediately and long term. He also provided comparison figures between leasing and buying equipment.

Continually seeking new learning opportunities enables superintendents to develop the business savvy to handle projects such as the one at Northmoor.

In the golf business, how one presents something can be as important as what's presented. No matter what their positions, superintendents should take the time to establish rapport and build relationships within an organization and with those they interact with in every facet of their work environment. It's especially important to establish relationships within the course management team.

“The higher the expectations of the golfer or member, the more imperative it is leadership at the facility is strong and all the departments are able to work with each other to accomplish the goal of meeting the golfer expectations,” Witt says. “You can't do it with a 'me' attitude. It has to

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be a team attitude that comes from building strong, healthy, secure, unencumbered relationships.”

A good support system

A superintendent who has competent people working in his department allows him to focus his time on project development and other business aspects of his job responsibilities.

“It’s a simple fact: You need a great staff to succeed,” Witt says. “I try to hire and retain the best employees I can and reward them for superior performance. It’s imperative the superintendent build a qualified staff. You not only need to hire good people, you also must develop an effective training program that equips them for their current positions and presents opportunities for them to advance within the organization. The more they succeed, the more I succeed. It’s a win-win situation.”

But finding the right people takes skill.

“When I assess potential employees, I want to see what they’ve accomplished in their previous positions and how dependable they’ve been,” Cleveland says. “One of the most difficult things to evaluate is how a qualified individual is going to function on your staff



Cleveland

under your management practices. A good human resources course or seminar can be beneficial to develop the people skills needed to make these decisions. Often, it’s not the aptitude or the financial issues that make a new employee a good fit with your program. It’s the personality of the individual and their desire to make it work.”

A place in the market

People skills impact every facet of the superintendent’s position and because golf is primarily a service business, superintendents need to understand the client, know who



Eide

they’re targeting and figure out how to give them what they want, according to Eide.

“This is a highly competitive market,” he says. “It’s all about getting customers and then getting them to return.”

Much of the marketing side of golf course management revolves around the playing surface, which is the basis of the superintendent’s job. Beautiful facilities with poor playing conditions won’t earn return business.

“The facilities are going to be dramatically different from the public course to the high-end course,” Edie says. “We’re overbuilt in a lot of areas, so your customer has many choices. You have to take a hard look at your course, define who you are, who your potential buyer will be, and then focus on

selling your product to that buyer.”

It takes a well-rounded business professional to make that all work. GCN

Steve and Suz Trusty are freelance writers based in Council Bluffs, Iowa. They can be reached at suz@trusty.bz.

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The all-natural way

ORGANIC TURFGRASS MANAGEMENT MAKES HEADWAY, BUT SUSPICIONS REMAIN

by
JOHN
TORSIELLO

Mention the word “organic” during a discussion about golf course turfgrass management, and you’ll get responses as varied as New England weather.

In some quarters, organic fertilizers and fungicides are the next big thing. Others question their benefits, doubting they perform to the degree necessary for a multimillion-dollar industry to trust.

But organics are here, seemingly to stay. Technological advances in the development and manufacturing of such environmentally-friendly products during the past five to six years increased their effectiveness while capturing the attention of more golf course superintendents, according to industry suppliers. Continued pressure from citizen and environmental groups, as

well as fears about surface and groundwater contamination from synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, make organic products an attractive alternative in sustainable turf management programs.

“There certainly is a growing interest in organic products for the care of golf course turf,” says James Murphy, Ph.D., extension turfgrass specialist at New Jersey’s Rutgers University. “This has been encouraged by environmental groups, membership at clubs and the superintendents themselves, who want to be environmentally sensitive, cut down on their use of chemicals and protect themselves from overexposure to chemicals.”

The foundation of nonchemical methods of turf maintenance are formed by microbes, which are part of a diverse ecosystem of mi-

croorganisms in the soil. Beneficial microbes feed on disease-causing microbes, out-competing them for food and water, while at the same time coating the roots and blades of grass. The latter blocks pathogens and makes vital nutrients more readily available to the plant.

Agronomist Dick Psolla, who operates REP Consulting in Hartville, Ohio, says from a soil fertility standpoint, going all organic is possible.

“But I don’t know if any superintendent can say, ‘Everything we do is organic,’” he says. “Problems like dollar spot and brown patch need to be suppressed and sometimes immediately.”

REP is associated with Brookside Laboratories, a soil-testing facility in New Knoxville, Ohio.



Technological advances in the development and manufacturing of organic products during the past six years have improved their effectiveness.

Photo: Novozymes Biologics

Improving products

To some degree, going organic is a return to how superintendents managed their fairways, greens and tees at the turn of the 20th century, well before effective fertilizers and pesticides were developed. Compost from clippings and leaves and animal excrement was used to enrich the soil of golf courses and reduce thatch. Many organic fertilizers used currently contain ingredients such as seaweed powder, humate and molasses, which are often mixed with elements such as iron, zinc sulfates, manganese and calcium. Organic fertilizers are sometimes made from treated excrement from chickens and cows.

Those in the organics segment of the industry say their products are effective and produce predictable results.

"Organics were once viewed as snake oil, voodoo or some type of elixir for a golf course," says Gary Grandstaff, c.e.o. of Clarksburg, W.Va.-based From The Ground Up, which makes and markets a number of organic products for turf management. "We're becoming much more accepted. We're just seeing the cutting edge now. We're the tip of the rocket ship headed for space.

"With the use of our products, there's increased microbial activity in the soil, which, in turn, feeds on the organic matter from thatch and breaks it down to form a rich humus layer in the top soil," he adds. "The end result is turf that becomes stronger and healthier, making it more tolerant to drought and high stress periods from heat and high traffic."

Grandstaff, who's also golf course superintendent at the Pete Dye Golf Club in Bridgeport, W.Va., says his company's biodegradable MOL products offer other benefits, such as reducing or eliminating fall aeration when used consistently on a seven-to-10-day spraying schedule for at least two years. They also can help superintendents reduce the amount of fertilizer and fungicide required during the growing season.

During the early years of using organics, the strains of soil bacillus were relatively unstable, which caused a few problems, including a short shelf life, according to Jeff Howard, marketing manager in the Roots Care Group at Novozymes. Howard says the technology has changed to the point where it has allowed the company to deliver a more stable product that has a two- to three-year shelf life.

While Howard says the bulk of the growth in the company's business has been in the nursery and landscape sectors, it has



Those in the organics segment of the industry say their products are effective. Pictured is a pot of bentgrass treated with an organic product (right) next to a control pot.

Photo: Novozymes Biologicals

seen moderate growth in the golf sector.

"But we don't see any lessening of public and potential regulatory pressure that will limit the amount of chemicals that can be used on a golf course," he says.

Those in the organics segment say their products don't incur considerable increase of expenditures, manpower or equipment, and might ultimately save golf courses money by reducing man-hours and the use of synthetic products.

"All our products fit well with existing cultural practices," Howard says. "Our products are extremely affordable for even a nine-hole municipal golf course."

One organic trend becoming more popular is compost tea machines, which can create as much as 500 gallons of liquid soil fertilizer. Proponents say compost tea is easier and cheaper to apply than compost, and its microbial make-up can be altered when it's brewed to help fine-tune the soil microbiology. Long Island golf courses using compost tea have reported significant reductions in the number and severity of outbreaks of diseases such as dollar spot.

Another trend is the blending of organic and conventional synthetic products for turf management. Organics can be used as a base in the treatment and care of soil and grass, bridging to chemical fertilizers and pesticides, which are added to the mix to suppress or prevent troublesome disease and pests.

All-organic

One course that has an all-organic turfgrass management program is the Vineyard Golf Club on Martha's Vineyard off the coast of southeastern Massachusetts. Golf course superintendent Jeff Carlson was

given a momentous task when he came on board: make his maintenance operation completely organic. The local government placed such a stipulation on the maintenance staff when it allowed the course to be built six years ago.

"It certainly is a challenge," Carlson says. "It's important to remember that we had the benefit of growing in a new golf course and selecting the types of grasses that were more resistant to disease, such as dollar spot. We have a moderate climate because we're on the ocean, good air circulation because we don't have a lot of trees, and most of our play is on foot, which reduces the stress on the turf."

Carlson says for the most part, various organic fertilizers and the biofungicide, Ecoguard, have resulted in excellent course conditions.

"We do have occasional brown spots, which I'm much more aware of than anybody else," he says. "We spend a lot of time getting rid of dew in the mornings, and because the organics we use are light sensitive, we do more work at the end of the day. It's been a shift in routine. All in all, the members are proud to have an all-organic golf course, and I'm proud of it. It's been fascinating."

Dabbling in organics

Even though Baker Hill Golf Club in Newbury, N.H., doesn't have an all-organic turf management program, golf course superintendent Bob Turcotte has been using a mix of organics and traditional synthetic products since the club opened six years ago.

"It took a while for the organics industry to adapt to our needs," he says. "We have a

lake downstream from the course, and we have always wanted to be good neighbors. We don't rely solely on organic products because we sometimes need something that can break down faster, so the bridge products come in handy. But we want to go back to basics whenever we can, whether it be with organic fertilizers or use of mulch."

Other haven't quite made up their mind on the issue. Frank Dobie, golf course superintendent at the 40-year-old Sharon Golf Club in Sharon Center, Ohio, is one of them.

"I've been a dabbler in organic treatments," he says. "We've done a little bit of it at the club, but I don't know if it has made any difference. But I recommend superintendents keep an open mind to it."

Inconclusive evidence

Some say university-based research about organic products remains inconclusive and doubt whether golf course turf can ever be treated and cared for properly without the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. Others question whether serious turf

problems such as pythium, leaf spot, patch disease, as well as mole crickets and nematodes, can ever be contained or prevented with organics.

"I don't know how possible all-organic can be in areas of the country where the grass comes under great stress from the weather and heat, like in the South and Southwest where you have long, very hot summers and diseases and insects can be a serious problem," Murphy says. "The weather in Northern climates, such as New England, allows you to use more organic products with a degree of effectiveness."

"With a lot of these organics, people say they work in theory, and theory sounds good, but the field tests have shown they're not consistent, and other research is inconclusive at this point," says James Snow, national director of the Green Section of the U.S. Golf Association. "A golf course on an island off the New England coast isn't representative of 99 percent of the country's other courses."

However, Snow, Psolla and Grandstaff agree superintendents should keep an open

mind and do their homework when it comes to organic products.

"Superintendents should always have a trial area when they can use a product and see how it works over a period of several years before they take it to the entire course," Snow says.

"So many superintendents don't truly understand the soil and how it works, and they really should," Psolla says. "It's a living organism that must be treated as such. And you need to have a long-range turf management program. Organics take several years to work properly, especially on a course that has been starved for nutrients."

"The best way to approach organics if you haven't already tried them is to do half a fairway, half a tee box or a practice green with organics and compare with the rest of the course being treated with other turf management products," Grandstaff says. GCN

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In the early stages

SUPERINTENDENTS REFINE THE MANAGEMENT OF SEASHORE PASPALUM

by
DOUG
SAUNDERS

For golf course superintendents throughout the Southeastern United States, the challenge of growing healthy turf in hot, humid conditions leads to the continuous development of new strains of Bermudagrass, bentgrass, fescue and ryegrass (for overseeding). The new strains are more disease and stress tolerant than older ones and are more like the latest software versions, but they don't address all the variables turf managers face. Difficult growing conditions stemming from poor-quality and high-salinity water created the need for a new turfgrass.

During the past 10 years, seashore pas-

palum has been introduced and seems like the answer to the aforementioned problems. The hardy grass thrives amid the salt spray of the ocean coastlines and grows well near swamplands and brackish water.

Ron Duncan, Ph.D., a former professor of turfgrass breeding at the University of Georgia in Tifton, first began studying paspalum after a colleague sent him a clump of the deep-rooted turf in 1992. The grass, which had been around golf courses since the 1970s, was wiry, stringy and difficult to mow. Through breeding, crossbreeding and refining, Duncan was able to develop two cultivars

of a salt-tolerant grass that could thrive in warm climates, grow well in foggy and humid conditions, and provide a satisfactory playing surface for discriminating golfers.

The results of Duncan's research were two cultivars – Sea Isle 1, a paspalum suitable for tees and fairways, and Sea Isle 2000, which could be used for greens. The grass breeds, licensed in 1999, became an alternative to Bermudagrass. They can withstand water with high salt content, even brackish water and seawater, require as much as 75 percent less fertilizer and be mowed to heights of 0.25 of an inch. It seemed Duncan helped create the perfect grass for southern climates.

“Many thought paspalum would just be a niche grass with limited use, but I always felt it would be an important turf because it can withstand poorer water sources,” Duncan says. “The fact is, overall water quality is as good as it will ever be, and during the next decades it will only get worse.”

Poor water quality and the increasing cost of fertilizer have continued to pique the interest in paspalum, which can tolerate salt levels as high as 22,000 ppm.

“We can't grow enough sod to meet the demand for paspalum right now,” says John Holmes, director of global sales for Soperton, Ga.-based Phillip Jennings Turf Farms. “Fifty percent of the golf course renovation work in the Southeast is going to paspalum, and 50 percent of the new course construction has specified paspalum turf. Because it can be introduced only through sod, the initial cost of paspalum can be 15-percent to 20-percent higher, but the need for less water and nutrients during the first few years can easily justify the cost. In fact, more than 160 courses worldwide have paspalum.”

Paspalum can be introduced only through sod because of the long germination process that would be inefficient on a golf course. Sprigs can be used, but that method also would take too long to fill in.

A new learning curve

Because paspalum is a relatively new grass, developing the proper techniques to maintain it has been a work in progress. The Old



Photo: Rich Reales

At Hammock Bay Golf Club in Florida, golf course superintendent Rodney Whisman applies 35 percent less fertilizer on seashore paspalum than he did on Bermudagrass.

Tuscany Reserve Golf Club in Naples, Fla., is grassed tee-to-green with SeaDwarf seashore paspalum from Environmental Turf.
Photo: Rich Redles





Photo: Monarch Bay Golf Course

The seashore paspalum on the Monarch Bay Golf Course in San Leandro, Calif., has survived cool winters.

Collier Golf Club in Naples, Fla., was one of the first courses to use the newer breeds.

"The site where Old Collier is located had no source of fresh water, only brackish water from the Cocahatchee River, so the reality is there would be no golf course here if it wasn't for paspalum," says certified golf course superintendent Tim Hiers. "The developers took a huge leap of faith to go with this new grass when the course was built."

Hiers compares the challenge to what happens when a new drug is introduced to the market by a pharmaceutical company. While a company will lab test a product before it's

finally introduced to the market, Hiers took a new product from the research center and put it to use immediately.

"We skipped the testing phase," he says. "When issues appeared, we had no place to go to for answers. It was a matter of creating a new learning curve right on the spot as we grew this new turf."

During the past seven years, Hiers learned nurturing paspalum takes a completely different mindset. Even though it's a warm-season grass like Bermudagrass, the similarities end there. Because it grows aggressively, a different approach to control thatch is needed. While

the turf can be irrigated with high-sodium water, it's important to manage salt buildup in the soils through additions of trace minerals and aerification during the year.

"There are so many nuances to paspalum," Hiers says. "For example, dew will not form on paspalum, yet rainwater will be absorbed more readily by it. The grass will grow in faster, but it will take a longer time to develop a good putting surface. It takes more water to bring in the turf, but then it will require less water to keep it healthy after it has been established. Anyone who switches to paspalum needs to study the recent research that has been done but also understand each course will present its own unique situation."

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Stimulating an interest

Hammock Bay Golf Club near Marco Island is another course in Florida that features paspalum. Golf course superintendent Rodney Whisman was on board for the grow-in phase of the course in 2003. Managers at WCI Communities made the decision to use the turf.

"WCI's commitment to finding solutions to environmental challenges stimulated the interest in paspalum," Whisman says. "Since it was established at Hammock Bay, I've been very happy with its performance. I've used water that's as high as 10,000 ppm of salts for irrigation, and I use 35 percent less fertilizer than I used to use on Bermudagrass. I have to be careful to control its growth, and I make

sure my mowing equipment is very sharp.”

Whisman agrees with Hiers and says the key is not following old concepts of turf management when managing paspalum.

“This a new and interesting turf to deal with,” Whisman says. “I’ve had visitors from Costa Rica, the Caribbean and Dubai come to see what the turf is like. The players who play on it like how the ball sits up on it. I like that it keeps a greener color throughout the winter so I don’t have to overseed. Overall, I know that if I was offered another course to manage that was Bermudagrass, I would rather not do it.”

The success of paspalum at Hammock Bay lead WCI to use it at many of its other Florida properties.

Meeting expectations

Another example of the versatility of paspalum can be found in the San Francisco Bay area. Monarch Bay Golf Course in San Leandro, Calif., is an 18-hole course built on an old landfill in 1961 and was redesigned in 1999. The remodeled track was planted with ryegrass but began losing turf three months after the renovation was complete.

“Our soil here is very salty because the old landfill was capped with dredge material from the bay, and our irrigation water also has a high salt content,” says golf course superintendent Todd Gilles. “The designer, John Harbottle Jr., came up with the idea of using paspalum, but the concern was whether our climate was to cool for it to work.”

The course was sodded with Sea Isle 1 in 2004, and after two of the coolest winters on record, and some of the heaviest rains, the turf has stood up to the test of Mother Nature.

“The turf has certainly performed up to expectations,” Gilles says. “This winter, I’ve worked on other projects and haven’t had the time to concentrate on the fairways like I usually do, but the turf looks good after the heavy rains this winter.”

Gilles tries to keep the soil high in potassium and light on nitrogen. He also plans to verticut the fairways four times a year and aerify three times a year to control thatch buildup. Gilles takes the cores that result from aerifying and spreads them into areas of the rough that have a poor soil profile. He says the turf has performed well in those areas.

“The majority of players don’t even know what type of grass they’re playing on, and because the ball sits up on the fairways well, they don’t seem to mind the subtle color difference between the fairways and greens,” he says. “I noticed paspalum stripes



Photo: Rich Reddes

Seashore paspalum’s susceptibility to insects and disease is being addressed through research.

very nicely when it’s mowed, adding to the visually pleasing quality of the turf.”

Refined management

Even though there are many attributes of paspalum, it isn’t a silver bullet for difficult turfgrass management situations. Concerns about paspalum include its susceptibility to insects and disease and the difficulty to control other turf types within a stand of paspalum. But Duncan says these issues are being addressed through continued research.

“As the grass increases in acreage and is exposed to the challenges of Mother Nature, more information will be gleaned and translated into a refinement of management protocols,” Duncan says.

Hiers agrees.

“We’ve been using Bermudagrass for decades, and the industry continues to come up with new management protocols for it,” he says. “Paspalum is only a few years old, so obviously more research will lead to better growing techniques.” GCN

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

Editor’s note: For more information about seashore paspalum research, visit www.usga.org, www.environmentalturf.com, www.seasprayinfo.com and www.seasprayinfo.com/research.php. Additionally, the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program is considering a national seashore paspalum trial.

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Making it better

BALD PEAK COLONY CLUB SPENDS TIME AND MONEY TO PROPERLY RENOVATE AND EXPAND ITS GOLF COURSE MAINTENANCE FACILITY

by
STEVE AND
SUZ TRUSTY

Photos by
Brian Underwood

Are you considering renovating or expanding the maintenance building(s) at your golf course? A review of the maintenance facility improvement project at Bald Peak Colony Club in Melvin Village, N.H., provides information that might help you with such a project.

Bald Peak, a private club designed and built in the early 1920s, is the centerpiece of a gated residential community tucked into the rural countryside along the shoreline of Lake Winnepesaukee, the largest body of water in New Hampshire.

The original 70-year-old maintenance facility was a renovated, 4,500-square-foot barn that had insufficient lighting and ventilation. Bald Peak's two mechanics operated

in limited workspace. Equipment was stored outside at several locations throughout the grounds. The need for change was apparent, so in the fall of 2000, the management team began discussing long-range plans to replace the facility.

To start with, it's important for the superintendent or club officials to involve qualified professionals at the earliest possible stage of any major project, according to Todd Pollini, superintendent of golf and grounds, and Ralph G. Beckett, a long-time club member and green chairman. The professionalism they bring to the process can increase communication to the entire membership.

Bald Peak's first step was hiring Braintree,

Mass.-based Sports Club Management to perform a safety compliance audit of the entire operation.

"It clearly detailed conditions, including the areas where we were deficient," Pollini says. "It laid out the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration] regulations and federal laws and analyzed our facilities in relationship to them. It took the project from a concept of better conditions to the level of needing a new facility because of X or Y or Z."

The detailed report helped the club determine during the early planning stages that renovating the existing facility wouldn't accomplish their goals because it wasn't big enough and there were too many



Bald Peak expanded its maintenance facility from 4,500 square feet to 22,000 square feet.

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In June 2001, the club put together a 10-person, long-range planning committee. About 85 percent of the membership belongs to at least one other club somewhere else in the country. Three of the committee members belonged to clubs that expanded their maintenance facilities and brought that knowledge to the table.

"They all agreed we shouldn't crimp on space," Pollini says. "The clubs that had done so were asking for additional space within two or three years. We wanted a facility that would last 50 years. So instead of starting with a set price range, they decided it would be more efficient and cost effective over the long term to define what was needed first and then determine the cost."

The Bald Peak project also included the renovation of employee housing on the premises. Because many employees come from other regions of the country to work at the club during the summer, on-site housing allows the club to attract and retain the number of qualified individuals they need. The two existing facilities were adjacent to each other. The committee proposed combining the two renovations into a single project.

Explore regulations

Every municipality has requirements for permitting and documenting construction, renovation or expansion projects. Golf facility management should discuss these issues with the city's planning or zoning board at



Part of the maintenance facility expansion and renovation included office space for Todd Pollini, superintendent of golf and grounds.

the development stage of the process. The information then can be shared with the architect, engineer or design/build firm to reduce changes during the design phase and avoid construction delays.

"The town of Moultonboro required a new site plan for our facility to clearly define boundary lines," Pollini says. "Our site covers hundreds of acres, so this was an extensive and expensive part of our project development."

Most golf course managers, architects, engineers and contractors are familiar with state and national regulations, but it's important to make sure all information is up-to-date in these areas before developing the design.

Develop a wish list

In the summer of 2001, as the committee interviewed firms to design the project, Pollini was working to develop a punch list of the facility's features.

"You have to do your homework," he says. "We visited other courses and talked with those involved with facility renovation projects. We also made sure to address issues that had come up in our safety audit."

Bald Peak's goal was to develop an environmentally sound, safe and modern facility, and the committee took a proactive approach to achieve that. Along with other features, their stipulations included: ample workspace for the mechanics; office facilities for Pollini; an indoor wash-bay system to protect against water runoff; a containment area for waste oil; a series of state-licensed and-certified fuel tanks; a separate, contained reel grinding area; separate storage areas for paint and fertilizer; and a separate, contained painting area.

With an average of 20 to 23 golf course maintenance employees each season, a safe, comfortable environment also was planned. Features included an employee lounge with storage areas and kitchen facilities, and separate men's and women's restrooms, showers and sleeping quarters.



The club committed to the maintenance facility project before renovating the golf course or restoring the clubhouse.

The design process

Bald Peak's committee interviewed several firms before determining to use the services of a design/build company rather than separate architectural firms and construction companies. The company selected an in-house architect. Pollini, his assistant and the two mechanics worked closely with the architect to develop the floor plan. They combined his expertise in the layout with their knowledge of what they wanted to achieve functionally.

While the original punch list might not have been as detailed as one supplied by an architectural firm, it provided a sound base that was less challenging to adjust during the construction process. An engineering firm reviewed and approved the design before construction began. Overall costs were reduced, and the club ended up with outstanding facilities for the expense, according to Beckett and Pollini.

Bald Peak expanded its maintenance facility from 4,500 square feet to 22,000 square feet. It also added 4,000 square feet of pole barn storage for trucks and tractors plus topdressing, sand and salt bins.

"Don't be concerned about making it too big," Pollini says. "That won't happen. All of our space is being utilized. It doesn't take long to fill it up."

The employee housing renovation created comfortable living space for as many as 42 people within the three-story structure. The former maintenance facility was converted to a common recreational area and is positioned between the two larger structures, creating a separation between the work and residential spaces.

Presenting the proposal

Because Bald Peak is a seasonal club that has about a 3.5-to-four-month period during which the majority of the members are present at the same time, the project presentations needed to occur within that time frame.

Christian Coulter, CCM, Bald Peak's general manager, was the key communicator throughout the presentation process.

"The general manager has more exposure to the membership than the superintendent does," Beckett says. "Chris was very open to questions and comments at any time. He and the committee were excellent communicators to the board and membership during official presentations and town-hall meetings. Our club requires a membership vote on expenditures of \$250,000 or more. This project was approved on the first vote."

Construction began in the fall of 2002,

and the maintenance staff moved into the new maintenance facility in June of 2003. The project took 2.5 years from the first stage of development to completion.

"If our Web site had been up and running during the process, we would have provided constant updates on the project," Pollini says. "That resource wasn't available to us at the time. But this project demonstrates the club's commitment to employee safety and excellent working conditions because they undertook it before focusing on renovating the golf course and restoring the clubhouse."

Pollini and Coulter conducted tours for the members when the facilities were completed. "The tours were well attended and a big success," Beckett says. "It's obvious all the employees take pride in the facility and have a greater sense of its value to the club, which is reflected in job performance."

Rating the results

Bald Peak is heading into the third year in the new facility, and the results are out-

standing, according to Pollini.

"I'd rate it nine to 9.5, with 10 being ideal," he says. "There are a few things I'd tweak if we were to do it again, but they're minor compared to the positive big picture. The workflow is much more efficient. The design emphasizes safety, which reinforces our training in those areas. We've gone 15 months without an accident report."

The impact of the maintenance facility project on employee morale and improved job performance is impossible to measure in dollars, Pollini says.

"The golf course is what brings the members to the club," he says. "The quality of the maintenance facility only enhances the finished product and the course itself, and it shows. There is value gained for all the club members by having a quality maintenance facility. It's not just money spent." GCN

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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.

Redneck tree boom

As a result of Hurricane Wilma, which wreaked havoc on many south-Florida golf courses Oct. 24, 2005, there was significant tree and shrub damage. Because of high winds, many trees were knocked over and died, while fewer trees were blown over, put back up and survived.

To assist erecting the trees and shrubs, the dedicated staff at the 36-hole Vineyards Country Club in Naples designed and built a "redneck tree boom" that made their job much easier. Judd Allen, chief equipment operator of Premier Builders, welded the tree boom together with design input from Jim Schleutker, CGCS, CPAg, director of golf courses; Jim Baase, landscape architect; and Claudio Mares, horticulturist.

The redneck tree boom attaches to the standard hooks of a front-end loader tractor bucket or backhoe bucket similar to a set of detachable forks that also use the same hooks. The design and construction also is similar to the detachable forks because the top cross member is made of solid, 2-inch-diameter, rolled stock steel that attaches onto the existing bucket hooks. The frame mostly consists of 4-inch angle iron that's readily available at local junkyards or metal supply sources. The boom consists of 4-inch tubular stock steel that's about 6-feet long. It's supported with 2-inch, tubular steel stock.

When constructing the boom, Schleutker recommends using the heaviest-gauge metal available. After the metal is welded together, large, swivel-type shackles and hooks should be installed, one halfway and one at the end for the tree slings and baskets to be attached. There also are two stationary hooks welded to the bottom of the frame directly below the bottom of the bucket for lifting. The tree sling that wraps around the shrubs and tree trunks consists of a rope-like material available from tree-maintenance supply catalogs.

The boom is great for hoisting large shrubs into holes and lifting trees too large for a maintenance staff to lift by hand. It can be built for \$50 or less compared to a manufactured tree boom that can cost significantly more.



Spanglish

The Brandywine Country Club in Wilmington, Del., is in the grow-in stage of a renovation project that started last summer. The course is scheduled to reopen this summer.

The renovation was designed by Brian Ault of Ault, Clark & Associates. Landscapes Unlimited completed most of the construction work, and the in-house maintenance staff helped coordinate the project.

The board of directors, green committee, golf course architect and professional management staff had many friendly debates about whether to reverse the layout of the two nines once the 18-hole course reopened for play. Ultimately, the nines were reversed.

Most of the maintenance staff are Hispanic and don't speak English. So instead of waiting to train the staff the new hole numbers after the course reopened, Doug Rider, golf course superintendent, implemented a fun way to teach the staff while the course was still closed to play. A hole-number sign was placed behind each regulation green with the hole number written in Spanish below it. Rider also made charts showing all numbers written in English and Spanish. These were provided to each employee and were placed strategically around the employee areas of the maintenance building complex.

The charts and signs placed behind each green have helped the staff to identify the new hole numbers in a short time without using the old hole numbers anymore. GCN



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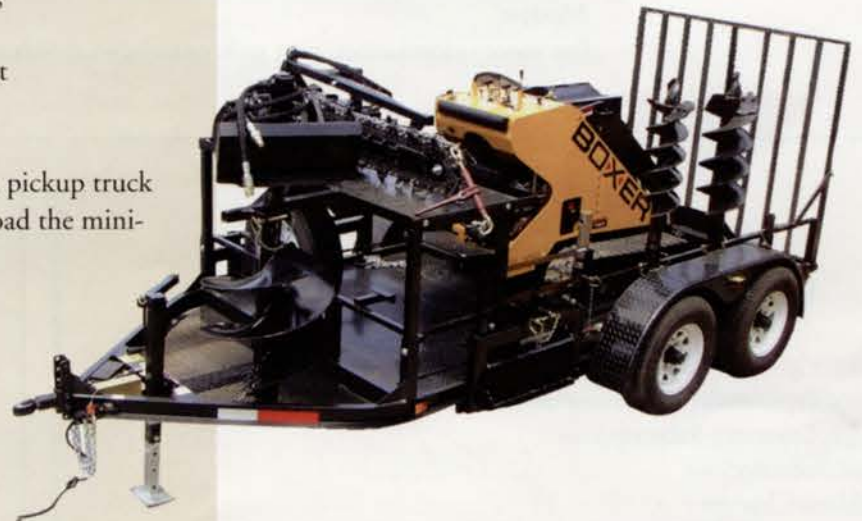


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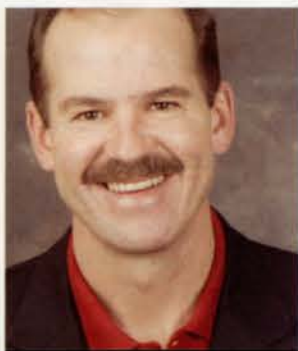
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15 ways to kill golf

How many times have you met someone who said, "Oh, I used to play golf, but I quit because ..."? They then give one of any number of reasons. You smile and simply change the subject.

Hey, good riddance, right? There are plenty more potential players where they came from. We don't need 'em if they're not committed to the game!

If you share that point of view, I'm here to help. As a public service, I'm happy to provide a list of 15 simple ways golf course operators can continue to drive those annoying, unwanted players away and continue to "refine" their markets. Here goes:

1. Make rounds longer. Casual players hate long rounds. (They usually make some lame excuse about having "lives" and "jobs," whatever those are.) So, lengthen the course to at least 7,500 yards, keep the rough about six-inches high and make sure they have to spend a half-hour per hole looking for balls in uncleared wooded areas just off the fairway. Don't forget to stagger tee times every four minutes to maximize their frustration during those long waits between shots on a packed course. Hey, everyone should enjoy spending six hours on the course, right?

2. Be kid-unfriendly. Someone wants his 7-year-old to go along with them during the round? That'll be an extra green fee please. We certainly don't want any ankle-biters enjoying the experience of being out on the course with mom or dad. Got rug rats who want to learn to play? Set up a junior golf program with sessions at times when it's impossible for parents to get them there. Remember what W.C. Fields said: "Anyone who hates children and dogs can't be all bad." (Well, dogs actually are better than kids because they can make themselves useful by chasing geese.)

3. Don't build any more nine-hole or executive courses. So what if the percentage of "entry-level" facilities has declined dramatically during the past 20 years? If a beginner wants to play this game, he damn well should get the full 18-hole experience. Oh sure, he'll complain that it's "intimidating" to play a big course his first few times out. Well, hey, there's a putt-putt course up the street, pal. And

people who whine about getting tired or not having five hours to kill should take up bowling or checkers or something.

4. Treat customers like the nuisances they are. Make sure to ignore anyone who's not immediately familiar to you when he comes into the pro shop. Have your staff stand behind a huge desk and sneer at them. Never offer tips or advice. Hide the scorecards and pencils. (Those cost money!) Make sure your marshals are untrained and extra grumpy! Thirsty golfers want a drink of water on the course? Forget those nice clean water stations every couple of holes when there's plenty for sale in the snack bar!

5. Require everyone to rent a golf car. God forbid anyone should associate the words "golf" and "exercise." Special bonus: Charge them a "trail fee" if they want to walk.

6. Marketing, schmarketing. Advertising and promotion are completely unnecessary. Those guys who spend money trying to increase rounds, retain existing golfers or offer creative discounts to fill tee times in off-peak hours are suckers. If people really want to play at your golf facility, they'll find you somehow. Oh, by the way, never create a Web site with easy-to-find contact information on it. If you have a Web site, make sure to hide the directions to your course on a page where no one will ever look.

7. Be directionally challenged. If you put up on-course signage (Why bother?), try to make it as confusing as possible to anyone who's never visited your place before. It should be an adventure to find the first tee!

8. Accurate yardage markers? Hah! Good players will figure it out.

9. Live in a vacuum. Getting those bothersome letters and calls from local green industry officials about looming pesticide bans or other unreasonable regulations? Ignore them ... they'll stop eventually.

10. Assume that any problems are related to weather or the economy. It couldn't possibly have anything to do

with the quality of your facility, your lack of marketing or the golf experience for customers. Don't worry about it. Things will turn around on their own.

11. Arbitrarily cut the maintenance budget. Hey, who needs more revenue when you can just dial back expenses for that luxury turf stuff. Nobody pays that much attention to the quality of the conditions. Dandelions dotting your fairways? Kind of pretty, actually. Bare patches on the greens because fungicide spending was cut in half? Makes putting all that more challenging!

12. Eliminate headcount. Get rid of your overpriced, experienced superintendent and hire the kid who's worked for him for a year. No downside to that!

13. Pay no attention to nongolf competition. Losing customers who say they can't play because of family or work obligations? The last thing you should do is consider creative options such as "family golf" times, or setting up company or couples leagues. That would send a

terrible message to your "regulars" – you know ... the 12 old farts who show up once a week, buy virtually nothing and even have the nerve to complain about everything.

14. Don't reinvest in your course. So what if things look a little shabby around the edges at your place? Sure, you've got a few busted ball-washers and an on-course restroom facility that would scare a hobo. Big deal. If they want to play at those fancy-schmancy new courses in the area, let them. And those other older courses that are regrassing, remodeling bunkers or putting in new irrigation systems are just throwing away money.

15. Education is for dummies. What could they possibly teach you at those seminars offered by the owners, superintendents or managers associations? You should cut those budgets right away. New ideas are overrated.

So, just follow these 15 simple rules and you, too, can help speed the demise of the game of golf and ensure your facility earns all the business it deserves. Good luck! GCN

GET RID OF YOUR OVERPRICED, EXPERIENCED SUPERINTENDENT AND HIRE THE KID WHO'S WORKED FOR HIM FOR A YEAR.

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