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EDITORIAL MISSION STATEMENT:
Golf Course Industry 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 Industry shows superintendents what’s possible, helps them understand why it’s important and tells them how to take the next step.
A HEALTHIER YOU

You can't turn on the tube, surf the Web or open a newspaper without reading or watching news about Americans trying to improve their health. Whether it's eating right or exercising more, fitness gurus and journalists are talking constantly about people's health -- both mental and physical. Much like being "green," a healthy lifestyle is trendy. Fattening foods are out, and organics are in. Also, many people talk a lot about wanting a better life/work balance. Golf course superintendents are no exception.

Reportedly, there are 13.4 million lost work days annually caused from stress, anxiety and depression in the United States. Common causes of stress include: employees, worry/anxiety, customer complaints, guilt, overwork, sleep deprivation, trauma/injury, physical and mental strain, bad diet, toxic exposure and overstimulation. Related to all of those, but more specific to the golf course management industry, are increased golfer/owner expectations, the economy, achieving more with fewer resources and growing shorter grass.

Mix these factors with working long hours, spending a less-than-desired amount of time with family and dealing with irksome club members, and you have one strong concoction that pushes some superintendents to the brink of losing it.

Physiologically, in stressful situations, nonessential bodily functions shut down. Reactions can include: adrenaline increases, weight loss or gain, hunger, gastrointestinal issues, blood pressure increases, headaches, immune system deficiencies, decreased energy and libido levels, and diarrhea or constipation. Emotionally, stressed-out people can experience apathy, depression, irritability, anger, forgetfulness and detachment. Not pleasant.

So, how do you prevent from feeling that way? For some, it's the old standbys -- booze, tobacco and pills -- which can calm nerves and help suppress the stresses of the day. However, even though these methods work in the short term, they're not so good for the body long term, aren't healthy and are becoming more taboo in society.

But there are better ways -- although not as "fun" at times -- to address stress and its symptoms. One way is to replenish nutrient deficiencies in the body by ingesting B-complex with vitamin C, antioxidants, zinc, magnesium, enzymes and electrolytes. Also, you can manage stress healthily by exercising, executing and organizing your priorities, napping, spending time with family, venting, getting a massage, and through hobbies such as reading, listening to music, etc.

One area of improving your health and dealing with stress that might be easiest for you is changing your eating habits. Healthy nutritional techniques include: decreasing the amount of caffeine and alcohol you ingest, controlling your blood sugar level, eating regularly, limiting fried foods, drinking more water, eating more fruits and vegetables, and taking magnesium, B-complex and a multivitamin.

Aside from nutritional health, try to reduce the number of hours you work per week -- and I know you think it's impossible. Delegate jobs to different members of your staff. One veteran superintendent once told me members don't know if you work 70 hours a week or 60 hours. So it makes sense to focus on the aspects of the operation members notice most. The fewer hours you work on the course, the more you can spend with your family and improve that life/work balance we hear so much about.

Finally, for a good laugh, watch the movie "Office Space" and learn from character Peter Gibbons about how to relax and live a more carefree lifestyle. While the work environment in the movie is different than yours, it still correlates.

Now that I've suggested ways to improve your well-being, step outside, crack a beer, light a smoke and talk to the dog about how you're going to start living a more healthy, stress-free life -- without sending in your resignation. SCI
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UMass Joseph Troll Turf Research Center
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July 10
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UK's Spindletop Research Farm
Lexington, Ky.
Visit www.uky.edu/Ag/ukturf.

July 15
THE MIDWEST REGIONAL TURF FOUNDATION'S TURF FIELD DAY
Purdue University
West Lafayette, Ind.
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July 17
IOWA TURFGRASS FIELD DAY
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LEND A HELPING HAND

As professionals in the golf course industry, it’s our duty to help educate others about environmental management and the preservation of the environment. As a proud member of the class C assistant superintendents committee of the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents, our chapter has supported us to become involved in our industry and community. With most of us having a turf/horticulture background, providing support for a landscape project was the best choice. We chose to work with Habitat for Humanity. HFH is an international organization that helps communities everywhere and has built more than 225,000 homes worldwide. Let me tell you a bit about our project that started in 2007 in Aurora, Ill.

Last year, the Fox Valley Illinois chapter of HFH set a goal to provide four homes to needy families, who have an opportunity to put sweat equity into their future. Each family helps build its future residence and establishes equity in its home once completed. The home isn’t free, but it’s a way to improve people’s lives and provide a stable platform to continue building a better life.

Knowing a need existed in our community, the assistants committee of the MAGCS, volunteered to provide the labor and landscaping for a house that was to be built by the HFH chapter. I was privileged to serve as the project coordinator in charge of organizing the donation and installation of the plant material.

First on the to-do list was find a landscape architect to prepare the site’s landscape design. It needed to be someone who was familiar with local growing conditions and plants hardy to the area. We engaged the entire Midwest chapter and solicited members’ help and expertise. Greg Martin of Martin Designs, Ltd., provided the landscape and planting plan for the project. Once Martin completed the design, it was time to locate the plant material. We spoke with the president of the MAGCS and our board of directors to come up with a solution that allowed multiple companies to donate sod and materials. We composed a letter that was sent to all the vendors in our local association. The letter also was posted on the association’s Web site. Any member could sign up to donate plant material, time or money.

MAGCS members volunteered their time to help turn a house into a home.

The home building ran a few weeks later than expected, and by then, it was late November. We spoke with the building coordinator and discussed our options. We decided to sod the lot before winter settled in for good. The lot needed to be grassed before it would pass for an occupancy permit. We installed the rest of the plant material in the spring of 2008.

Duntemann Sod Farms, a local sod farm and member of the MAGCS, donated the sod. The lot required about 9,000 square feet of sod. Luckily, the snow held off long enough for the sod to be cut and delivered to the home. In typical midwestern fashion, the weather changed quickly. The temperature dropped 15 degrees, from 45 to 30, and snow began to fall at a rate of one-half inch per hour within two hours of our arrival. Ten association members spent six hours finishing grading the lot and installing the sod. Shortly after we began working, we were joined by the family that would soon live in the house. Throughout the home building, they had helped, and this day was no different. Together, we laid the sod before the ground froze.

The winter of 2007/2008 in the Chicago area was cold and long. When the weather broke this spring, we called the volunteers and companies to help out once more. The landscape plan called for various shrubs, groundcover, trees and flowers. We worked with the family to complete the landscape. The final step included smoothing the sod, adding mulch to the landscape beds and applying fertilizer.

As a volunteer, the joy I received from helping others was immeasurable. Working with soil, growing grass and maintaining turf are my passions. To be able to use this knowledge and the resources available to me is a small way to help others in my community. A little time and a lot of generosity from a bunch of dedicated people made it possible to turn dirt into a yard and a house into a home. I thank the volunteers who offered their help with this project. This philanthropic effort couldn’t have been completed without the support of the MAGCS. Last, but certainly not least, I thank the vendors who provided the plant materials. Because of these fine folks and all of the volunteers, the project was a success.

The golf course maintenance profession has a great story to tell the public. HFH is one of many fine organizations to get involved with to help make our profession and our society a better place.
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SMART IRRIGATION INVESTMENTS

In the past, I’ve stressed the idea of intelligent investment, or spending money to rebuild and upgrade a course’s infrastructure to improve maintenance and reduce long-term costs.

When looking at the cost/benefit ratio of an infrastructure, there’s little question upgrading an irrigation system often pencils out as the best investment one can make. And numbers support that. The irrigation industry spent its formative years working to let superintendents irrigate more turf more reliably. But with current and proposed water restrictions in many areas, irrigation companies now focus on more efficiency.

The newest generation of irrigation systems offers substantial, reliable upgrades with better gear drives, solenoids and grit resistance compared to their predecessors. More importantly, new sprinklers offer substantial cost savings for water and electricity use. The advances are so broad, any course with a system older than 10 years should consider new components or an entirely new system. If your system is 20 years old, a new system would be worthwhile.

Improvements of sprinklers, control systems and designs provide laser-like precision for applications. Distribution uniformity of the newest generation of sprinklers has improved to 88 percent from 67 percent just a few years ago. Distribution uniformity is a measure of uniform water application within a sprinkler’s coverage area — 100 percent is a perfectly even application. At 67 percent, one needs to run the system one and a half times longer than required to assure adequate coverage everywhere (1/0.6666 = 1.50). At 88 percent, additional running time is reduced to about 14 percent. Thus, simply replacing worn-out sprinklers might offer water and electrical savings of 23 percent.

Some courses have experienced an additional 23-percent water savings by installing a new system designed for precision application. Irrigation designers know more sprinklers means less water usage. Tighter spacing increases distribution uniformity and fights wind effects. Using back-to-back part circle heads — once thought to be a luxury between greens and surrounds — is used commonly to increase control differential for fairways and roughs. Using part circles on the border between turf and native areas eliminates unnecessary irrigation of native areas.

... there’s little question upgrading an irrigation system often pencils out as the best investment one can make.

New irrigation system designs also focus more on control flexibility. This allows superintendents to fine tune a system to irrigate different microclimates (such as hills and valleys or shade and sun) much better than designs a decade ago, which focused on minimizing pipe and wire. Better control reduces water use and annoying wet or dry spots, which enhances turf health and play quality.

Irrigation control no longer requires guesswork, and systems never have to run while it’s raining. Newer central controllers are smarter and use real-time evaluation and data from past experience to constantly and intelligently adjust, cancel, pause and/or resume irrigation programming in response to changes in temperature, wind, precipitation and evapotranspiration. Central control systems can monitor system flow to keep pipes running near capacity. This shortens watering time, saves water and energy, reduces pipe and pump wear, and completes watering sooner, allowing earlier mowing to beat the crowd.

New wireless soil monitoring systems — which allow superintendents to determine irrigation need based on actual soil moisture, salinity and temperature measurements rather than computer calculations of ET — show great promise for additional water savings. Naturally, the location of these devices in representative microclimates makes them the most effective.

In one instance, a superintendent documented 46-percent water savings on a per-acre basis after installing a new system based on modern components and precision design. Some clubs use water savings to water more acreage and improve turf. Others choose the cost savings of using less water. Some use new systems simply to survive newly imposed water restrictions. I recently proposed a precision watering system for a course that will add nine holes to avoid the cost of rebuilding a supply line. Precision systems cost more up front, however.

“While long-term savings will offset up-front expense, in the current economy, many courses still opt for less-expensive systems,” says Terry Little, an irrigation consultant with Aqua Engineering in Fort Collins, Colo. “Like many irrigation innovations, the new technology seems more common in the West, where water needs are often most critical. But it works everywhere.”

Current cost concerns aside, the least-expensive way to do something is to do it right in the first place. That idea holds true now more than ever regarding irrigation. Building as sophisticated an irrigation system as you can afford pays big dividends down the line through reduced water and power usage and better turf.
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BEWARE OF (SOME) G.M.S

It's often said that while the American form of government isn't perfect, it's clearly the best form of government available to man. Similarly, it can be said that while the general manager format of club governance isn't perfect, it's the best available to the private golf sector. (See my March 2007 GCI column.)

Some might think there can be no more deadly power struggles than what we see within the halls of government where the welfare of constituencies, or voters, often are subverted to the will of the politically ambitious. Regrettably, this level of political infighting isn't limited to government. We see similar devastating infighting every year within the halls of America's private club community between general managers and golf course superintendents.

In my March 2007 column, I mention there are about 4,600 private golf clubs throughout the country, about 950 of these are governed by the committee format, another 850 are managed by contract firms, and the balance of about 2,800 clubs (61 percent of the total) are operated through the general manager concept. The approximate 2,800 general managers in American golf can be broken down into the following three categories:

The good guys (about 60 percent of general managers). If general managements are the best form of governance in golf (and they are), the reason for this is solely because of the experience, leadership qualities and maturity of the people who occupy these positions. Their personal makeup includes a fundamental understanding that private clubs are in the service business, staff careers should be nurtured, effective intramural communications are essential to success, and a club's welfare is the paramount objective at all times. This is the best working environment throughout all golf for golf course superintendents.

The power brokers (about 25 percent of general managers). This category of general manager generally is employed at a club before a superintendent candidate is hired. These general managers have established their power base within the club and don't want an incoming well-qualified golf course superintendent becoming too popular, thereby, potentially undermining this authority. Consequently, they do what they must to ensure star-material superintendent candidates don't get hired and lesser, more pliable candidates do. Once hired within such an environment, superintendents should be mindful that the better they do their jobs, the more tenous their job security might become. Accordingly, superintendents always should have their personal Web sites ready to move on.

The bad dudes (about 15 percent of general managers). These are the most lethal type of general managers who, generally, will be hired after the golf course superintendent was brought to bear.

These general managers dismiss superintendents at the first practical opportunity. If a superintendent resists, the big guns are brought to bear. Superintendents who resist the big guns are brought to bear. Superintendents are told that, unless they leave quickly and quietly, their salaries and benefits will be terminated immediately, health coverage will be shut down, their families will be put out on the street if the club provides housing directly or indirectly, and positive references will be permanently denied. Left with no choice, proud superintendents cave and go quietly, often with little hope of resurrecting careers. This scenario is repeated a few hundred times a year throughout the country.

If the memberships at these clubs knew how their respected golf course superintendents were being treated, there would be outrage. But they don't know because the GCSAA and its 103 chapters have done little throughout the years to educate people in this regard. They haven't addressed the lack of written contracts issue, which, once resolved, would restrain overzealous general managers. While the present GCSAA board scrutinizes these issues more closely, the 103 GCSA chapters might consider taking this issue directly to their local clubs via their Web sites and newsletters to ask their constituent clubs why only 20 percent of golf course superintendents are granted written contracts when as many as 80 percent of golf professionals, club managers and virtually 100 percent of club employed members are. This question properly presented should open the door for better dialogue with clubs about this issue.

Closing reminder: It should be clear that candidates for superintendents' jobs should check out the caliber of general manager they would work with if hired and act accordingly. GCI
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**INTERPRET MARKET RESEARCH**

My past several marketing columns emphasized the value of market research – in-office and in-person research in the marketplace – for quality golf course marketing planning. Neither is complete without the other, but in-person research tells you what's actually occurring in your market. There's no substitute for “on the ground” research.

All the formulas for golf market research – participation rates, state annual rounds, adjustments for age and income, etc. – will give you a snapshot of what, most likely, is occurring in the market. And, it's quality information, which is a product of many years of golf industry research by the National Golf Foundation, the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association, Pellucid Corp. and others.

However, when it comes to planning real-life golf course marketing, golf course managers should want this theoretical or in-house research along with in-person market research before they start projecting priority business segments and allocating budget money to them. Although course managers prioritize incorrectly occasionally, you want your best shot at being right with marketing plan priorities the first time through.

If you've followed my column the past few months, you're capable of identifying and collecting valuable market research for your course to help you create a meaningful marketing plan that will generate incremental rounds and revenue. After a few calls from readers apparently trying to follow my market research columns, eventually, you come across a unique market where you have to ask, "So, what if ..." 

What if you're in a market where the available in-office market research and the in-person market research are so divergent that golf demand for the marketplace doesn't make sense?

For example, seven or eight years ago I was trying to help an industry friend better understand his market, Jacksonville, Fla. The first thing I did was conduct a golf rounds demand analysis. I wanted to look closely at where his greatest opportunities for public play would come from, so I researched a five-, 10- and 20-mile radius from his course. In a five-mile radius, consumer golf demand ranged from 16,500 rounds to 21,900 rounds per 18-hole equivalent. In a 10-mile radius, consumer golf demand ranged from 72,800 rounds to 91,000 rounds per 18-hole equivalent. "That can't be! It's highly unlikely," I thought. In a 20-mile radius, consumer golf demand ranged from 87,300 rounds to 110,400 rounds per 18-hole equivalent. "I don't think so! Jacksonville?" I thought.

I called the company I bought the demographics package from and asked if there could have been a mistake in the population numbers it gave me. It double-checked, and its population statistics were correct. Confused, I called another consultant – one with more years of consumer market research experience at the time. Stuart Lindsay of Edgehill Consulting looked at my consumer demand analysis then looked at the raw population figures. He followed my calculations and demand adjustments and stated quite comfortably: "The five-mile radius is probably representative, but the 10-mile and 20-mile radii are population anomalies. When you visit, check your golfer participation rate. It's probably very low in that particular area of Jacksonville."

Lindsay was correct. My point is there are many types of market research, and not all of them will be accurately revealing about a golf market.

Lindsay shared another market with research aberrations unique to it – Las Vegas.

"They've got 39 million visitors from all over the country, and 9 percent (the national golf participation rate) of those probably play golf. But the Las Vegas Visitors and Convention Bureau states 2 percent of those 39 million play almost 800,000 rounds while they're there. What that number really says is that only about 25 percent of the golfers visiting actually play golf, or the demographics of the typical Las Vegas visitor don't match those of the typical golfers. It's what we call a cultural anomaly. In a nontourist area, we then look at income, age and ethnicity for a possible explanation. If that doesn't work, we usually repeat... There are many types of market research, and not all of them will be accurately revealing about a golf market.

The following advice:
1. There's no substitute for actual "on the ground" market reconnaissance.
2. Place more belief in the rounds information personally obtained from courses in the area.
3. Use those round averages to extrapolate actual golf demand in the area.

So, in the aforementioned Jacksonville example, one should follow this advice to figure out why all those missing golfers are doing something instead of golfing. The same advice can be used in the Las Vegas market as well.

The bottom line is that you should conduct all the market research available to you. Always remember the most important element of market research is the correct interpretation of the data and information for the benefit of your facility. Keep asking: "So, what if ..." The answers will follow.
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Barriers to play

A high percentage of golfers are intimidated or embarrassed at golf courses, according to a recent survey conducted by the National Golf Foundation. The finding shows efforts to create new players – or more frequent, committed golfers – are more difficult. However, most of the issues surrounding these bad feelings are addressable at the facility.

More than half of female golfers feel intimidated by other players, the staff or the environment in general. And 60 percent of women feel embarrassed by their lack of skill or knowledge. Men are far less likely to feel intimidated or embarrassed compared to women. Still, one-third are.

Infrequent golfers are much more likely to have these feelings compared to more frequent players. Addressing the issues: Skill, the No. 1 issue, can be addressed in group lessons; staff can be more welcoming; structured programs for beginners can include rules and etiquette lessons; and so on.

When asked what would make them play more often, golfers overwhelmingly answered the age-old time-and-money issue, which, for the most part, aren’t addressable at the facility. Issues that are addressable, and are important to many golfers, include having a social network of people to play with, such as leagues, playing nine holes and walking instead of riding.

Source: National Golf Foundation

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<th></th>
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<th>Female</th>
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<th>Core (8+ rounds)</th>
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Charlie Birney swings into his new role as the NGCOA president

Let’s get one thing straight right now. Charlie Birney, the grand high poobah ... er, I mean president ... of the National Golf Course Owners Association, is a lunatic.

No, he’s not a raving, knife-wielding serial killer or anything like that. He’s just a mildly wacky guy who sends self-drawn cartoons and odd pictures along with every e-mail. He’s incapable of staying on point in a phone conversation. You ask him a simple question about the golf courses he owns, and you end up talking about 17th century archeology and exotic bird species.

But that’s the beauty of Birney. He’s a lunatic who’s passionate about the golf business. And the industry will be better off for it.

Birney was born with a terra-cotta spoon in his mouth. Specifically, he’s a descendant of the founders of The Brick Companies, originally the Washington Brick & Terra Cotta Co., one of the region’s great accidental fortunes. Way back when, one of his ancestors was smart enough to realize that building Washington, D.C., would require a great many bricks, and established a company to provide them. The business was successful, but the land on which the company operated also happened to be the area of northern Virginia that’s now called Crystal City. The family eventually sold that land to companies such as Charles E. Smith and Marriott. Today, Crystal City is packed with hotels, office buildings and government agencies. Suffice it to say that The Brick Companies made a small profit along the way.

The company hasn’t produced a brick since 1939. Instead, it focuses on managing and developing commercial properties and real estate, including three courses in a division called Atlantic Golf. When he’s not busy with NGCOA stuff, fund-raising for the company’s charitable foundation or doing wacky stuff with his wife and twins, Birney serves as the managing director for the company. He started his two-year term at the helm of the owners association in February, so it’s a good time to ask him about his plans for the organization and his views about the state of the industry.

Why did you volunteer for NGCOA in the first place?

I went to an NGCOA conference years ago, and it wasn’t good. I was underwhelmed, and I said so. But I was impressed with the staff. Before I got involved, I’d spent a great deal of time and money opposing the growth of municipal golf in our area. I was a private sector guy competing against a government agency. I started to go to hearings where the county was trying to get even more active in golf development. I said, ‘Look, this is a travesty. You have no business building courses.’ Eventually, we sued them and forced them to change their charter. Unfortunately, this allowed them to do whatever they wanted to do. It’s pretty darn hard to oppose government development.

I became involved with a lot more political stuff because of that and lobbied for tourism as a member of the Maryland Tourism Development Board. A friend, John Shields, was leaving the board of the NGCOA and helped get me involved. At the time, Bill Stine was dumb enough to nominate me for the board. I’m still passing the hat for my own impeachment fund.

Is there any legitimate role for government to develop new golf courses?

There might be places – and I’m not aware of any – where governments should be creating new golf courses. But, as a rule, the government shouldn’t be building any new courses. There are plenty of idiots like me who are willing to do it. I’d like to see existing muni facilities privatized, but the problem is counties such as Montgomery County in Maryland have a stranglehold on golf. Typically, these courses aren’t really run by the county but by a ‘revenue authority’ or similar mechanism so the jurisdiction can act outside its standard responsibilities and take on projects that compete with the private sector. They should have better things to do. So, I don’t think the government should be building golf courses ... or the PGA Tour for that matter.

Tell us about your courses.

They’re three very different facilities – different styles, price points and locations. South River outside Annapolis is transitioning to private and hopefully will be profitable. There is a lot more rise and fall to the course than you would expect from land in this area.

Queenstown Harbor is a special course right on the Chester River and the Chesapeake Bay. I can’t think of a course in the area with better views of the bay from so many holes. It’s wrapped in great history as well. And Queenstown is
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a players' course. Even I can appreciate what a great golf course it is, and I stink at golf.

Potomac Ridge is in southern Prince George's County. The National Harbor project, located 10 minutes across the Potomac River from Old Town Alexandria, is opening this April and includes a 2,000-room Gaylord Hotel. We're looking forward to some golfers from the hotel's conferences.

You seem very focused on the environment. We've had to be, just to do business and get permits, but we're trying to make a stand environmentally from top to bottom. We've led the way locally. We're doing lots of little things, such as installing rain barrels at our facilities and using cups made out of corn in the cafe. We're getting back into Audubon International certification, and we're hosting the first golf tournament for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. I'm proud of this, considering the bad environmental image that golf courses have. The 'green' aspects of Queenstown Harbor are a large part of the marketing for this tournament. Heck, I even drive a Prius, which is really small but gets fabulous gas mileage.

What are your challenges, and how do they differ from typical NGCOA facilities? We're not a mom-and-pop operation, and we're not a huge golf management company. We're in between. But our challenges are probably more like NGCOA's mom-and-pop members. Luckily, our portfolio includes office buildings and other stuff that's helped us get through lean times. Also, while I don't think the environment is a huge issue for most courses nationwide, it's still a big issue for us. One of the constant challenges is dealing with an outdated perception that golf courses are inherently bad for the environment.

Quite frankly, economics are driving us to be more careful with chemicals. Money also can be a good environmental motivator. We're also getting serious about water use – we changed our fairway grasses at Potomac Ridge to zoysia to be less thirsty. Water restrictions are going to come and we need to be prepared.

Are you going to be active on the national level in terms of lobbying? Absolutely. The whole industry is getting more active and pushing things such as green carbon credits for golf. The industry has hired new lobbyists to push that, and we're having a "Day on the Hill" in D.C. this spring. There's a huge future potential for golf courses to be viewed as environmental resources for communities. We sort of led the way in that when we lobbied for and received "open space" designation for courses in Maryland.

Do you feel good about the business now?
Yeah right! We’re temporarily closing one nine at our 27-hole facility in Prince George’s County because play is down. Still, I’m confident that the huge influx of housing, not to mention those 2,000 hotel rooms, will drive play. The future for that facility is bright. But on the whole, we’re working hard to keep our rounds consistent. That truly has been a sign of the current state of things.

If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about the market, what would it be? I’ll pick two. First, more accessibility for young golfers and, second, erasing the bad perception that courses have regarding the environment.

What are your goals as NGCOA president? I want to push the sustainability/environment issues as much as possible. We have “fixed” a lot of the problems from years back, and the products and practices are getting better all the time. I talked to one of the Toro scientists at the show and got jazzed about some of the environmental technologies coming down the pike. We’d love to be a test case for some of those innovations.

How often do you get to play? Not very often. After talking with NGCOA executive director Mike Hughes about the importance of nine-hole play a few years ago, I started the “Friday Morning Irregulars.” We have a big group that’s invited to meet at 7:30 in the morning, on Fridays, and play the back nine—so no sellable tee times get used. I charge $15, and it all goes to charity. It’s a blast. Other than that, I don’t get out too much, except for the occasional tournament.

What advice would you give to an aspiring golf course owner these days? To analyze the community needs and make sure he or she knows what’s on the municipality’s development plans. It just makes me nuts that cities and counties keep developing courses. Yikes!

If you could turn back the clock 20 years and change your career, what would you do differently? That’s a loaded question. If I had known about the golf career, I definitely would have tried to play more and learn more about the game before building a course. But there are only a few things I would change.

The best part of all was that for many years I was able to work with my father, Arthur Birney Sr., who just turned 80 and is still active, and that had been my dream. He’s a fantastic man, and everyone loves him. The nicest compliment I ever received was while I was giving a toast at the wedding of one of my closest friends, when a little old lady leaned next to her friend and I heard her say, ‘He’s just like his father.’ That was wonderful.
After almost 20 years as a superintendent, 

**Quent Baria** now works on the supply side of the business

Last year, after 19 years as a superintendent and a lifetime on golf courses, a middle-aged Quent Baria, CGCS, found himself looking for a job. After a career progression with four different clubs on the East Coast, Baria's hand was forced at the Towson Golf and Country Club in Phoenix, Md. Instead of looking for another superintendent job, he already was contemplating working for a chemical company. Now a territory manager for Valent Professional Products, his transition from superintendent to salesman has been smooth.

Baria's story is similar to many other superintendents who've left the profession but not the industry because they've taken jobs helping out their brethren on the supply side of the business.
FROM CRADLE TO GRASS
Like many, Baria was born into the profession. His father, Robert E. Baria Jr., was a golf course superintendent, so the younger Baria grew up on a golf course, the Fincastle Country Club in Bluefield, Va., and lived on the property.

“I lived there since I was an infant, from the first day my folks brought me back from the hospital,” Baria says. “I decided early on, at the age of 16 or 17, that I wanted to pursue turf management as a career.”

After high school, Baria attended Virginia Tech and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in agronomy specializing in turfgrass management. After graduation, he spent one year as an assistant superintendent at the 27-hole Glen Oaks Club in Old Westbury, N.Y., under superintendent Richie Struss, CGCS, who’s still there.

At Glen Oaks, Baria learned the colloquialisms and regional differences of turf management. He also was exposed to how a high-end club operated, and he took it in the management feel.

“Basically, I saw the nuts and bolts of dealing with members,” he says. “Richie was more of a liaison to the membership. I was basically his man on the ground to accomplish missions. He was under a different set of pressures and circumstances. I learned there’s another side to being a golf course superintendent.”

Baria also learned a lot from his father, who always set the bar extremely high. The elder Baria, who has been a GCSAA member for 45 years, retired from the profession at age 59 because of health reasons.

“While on his crew, I took the heat for a lot of things I didn’t do just so he could get the message across to other crew members,” he says. “He was a perfectionist. Even though there were membership demands, they weren’t as demanding as the ones my father put on himself.”

TOP DOG
In 1989, Baria left Glen Oaks and came back to southwestern Virginia, to his roots, and took the head superintendent job at the Tazewell Country Club in Pounding Mill, Va., at the young age of 23. Baria’s original plan, however, was to spend another year or two as an assistant at Glen Oaks. But because there was a job opening 20 miles from his home and the folks at Tazewell sought him out to fill the position, he took it.

“That was back in the golf building phase when the demand for superintendents was high,” he says. “It was unlike a lot of the assistants nowadays who are five to 10 years in that role. I was fairly green but not as green as many of the young superintendents because of my experiences with my father and having worked on a golf course since I was 14 years old. I had nine years of experience on a course, obviously not in management, when I took the job at Tazewell, where I spent about five years.”

At the time, Tazewell was one of the lower-tier private clubs that had budget and playability issues. The course lost a significant portion of grass on the greens the season before. One green was completely out of play and considerable portions of eight greens were out of play because of turf loss. Baria started early in the spring working to recover the turf, which was a bentgrass/Poa annua mix. He was able to regrass and reclaim a large portion.

“I started that job April 2, and after Memorial Day, we were 100 percent grass from then on every year,” he says. “We were off to a rocket start, and the members were happy. They were saying, ‘This guy can grow grass on a rock.’”

Baria credits his success at Tazewell to his skill set, which the club hadn’t been able to hire before.

“There were far fewer turf professionals, far fewer people educated on a college level in rural southwestern Virginia,” he says. “The ones that were around didn’t seem to make their way into that part of the world.”

As Baria reflects back on his career and some of his greatest successes, he thinks of Tazewell.

“It’s a mark of true leadership when you can go back to a facility and not see where they missed you but see where they grew with you and continued to grow,” he says. “You set a pattern, and they continued to grow even after your departure. It’s neat to know you’ve been a part of that. I got the ball rolling, and from that day, they continued to function as a debt-free club. They paid for projects, such as irrigation upgrades, with cash. They’ve managed effectively and wisely. They’ve continued to seek professionals after I left. I felt like they got their money’s worth when they hired their first professional.”

DEEP ROOTS
From Tazewell, Baria moved on to Fincastle

Thinking about a career change?
Consider these points:

1. Consult your spouse.
2. Pray. Spiritual direction and peace soothe the soul in times of turmoil.
3. Consult with others who’ve made similar moves. When you can’t find someone whose moved back from sales to course management, it speaks volumes.
4. Asked yourself “What do I want to do?” instead of “What am I going to have to do now?”
5. Don’t put your children’s desires ahead of properly positioning yourself to provide for them. Use the resiliency of youth for the family’s mutual benefit.
6. Trust your gut and instincts. Know they’ve driven you in a successful path before and will again. Embrace change, it’s the only constant we truly deal with.
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in 1993 to take the place of his father after his retirement. But before he left Tazewell, he had input on the superintendent that followed him – Charlie Scott.

"Tazewell is an intermediate-tier private club, one of those where a superintendent will come and stay four or five years," Baria says. "It's not that kind of perch position where you try to end your career, but it has had quality people and results ever since I was there."

Fincastle was stable when Baria started working there, but later, because of a lack of clarity, the club went through with an untimely expansion and clubhouse renovation and invested a lot in phases of the operation that were destined not to produce a return on investment, Baria says. Although he had an opinion, Baria says it wasn't his place to offer his input about such investments.

"It was already a line of demarcation and a source of division among the membership," he says. "I made a conscious decision early on and stayed away from that one."

Baria says the club believed it could improve its food-and-beverage, catering and facilities management and turn those improvements into a source of revenue rather than a drain.

"They actually increased the size of the monster they needed to feed, and that didn't turn out to be a good thing," he says. "But hindsight is 20/20."

While at Tazewell, Baria's budget was about $150,000, which equates to about $300,000 nowadays. At Fincastle, the budget was about $375,000, which equates to about $750,000 now. With those budgets, he was able to stay current with industry trends, such as using soluble spray programs, flat-line growth curves on greens, plant growth regulators to manage ball roll and mowing intermediate roughs. He also implemented a three-year sizable landscape plan for Fincastle's entire facility.

"Rather than just sit down there in isolated southwestern Virginia and let the world pass us by, we were keeping pace with all the trends and improvements that were going on in the industry," he says. "What was always neat in those years was that climate and region was that our membership could go elsewhere to some of the finest venues, whether it was at the Greenbrier or destination beach resorts, and come back home and say, 'You know what, we get to play a better golf course at home than we do when we leave.' That type of statement made you proud."

Aside from agronomic issues, Baria also developed his business management acumen at Tazewell and Fincastle. He had the pleasure of working with Walter (Buck) Sowers, a successful businessman and green chairman at Fincastle.

"I quietly requested he take over the role as green chairman because I worked with him before," he says. "He had been my father's green chairman for a number of years. He recognized right away that he couldn't make me a better technician, but he could make me a better manager. The first thing he did was hand me the book, 'The Goal,' by Eli Goldratt and said, 'This book doesn't have anything to do with turf management, but it has a lot to do with ongoing improvement.' It helped me to make sure we had systems in place and that we get correct feedback and act correctly on that feedback to make sure the next time we go through a process, procedure or budget, we were better at it the second, third and fourth time around."

TIME AT TOWSON

Baria's next career move came in 2002, when he left Fincastle to go to Towson.

"After a while, the budget at Fincastle flattened, and without malice or discontent on any party, I surmised that, from a career standpoint, we had gotten to a plateau level where I wasn't going any farther," he says.

Baria was looking actively for another job during the last year at Fincastle because he didn't want to make a hurried decision. Baria was attracted to Towson for several reasons: working with a budget that was double the size of Fincastle's, working in a metropolitan region and being compensated more.

"The dynamic was pretty neat at Towson," he says. "It was all about comparing favorably to your peer and sister clubs around the Beltway. If you didn't compare favorably, the pressure was on. If you were in a position in which you compared favorably, you could ride the wave."

Moving from a rural setting to a metropolitan one allowed Baria to be recognized by more of his peers.

"A few people in the industry had always recognized that I was doing innovative things and using leading technologies," he says. "That started to be recognized by a larger set of people when I moved to Towson."

One of the innovative strategies was rebuilding all 19 greens using the International Greens

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Baria says what always trumps changing jobs is the financial responsibilities and obligations one has to a family, which doesn’t allow one to leave a job whenever one wants. Photo Darren Higgins

Method with the help of Joe Harmon of Harmon Turf Services. The project was done out of necessity. (For more, see the article, “The international way,” on page 13 of the May 2007 issue.) Reflecting on the project, Baria says it was one of his most successful communication efforts as a superintendent.

“We went from crisis management mode and morphed so quickly into project management mode,” he says. “I worked with a great set of club leaders. The golf professional, Mike Welsh, and his staff and their confidence in me never wavered. We kept moving forward, and 12 weeks later, we were playing on 19 new greens.”

Baria also implemented innovative stratagies with labor, staffing and scheduling at Towson. He had a 26-person staff, and at the height of the program, 17 of those people were part-time retirees.

“It was the way I met a unique challenge, not that it hadn’t been tried before, but I probably took it to the next level, where those retirees actually became the core of my crew,” he says.

A BUDDING RELATIONSHIP

The birth of Baria’s relationship with Valent started with his strategies to reduce Poa populations in the bentgrass fairways at Towson. He was interested in the herbicide Velocity.

“Velocity was the first true herbicide that you could use in season with predictable results,” he says. “The only other herbicide that was really available was ethofumesate, which was used at the end of the season. With ethofumesate, the efficacy of the product was pretty much at the mercy of how severe your winter was. The other products used to control Poa were growth regulators, which are effective tools to harness levels of infestation, but they’re not herbicides.”

When Baria arrived at Towson, the mid-Atlantic superintendents welcomed him to the area, enabling him to rapidly interface and exchange ideas with them. One such peer was Dean Graves, CGCS, at the Chevy Chase Club in Maryland. Graves was using Velocity as an experimental product on bentgrass fairways. Baria saw some of the results while Graves was using the product, so he had visual feedback and knew what to expect when he began using the product. Then he started working with the folks at Valent and experimented on his own to see what worked best at Towson. Eventually, Baria began working with the company as a cooperator to test Velocity.

“I was buying and using the product from year one, but I had a knowledge and experience
CAREER PROFILE

base from basically observing Dean, who was gracious enough to let me do so," he says.

CAREER CHANGE
Dealing with members and committees is another aspect of the job Baria learned from his father. Though the GCSAA was helpful, too.

"We are able to take seminars about 'managing up,' which is a buzzword about educating the people and decision-makers above us," he says. "I tried to use all the resources at my disposal to make sure I continued to mature."

While "managing up," Baria was effective with certain people and less effective with others. "That doesn't mean we shouldn't try to work harder when we see the feedback isn't what we hoped it would be," he says. "You have to learn to work with all types of people throughout various levels of the club, some more teachable and manageable than others. In all candor, I grew a bit frustrated with my ineffectiveness and as a result became interested in opportunities with Valent."

In the spring of 2007, Baria asked himself how much longer he was going to be a golf course superintendent.

"I'd been going to a couple of retirement parties for superintendents," he says. "They were guys much like me who changed gears and went other ways. I was put on the spot by Rhys Arthur, GCGS. (He ran a 36-hole facility named Indian Spring in Rockville, Md. Course owners sold the land for development, and that was when he exited the business.) As I was exiting one of those get-togethers, he asked how long was it going to be before I hung it up. I said I didn't think I was finished yet. He looked me dead in the eye and said, 'You have no idea how much pressure you're under.' I said, 'I've got some idea.' He told me I'd like the sales side of the business, and that put an indelible image in my brain. It caused me to think about it and have conversations with my wife, Theresa."

After the encounter with Arthur, Baria formulated an exit strategy from Towson, but he thought he wasn't finished growing grass just yet. At the same time, he was working closely with Valent, testing and using more of the company's new pesticides regularly. Jerry Bunting, a territory manager, called Baria to let him know the company was in need of more managers.

"I must admit, I wasn't initially attracted to the day-to-day calling on end-users, but the educational aspect of working with distributors was attractive," he says. "I probably wasn't going to see another opportunity like this in a long while."

Baria didn't openly tell Bunting he was looking for a career change, but he figured Bunting picked up on some of the frustration he was
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dealing with: people on the green committee and underfunded expectations.

But shortly before Baria was about to make his move to Valent, he was fired from Towson.

"The club was unhappy with me," he says. "As a superintendent, you have a shelf life at a club. Relationships grow old and stale. With the rotations of green committee members and boards, you deal with people in charge you're not effective with.

"But what always trumps changing jobs is your financial responsibilities and obligations to your family, which doesn't allow you to just leave a job whenever you want," he adds. "You often have to put up with the low satisfaction of a job for a while."

Every job contract signed by a superintendent is signed under duress, Baria says. That's because if a superintendent doesn't sign a contract, he's on the sideline without income or a job, and getting back in to the game from the sideline isn't a good position to be in.

"I had a contract with Towson, and there was a clause in it that stated either party can terminate it in 30 days at any time," he says. "But if you don't sign the contract, there are plenty of other superintendents or assistants right behind you who will sign it."

Before taking the Valent job, Baria consulted with Mark Merrick, CGCS, who formerly worked at The Elkridge Club in Baltimore. Merrick had made a similar move to Syngenta.

"I talked to him about the transition and conferred with him, which reinforced that I was making the right decision," Baria says.

MEETING NEEDS

Baria's first order of business with Valent was attending an annual sales meeting. Right away he could tell his new career in sales was going to be far different from life as a superintendent.

"With the brainpower in the room - among the sales, field research, development, marketing and business administration teams - I quickly realized one of the challenges of my new job wasn't going to be the traditional 'managing up' I had done in previous positions but learning from my new resource group and turning their wealth of knowledge and experiences into my success."

Baria went through extensive presentation training for use at future sales meetings, as well as new employee, sales and technical training.

"Whether it's setting up a new distributor, fielding technical questions, sharing my experiences with superintendents or giving a training seminar to a distribution sales team, I'm thoroughly enjoying my new responsibilities," Baria says. "We're in the people business. Sales happen when you take care of people by meeting their needs." GCI

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Drainage is the key to maintaining consistent, playable bunkers.

By John Torsiello

Superintendents would like to hear golfers in the 19th hole chatting about the fine conditions of greens, fairways and tees. But when the discussion turns to bunkers, it's usually time to start worrying.

Like it or not, player expectations of bunker conditions might even exceed those demanded of greens – despite the fact that when a ball is hit into the sand it's supposed to be a penalty. That's why it's paramount for superintendents to maintain bunkers properly, at times renovating them, even though doing so is costly and time consuming.

"I get more complaints about bunkers than I do anything else," says Brad Sparta, golf course superintendent at Ballyowen Golf Club in Hamburg, N.J. "People tend to forget that a bunker is a hazard. Unless bunkers are maintained perfectly, you're going to get complaints. And even if they're maintained perfectly in your eyes, you're still going to get complaints."

Translation: It's a no-win situation.

"I say it tongue in cheek, but it's true: Taking care of your bunkers is like painting the Golden Gate Bridge," says Les Rutan, golf course superintendent at Crystal Tree Country Club in Orland.

Paul Miller, CGCS, at Nashawtuc Country Club in Concord, Mass., site of the Bank of America Championship Champions Tour event, says the USGA defines a bunker as a hole in the ground, usually filled with sand, that serves as a penalty.

“It’s very vague,” Miller says. “But what we’ve determined in the industry from our members and the pros is that bunkers should receive almost as much, if not more, consideration than greens. It sounds crazy, but that’s the way it is.”

Miller is developing a master plan for Nashawtuc’s renovation that will include considerable bunker work, which will take up 30 percent to 40 percent of a several-million-dollar price tag.

One of the difficulties of bunker management is the physical characteristics of the hazards. Because they’re often below the playing surface and sloped as much as 30 degrees, bunkers are susceptible to contamination and damage from heavy rainfall and strong winds. Crews pumping water out of, and raking sand back into the face of, bunkers is a scene that brings to mind the ancient Greek myth of Sisyphus, who was sentenced to rolling a boulder up a hill only to have it tumble down the other side, forcing him to begin the task all over again.

Another complicating aspect of bunker management is that golfers have different preferences. Skilled players usually like a firmer sand for better shot control, while less accomplished golfers prefer a softer sand that allows them to pick out the ball with greater ease.

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water drainage patterns, cloud the issue even more, making bunker consistency impossible for most courses.

"It's darn near impossible to get perfect consistency from bunker to bunker," Miller says. "Conditions change from hole to hole in terms of elevation and how the property drains."

As far as the types of sand desired in bunkers, a round sand will allow the water to pass through more easily and would be ideal for bunkers in low areas of the course. Angular sand has a small amount of silt in it, allowing it to pack tightly.

"You can have two different types of sand on a course, but that's where the art comes in," Miller says.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DRAINAGE

Drainage is the key to keeping bunkers consistent and playable. Much of that depends on the drainage that's installed, subsoil makeup, how the bunkers are designed (flat bottomed or flashed), if any surface runoff comes from outside the bunker into it and sand selection.

When Ballyowen opened, there wasn't enough drainage in the bunkers, and they were a real headache, Sparta says. Now that additional drainage was added, they drain fine, and there are few bunkers that need to be pumped after a rain.

"You can never have enough drainage," he says. "I like to see a trunk go up through the belly of the bunker and laterals coming off of that every 15 feet or so."

Because bunkers are battered constantly by the elements and player expectations have risen so sharply, superintendents often face costly renovation projects when bunkers become extremely contaminated and drain poorly. Whether done by a contractor or in-house, it's a time-consuming, costly undertaking.

"We only have 39 bunkers on the course, but caring for them was very time consuming," says Tim Mack, superintendent at Guyan Golf and Country Club, a 1922 layout in East Huntington, W.Va. "The biggest problem we had was poor drainage and contamination. A lot of our drainage systems under the bunkers were shot.
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During the renovation of the 160 bunkers at Seawane Golf & Country Club, bunkers couldn’t be cut deep because of their proximity to groundwater. Photo: Seawane Golf & Country Club

Mack and his crew cored out the bunkers, removed clay that had built up in some areas and added clay walls in other bunkers to facilitate drainage. They placed perimeter drainage at the base of the slopes on the edges of the bunkers to prevent water from flowing down and sitting at the low points of the hazards. The crews installed new synthetic liners in the bunkers to prevent contamination from below ground and refilled the hazards with angular sand, which Mack believes is the best for the club’s players and maintenance practices.

“What we did before the renovation was do four of our worst bunkers using two different types of liners and sand to see how they performed,” Mack says. “We got feedback from members and our crews, and then we chose the liner and sand we wanted to go with for all the bunkers.”

The project took about four months to complete and cost around $80,000, and Mack says that was much cheaper than having a contractor come in and do it.

GROUNDWATER CONCERNS

Brian Benedict, golf course superintendent at the Seawane Golf & Country Club in Hewlett Harbor, N.Y., undertook a massive renovation of the course’s 160 bunkers several years ago. The project was challenging because the course is close to the Long Island Sound and some holes are almost at sea level.

“We did six and a half acres of bunkers,” Benedict says. “Our groundwater is, in some instances, only 30 inches below the surface, and that meant we couldn’t cut the bunkers too deep or we would have been in the groundwater.

We went in with a bulldozer and found where the groundwater was and built up from there. We wanted to be about 24 inches above the groundwater level and have six to 10 inches of sand in the bunkers.”

Because of Seawane’s location, it’s sometimes a victim of extreme high tides. Benedict chose to use flexible duckbill valves on drainage pipes in his reworked bunkers that allow water to exit, but not enter, when flooding occurs.

“Because we went to the duckbills, the bunkers have become a lot firmer than they used to be,” he says. “The biggest thing for us here is water displacement. If we get saltwater onto the course, we need to get that into the ground as fast as possible.”

Renovating Seawane’s bunkers took somewhat of a trial-and-error approach.

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BUNKER MANAGEMENT

least a half mile from the nearest canal or beach, where the groundwater is only 19 inches below the surface," Benedict says. "It all depends on the hydraulic pressure of the land. We would cut in, and, if we found a wet spot near a greenside bunker, we would fill it up and make it higher. Each bunker complex has its own drainage system, and every hole was customized so it would enhance the playability of the course."

Benedict opted for angular sand in his bunkers because that type of sand is resistant to high winds that buffet the course most of the year.

REDUCING CONTAMINATION

Rutan is undertaking an intensive, multiyear project that includes renovating and upgrading all 122 bunkers scattered about the Robert Trent Jones Jr.-designed course built in 1989. So far, between 50 and 55 have been completed, and the work is being done in-house over the course of several years. It's a cost savings but also very time consuming, Rutan says, adding his crews spend 60 to 70 man-hours just getting water out of bunkers and moving sand back where it should be after a heavy rainfall.

This is the second or third time Rutan and his crew have tended to the bunkers, with most of the problems relating to sand contamination.

"We've gone to a unique idea for drainage," he says. "If you can picture a peace symbol, that gives you an idea of how we have installed perimeter drainage around the edges of the bunkers and funneled the water through a herringbone design down through the middle of the bunker. We've found that this configuration cuts down on contamination and has worked effectively."

It takes Rutan's crews an average of three or four days per bunker to complete the restoration work, which is undertaken mostly during early spring and late fall so it doesn't interfere with play.

EVENTUAL DETERIORATION

Perhaps the most sobering aspect of bunker management is there are no shortcuts superintendents can take to prevent eventual deterioration.

"Over time, bunkers are going to deteriorate," Sparta says. "If the bunkers are designed right, constructed right and you have the right sand selection, you stand a fighting chance of delaying a large capital expenditure to your bunkers. But sooner or later you'll have that large capital expenditure that you'll have to make on them."  GCi
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As the number of Spanish-speaking employees continues to increase in the green industry, supervisors and managers are exploring different ways to remain effective in their operations. The challenges remain the same: overcoming safety, quality and training barriers because of language and cultural differences. Learning and speaking practical Spanish can help mitigate these challenges, but many supervisors and managers believe it's an intimidating task. The following tips can improve superintendents' odds for a successful and meaningful approach to learning Spanish.

By Arturo Castro
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LEARN WHAT YOU NEED

If it isn't relevant to your job, it's more difficult to apply and learn. A class at a community college or tapes at the bookstore might focus on ordering food at a restaurant or catching a cab. This usually leads to discouragement for students because they're not able to apply the lessons immediately.

Paul Pimsleur, Ph.D., former head of the language department at The Ohio State University, developed a memory recall system for learning a second language. His language programs are designed in a way to remember a concept or word right before you're likely to forget it.

Pimsleur also states the human brain tends to store information in short-term, long-term or temporary memory. The destination is based on how important the information is to survival.

These principles helped develop a self-instruction language program – Spanish for Golf Course Management by Spanish Systems. Throughout the years, superintendents have found it helpful because it teaches exactly what's needed to be said. With this method, the principles of relevance and frequency are observed.

CREATE YOUR OWN PROGRAM

Before the content for the Spanish for Golf Course Management program was designed, dozens of superintendents were asked what was important for them to say in Spanish related to their daily operations. Most of them mentioned the common assignments for the day and the common mistakes made by Spanish-speaking employees who couldn’t be trained in English. Then a list of all the items was created, and the items were turned into a set of basic commands. Next, these commands were converted into questions for follow-up, statements for correcting tasks and compliments for praising the corrected task. For example:

- Command – Check the oil in the morning.
- Follow-up – Have you already checked the oil?
- Correction – It’s necessary to check the oil in the morning.
- Praise – You always check the oil in the morning, thank you.

You can ask any of your bilingual employees to translate these statements. Focus on a few of them at a time and use them frequently. Make sure your list starts with those actions that are most important and carry small cue cards to assist you.
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PRIVATE INSTRUCTORS
A private instructor is a good way to avoid some pitfalls from generic classes and translation software programs because an instructor can cater the lessons or curriculum to specific needs and explain nuances to avoid flawed literal translations.

A private lesson should cover all language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. People learn faster when they perform all four skills and use them on a single concept. Lessons should be contiguous and progressive, always building on the previous lesson.

Frequency of lessons is more important than length of sessions. Two one-hour classes a week are more effective than one two-hour class a week. In fact, half-hour lessons tend to be ideal.

Good lessons begin with repetition, followed by less and less help from the teacher, until you’re able to perform the language for a certain scenario. An instructor should understand and focus on your learning strengths. A visual learner will remember written words and images easily. An analytical learner needs more explanation, translation and logic. A hands-on learner learns faster by just saying the words.

Community colleges are a good place to look for potential instructors. You can share these ideas and tips with them.

SELF-INSTRUCTION PROGRAMS
Self-instruction programs can be effective if you’re disciplined enough to follow through and if all four language skills are – listening, speaking, reading and writing – are covered. For example, few people learn effectively by listening to tapes in the car on the way to work. Remember, people have different learning styles and preferences. It’s best if the program is interactive, asking questions and giving you plenty of time to answer them, followed by the correct answer. If the audio program adheres to some of these principles it will take you longer to learn what they’re trying to teach.

The program should focus on what you’re trying to learn and should be progressive and consistent. Make sure it doesn’t start simply and end up throwing a lot of material at you. Many programs try to pack too much information in a few CDs. If your goal is to be fluent, find a program that covers all the grammar and then add content that you can use at work immediately. Don’t try to learn the work-related vocabulary later, because you run the risk of never getting there.

Spanish-learning resources

Workplace Spanish for Golf Course Superintendents & Landscapers. Includes one CD, book. www.gcsaa.org


Spanish for the Green Industry course. Virginia Tech, Barbara Kraft. bcraft@vt.edu


Spanish for Golf Course Management Self-Instruction Kit. Includes book, five CDs, flashcards. www.spanishsystems.com

Pocket Spanish for Golf Course Management. Reference. www.spanishsystems.com

Quick Spanish for Golf Course Management. Reference poster. www.spanishsystems.com

Search & Say Spanish for Golf Course Management. CD ROM, software. www.spanishsystems.com
Computer-based programs can be good if sitting in front of a computer fits your lifestyle and learning preferences. If you’re an extrovert, this might not be the best approach. Either way, computer-based programs should use auditory and pictorial cues and should be interactive and allow you to use previously learned material. If using a multimedia program, make sure all the media follow the same curriculum. What you hear in the car should be the same as what you do in a workbook as well as on the computer.

IMMERSION PROGRAMS
There are two concepts in crash courses: learning by submersion and learning by immersion. With immersion, you have intense lessons with logical explanations and a lot of practice. In submersion, you’re subjected to situations where you need to use the language. Because you can only use the foreign language, it’s then learned in the moment. These programs frequently come with living arrangements with a family that only speaks Spanish. These are great options for establishing a solid foundation, removing fears and becoming comfortable with the language.

QUICK FIX AND REFERENCE MEDIA
There are a number of posters, pocket guides, software packages and books that serve as quick reference Spanish guides for turf management. These media can be effective if you intend to focus on a few phrases at a time. Choose those that have the most meaning to you first. Don’t necessarily just follow the order of the medium. There are specific golf course management reference guides in the market with practical phrases and words.

TRANSLATION SOFTWARE
Turf management language is specific. There are more stories of failure than success with online and off-the-shelf translation software. Translation software isn’t context specific, and most of the applications translate literally. More often, the sentence structure isn’t the same in Spanish. For example, a public school in Chicago once tried to translate a memo to students’ parents saying: “Tomorrow, the children will get their shots (vaccinations).” The memo in Spanish read, “Tomorrow, the children will get shot at school.”

Some turf companies have translated employee manuals with software, resulting in a mediocre product and thus projecting a mediocre image to the employees. The subtle messages to the employees might be: “We tried to translate it, but we didn’t try hard enough,” or “We know there are mistakes, but we don’t care.” The surest way is to hire a translator. An employee’s relative who’s bilingual and makes an attempt to translate a formal document might not always be the best option. There’s a Spanish software package that includes more than 1,400 pretranslated phrases and words for turf management called Search & Say Spanish for Golf Course Management. This isn’t translation software. It’s a database you can search with key words. The software shows you the phrase in both languages. You can hear the pronunciation and actually print small cards or lists in Spanish that you can hand your employees.

BECOMING FLUENT
An average adult learner will take eight to 18 months to become fluent if he takes at least three hours of instruction a week and performs all four language skills consistently. The learning skills should be covered in order: listening, speaking, reading and writing. This is how we learned our native language originally.

As mentioned above, a program that covers all of the grammar is necessary. The logic behind grammar is reaffirmed by writing out a structure. Each structure or tense should be taught in all four forms: direct question, open-ended question, affirmative and negative. This is the best sequence for learning a grammatical structure. For example:

- Did you play last night?
- No, I did not play last night.
- What did you do last night?
- I worked last night.

A SPANISH COACH
Besides having formal lessons, you should have a coach or practice buddy, preferably someone at work. It’s important to find a person with whom you are comfortable. Make as many mistakes as possible. Learning a foreign language involves many different aspects of our personalities and psyches. It’s not like learning a skill like tennis or computing. People are challenged to be in a situation where they will be making mistakes constantly for a long time. Don’t be afraid to try or you might never get there. Be prepared, and most of all, make sure you’re always having fun with the language. GCI
Managing a maintenance crew of laborers is one thing, but managing the person who manages the crew is much different. It's a challenge, especially when moving from the role of golf course superintendent to a position of managing superintendents and other key course personnel. Bob Farren, CGCS, golf course and grounds manager for Pinehurst, the high-profile complex of eight 18-hole golf courses in Pinehurst, N.C., has been there almost 25 years, starting as a superintendent and moving to his current position in 1986. He supervises five golf course superintendents that manage the eight courses. All of his superintendents have a minimum of five years experience and as much as 15 years experience. Additionally, Farren oversees one grounds manager, one irrigation manager.
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and one equipment manager. "Having been a superintendent and still being a superintendent, it's easy to feel that your way is the only way," he says. "You have to get beyond that to give them the feeling of freedom to make their own decisions. But they have to know that with freedom comes accountability."

Ray Davies, CGCS - director of golf course maintenance and construction and a senior operations manager for CourseCo, a golf management and development company based in California - oversees superintendents and general managers. Davies is one of the owners of the company so he has interest in all aspects of operations at all facilities, even though some general managers report to another operations manager.

"The biggest challenge is changing from being the technician in the field with personal control of everything on the course to managing others who now have that job and want, even need, that same control," he says. "Hire good people and allow them the freedom you needed when you were running your own show. If those you manage see you as a competitor rather than a source of resources, they'll avoid you. They'll see every visit as micromanagement or something worse, a loss of their own personal leadership on that site."

Dennis Lyon, CGCS, manager of golf for the city of Aurora, Colo., has worked for the city for the past 34 years. Aurora operates six 18-hole courses and one par-3 nine-hole course.

"The biggest difference in managing superintendents compared to crew members is delegation of responsibility," he says. "I give superintendents bottom-line responsibility. This includes ensuring the course conditions are at the highest reasonable level. I'm also a resource for our superintendents and do everything I can within the organization to help them manage efficiently. I work through the organizational maze for them and try to keep them happy and productive in the field."

Shawn Emerson, director of agronomy for Desert Mountain, a complex of six 18-hole courses in Scottsdale, Ariz., manages superintendents who are dedicated to each course. Two agronomists each supervise three of the courses. The agronomists have 15 to 25 years experience managing courses, and the superintendents have one to eight years of experience. At one point, Emerson worked as a superintendent at Desert Mountain. After two years at another course, he came back to Desert Mountain in his current position and has been there 12 years.

"The difficult part is I anticipate the problems sooner," he says. "A superintendent just learning sees the road for the first time. I see further down the road to the first turn and beyond. The question is when do you let them learn on their own and fail and when do you step in to solve the problems without letting them occur? It's hard to learn without failure, yet my job is to make sure Desert Mountain doesn't fail."

**ESTABLISHING THE SYSTEMS**

Operational systems vary for each manager, and they try to meet the needs of the courses within the limitations of available resources. For Lyon, that entails working with courses spread throughout the city of Aurora.

"There's no prescription maintenance in our organization," he says. "Each superintendent manages their own operation, including managing expenses, helping optimizing revenue and ensuring superior customer service from his staff. I don't involve myself in day-to-day operations. My concern is the product we offer and how we're doing financially."

From an agronomic standpoint, all eight Pinehurst courses have to be consistent. Farren works out the overall program, and each of the superintendents provides budget input, which is developed into the central budget. Farren handles the purchasing, dealing with vendors. The superintendents manage the largest component of the budget – the payroll.

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PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

“They have a specific number of hours allocated per course per week, and it’s up to them to manage those hours,” he says. “All eight individuals have the same flexibility and the same level of management responsibilities. All handle the reviews for their people, satisfaction surveys for employees, disciplinary communications and guidelines to work within. It’s very important they manage those personnel areas with consistency so there’s no favoritism. We have to hold those same standards for everyone.”

Emerson manages by objectives. He has created A, B and C levels of delegation.

“At the A level, I’ll tell you what to do, and you follow my directions,” he says. “I use this for superintendents during their first 12 to 18 months here. At level B, you tell us what you want to do, and we’ll approve it. At level C, you tell us what you did. Each superintendent might have sev-

The following are nine keys to supervisory excellence, according to Dennis Lyon, CGCS, manager of golf for the city of Aurora, Colo.

1. Make thanking, praising, supporting and collaborating with employees one of your highest priorities.
2. Accept full responsibility when things go wrong, and give credit to staff and others when things go right.
3. Ownership in the workplace is most powerful when shared with co-workers.
4. Communicate with staff frequently. Surprise them seldomly but collaborate consistently.
5. Share your knowledge and decision-making processes with employees. In addition to detailing “what,” take time to explain “why.” Usually it’s best to leave the “how” to them.
6. Don’t try to be an expert in all things. Encourage staff to use and expand their expertise.
7. Accept criticism graciously from all sides, including staff, and learn from it.
8. Don’t criticize or complain about staff or your employer to others.
9. Be kind to staff and others frequently. Empathize before you criticize.
eral levels going on in different areas of course management at the same time based on their technical skills and past experience.

"The expectations and the financial impact of decisions end up on my desk," he adds. "Because of that, the superintendents don't always get to see or feel the whole experience of being their own manager."

For Davies, it's about developing management strategies and teaching superintendents to do the same.

"I ask each superintendent to provide a golf course management plan that outlines their strategy and what they're going to do to implement it," he says. "Most of my questions come during review of this plan. I'll ask how this year's strategy differs from the one of the previous year, why it differs and what the changes will accomplish. My job is to understand their thought process in managing the resources they're provided to obtain the desired course conditions that support the business plan."

The budget is the cost of implementing the management plan, and Davies needs to make sure expectations are in line with the resources given to superintendents.

"The superintendent must understand our business objectives and what financial resources are consistent with that objective," he says. "They see the full financials, including all departments, so they understand what other department's goals and objectives are, as well as the resources they have to meet them. This helps them see how the budgets are interrelated, and the importance of operating within that budget. They need to understand how financial decisions are made by upper management and learn to appreciate the impact the owner's perception of risk has on those decisions."

Whatever the operational system, it's up to the manager to make sure everyone clearly understands the goals and what's expected of them. "It goes beyond making sure everyone is on that page," Emerson says. "If you're a good manager and comfortable with yourself, you'll listen to their input and incorporate it into your plan."

Yet, for organizational success, it's important to work together to clearly define organizational values. "If everyone buys into the values, everyone knows what the organization expects of them and what they need to do to achieve success," Lyon says.

And that success is bigger than any position.

"The superintendents tend to think of themselves as department heads rather than business managers," Davies says. "The golf pro, g.m. and superintendent need to have a positive relationship and work together effectively. This is critical. I help them understand the difference between authority and influence and teach them to use influence to improve course operations. Authority and its misperception often interfere with good management."

COPING WITH THE INEVITABLE

For upper-level managers, planning, observation and open communication can keep small problems from escalating into big ones. "I tell my management team to call me when it's bent, not when it's already broken," Farren says. "I need to know about problems to support them if an issue arises."

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“...I’ll meet with the superintendent and ask a series of questions designed to help us understand our circumstances,” he says. “What’s the problem? What do we know? What additional information do we need? What resources can be brought to bear? What stakeholders need to know, and how can we get the information to them after we have a good understanding ourselves? I want to make sure the individual is working effectively, which is hard in a stressful situation. Often they’ll overreact. My goal is to help them deal with the stress, remind them of how good they are and get them to working a plan that addresses the problem effectively.”

But mistakes are inevitable, so managers need to develop strategies to deal with them and move beyond them.

“Don’t beat yourself up when you make mistakes, and don’t let your superintendents beat themselves up either,” Emerson says. “You have to admit you made the mistake, be honest about it, correct it, evaluate it, learn from it and don’t repeat it. Then pick yourself back up and move on or have people who can help you do that.”

MAKING IT ALL WORK

Mutual respect is the key to making it all work, says Lyon, who considers himself a superintendent as well as the division manager.

“I consider the superintendents on staff more as colleagues than peers,” he says. “We work together to achieve common goals. I hold them all in high regard. I trust them, I like them, and I enjoy working with them.”

Two of the individuals Emerson supervises served as his bosses when he was a superintendent.

“I learned from them to surround myself with good, solid people,” he says. “These individuals helped guide my career and still serve as mentors for me in a lot of situations. It works because of mutual trust and respect.”

Having people who are personally competent is a must, Davies says. “You need to know their strengths, leverage those strengths, and structure their department to make the weaknesses less relevant,” he says. “You need to determine if a deficiency is an innate trait, or if the person can acquire the competency. If they can, protect them from the weakness until they do.”

And as an upper-level manager, one has to be able to take the criticism when problems occur.

“You’re caught between what the members want and what the managers want to do and can do,” Emerson says. “You have to be able to take the heat. You can’t blame your managers. Managing them is your job.”
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On the surface, a subpar golf course will look pretty sometimes. But under stress, poor soil and drainage, and other fundamental flaws will always be evident. Similarly, golf course superintendents who polish the skills they need to improve can end up having a few more areas of expertise. By doing so, they become more marketable and valuable in the eyes of owners.

The GCSAA’s Professional Development Resource (www.gcsaa.org/pdr) helps superintendents learn to improve those skills. The primary goal of the PDR tool is to help superintendents accurately assess their skills, determine what improvements they need and pinpoint educational opportunities to address them. The site makes it simple. Through a series of yes/no questions answered in a self-assessment, the program highlights knowledge gaps and recommends association training opportunities to help close those gaps. The analysis compares superintendents’ skills with the base skills for a Class A and certified member.

Hannes Combest, director of educational programs at the GCSAA, leads the
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strategic push to improve members' skills. She says it took five years to develop the PDR, which was introduced in 2001 to assist superintendents by outlining key areas of expertise, known as competencies on the education front. The core competencies developed from the original skills GCSAA members believed strong superintendents should have. Those skills were defined in the PDR.

Aided by the skills gap analysis, Shawn Sheridan earned his certification within the past year. A GCSAA member for 19 years, Sheridan originally earned a degree in turfgrass management from The Ohio State University. He likes how the analysis helped focus his career.

"The process made me think hard about my skills and career," says the superintendent of Diamondback Golf Club in Haines City, Fla. "I felt I needed to answer honestly to get an accurate assessment of my abilities and to highlight areas that needed improvement."

The idea behind the skills-gap analysis is to shrink a superintendent's knowledge gap.

"It pointed out areas where I needed more depth," says Sheridan, who was impressed with the accuracy of the feedback in terms of the knowledge depth in each category.

Bruce Constable, CGCS, at Woodside Golf Club in Airdrie, Alberta, Canada, likes the development action plan the PDR tool creates.

"The biggest benefit of using the Professional Development Resource is that you get to develop a plan that will help you to improve your skills in certain areas," Constable says.

The development action plan helps superintendents chart a course of learning through their weaker areas to progress toward certification. Sheridan believes the approach helps boost one's career.

"We need to take the time to evaluate ourselves, seek out our weaknesses, address them and become more valuable to our current or future employers, which I feel is the biggest benefit of the system," he says.

Strong, successful facilities are usually led by superintendents who are capable of identifying flaws – even in their own knowledge base.

"If you answer the self assessment questions honestly, you'll get an accurate gap analysis that will help lead you down a good study path," says John Magnuson, CGCS, at Murphy Creek Golf Course in Aurora, Colo. "The development action plan allows you to set your own practical plan for completing the learning phase of competencies that showed weak in the gap analysis."

Whether it's information about ornamentals or EPA regulations, a pertinent course will be recommended to address the need.

"Financial management was one area in which I needed to make improvements, and the online course 'Developing Financial Savvy in the Golf Business' was valuable to me in that regard," Constable says. "It was narrated by Cleve Cleveland, CGCS, who made the material quite interesting."

Sheridan says his experience with the tool illuminated a need to learn more about governmental issues and record-keeping.

**BENEFITING OWNERS**

Fewer weaknesses mean better decision-making, better courses and happier owners – all good things for a superintendent's career. Henry DeLozier agrees wholeheartedly. As the vice president of golf for Pulte Homes, DeLozier believes the company's 20 golf properties benefit from the learning the GCSAA fosters among superintendents.

"I'm really a big fan of what the GCSAA is doing to help grow the intellectual capability of the golf course superintendent," he says. "The GCSAA seems to have its finger on the pulse of what golf course owners and operators need."

DeLozier refers to a symposium at this year's
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Golf Industry Show in Anaheim, Calif., as proof. The superintendents who used the PDR were better informed and knew what material owners were interested in, he says.

It's important for superintendents to remain current with the site's new information, says DeLozier, who believes the site provides an invitation for owners and superintendents to discuss key issues.

"It's a useful tool for owners and superintendents to find themselves working toward a common understanding," he says. "A lot of owners, especially those that are involved in the decision-making processes at their golf properties, find value in discussing topics covered on the site."

As a person responsible for leveraging golf properties to bring higher value to homeowners in a golf community – there are 30 new ones being planned – DeLozier understands the need for better communication with superintendents about many topics.

"Any time that we go on site together, it's stimulation for discussion," he says. "It fosters good, open discussion about strategic issues."

DeLozier recalls a situation in which a discussion about equipment replacement plans was sparked by something on the Web site.

"Everyone thought they were in agreement when it came to mower obsolescence, but after some talk about specifics and how each person defined the term 'obsolete,' everyone had better knowledge of the others' perspectives," he says.

A discussion like that can help owners and superintendents understand each other better, DeLozier says. The Web site can help owners and even long-time superintendents come together in their approach on numerous topics.

While the tools on the Web site aren't marketed to owners, they still increase value for owners when superintendents use them, Combest says.

"It's a tool designed to help people map out programs to address their weaknesses and perform more successfully," she says.

Because superintendents appreciate their contribution to the success of a course as a business, helping owners understand what the superintendent adds to the business equation should be part of every member's mind-set, Combest says.

"It's been an education process on our part to try to help people understand that relating the skills and knowledge they have to the success of the facility is important," she says.

MORE USAGE

Because the PDR tool has the long-standing competencies at its foundation, it continues to strengthen the profession, Combest says.

"It's not just the PDR, it's having the competencies, and what that has done for this profession is make it a profession," she says. "It has defined it."

Still, Combest hopes more members will use the tool.

"The PDR isn't used extensively, and that's one of the things we're trying to change," Combest says. "One of the most likely reasons it isn't used more, some superintendents say, is the time required to complete it and the recommended training."

One longtime professional, Terry Rodenberg, superintendent at St. Andrew's Golf Club in Overland Park, Kan., says he just wouldn't have enough time in the day to complete his work and go through the PDR and all the training needed to become certified. He acknowledges there's little reason at the upscale municipal course he works at to spend a lot of his own time on training for certification.

"I'm in my 25th year with my employer," Rodenberg says. "There's not an incentive to be certified."

Rodenberg says the city provides a lot of training opportunities for him and that keeps him current with the field.

Still, Combest encourages members to review the PDR analysis first, before beginning courses for the certification exam. She also notes that key information presented in training is marked as crucial for the certification exam.

"What we've realized is that we need to highlight that this is something you need to know for certification," she says.

Sheridan believes all facets of responsibility are represented in the analysis and must be cultivated to succeed in one's career.

"I don't know everything, but this process has indicated areas that, to be the best I can be as a CGCS, need to be addressed and how to address them," he says.

Even after a superintendent reaches the pinnacle of becoming certified, learning doesn't stop. With all the changes in regulations and technology, it's too easy for superintendents to fall behind if they don't focus on keeping pace with them.

"I can continue to use my development action plan to plot the course for my future educational activities," Constable says. "I'm a lifelong learner and will continue to build my skill set using the resources the GCSAA has to offer."
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When the Moody Foundation, a philanthropic organization, became aware the city of Galveston had a municipal course it couldn’t afford to maintain—and planned to bid a management contract publicly—the foundation tossed its hat in the ring, eventually winning the bid. Moody Gardens, which is a destination resort for the Houston market and the name of a company that operates the associated buildings, hotels and a convention center for the city of Galveston, agreed to manage the course and invest the money needed to make it a premier public facility. It was a deal city leaders couldn’t pass up.

“It was basically a gift from the Moody Foundation to the people of Galveston and the state of Texas,” says Buddy Herz, general counsel for the Moody Foundation and chairman of the Moody Gardens Golf Committee.

By Peter Blais

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The Moody Foundation provided funding for the $450-million Moody Gardens complex, which consists of an indoor aquarium, rain forest, space museum, white-sand beach, and a 425-room hotel and convention center that seats as many as 8,000 people within the 65,000-square-foot show center. Moody Gardens manages those facilities for the city without compensation and underwrites any deficits.

The foundation, the city of Galveston and Jacobsen Hardy Golf Course Design worked together to raise the golf course from the sea floor, literally. Galveston Municipal Golf Course—which has been renamed Moody Gardens Golf Course in recognition of the Moody Foundation’s funding of the $15.5-million renovation project—is scheduled to reopen in June.

Jacobsen Hardy was the logical choice to renovate the existing 40-year-old course given the Houston-based design firm’s experience at nearby Galveston Country Club, of which Herz is a member, where it undertook a renovation several years ago.

“The firm is familiar with the challenges of building on Galveston Island, particularly involving the uses of effluent water, complying with the requirements of the Army Corps of Engineers and wetlands issues,” Herz says.

RESSHAPING THE TERRAIN

What made the golf course potentially dramatic also is what made it difficult to rebuild. Located adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico and bisected by Sydnor Bayou, major tidal events would submerge portions of the course occasionally. Bermudagrass and saltwater were a poor mix. Turfgrass was slow to recover following coastal flooding, and the build-up of salts in the soil profile made it difficult to maintain a quality playing surface.

The No. 1 challenge, therefore, was reshaping the terrain and building the ground up and out of tidal areas where seawater occasionally inundated the land. Jacobsen Hardy’s grading and shaping plans concentrated on elevating those areas.

“We developed a balanced cut-and-fill plan that involved 175,000 cubic yards of dirt,” says Rex VanHoose, senior v.p. and managing architect of Jacobsen Hardy. “There was a tremendous amount of water already on the site. That presented a host of playability issues.

“We found an adjacent area and proposed digging a new lake, providing us with significant amounts of fill,” he adds. “The landscape contractor would then dig deeper into a couple of existing lakes to acquire more dirt.”

Senior project executive Bob Walcott estimated his construction firm, Gilbane Building Co., unearthed 200,000 to 250,000 yards of dirt.

While acknowledging the ingenious nature of the lake excavations, Jim Hardy, principal of Jacobsen Hardy, found the humor in it.

“Off-site dirt sells for $14 a cubic yard,” he says. “That would have added a major cost to the project. So we had to find a dirt fairy on site.”

The proposed finished product would be an optical illusion of sorts, Herz says. The greens would appear to be lowered, but in reality, the plan was to raise the entire course an additional two to five feet above the ocean.

A CHANGED LAYOUT

With the elevation problem solved, the Jacobsen Hardy team was able to dive into the actual design. Laid out in the 1960s, the existing design...
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   - 2-Golf Course Management Company
   - 3-Municipal Course System
   - 4-Club President
   - 5-General Manager
   - 6-Head Pro
   - 7-Assistant Superintendent
   - 8-Head Professional
   - 9-Feedback Professional
   - 10-Research Professional
   - 11-Research Professional
   - 12-Research Professional
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   - 98-Research Professional
   - 99-Research Professional

3. What best describes your title?
   - 9-Bentgrass
   - 10-Bermudagrass
   - 11-Bermudagrass
   - 12-Bermudagrass
   - 13-Bermudagrass
   - 14-Bermudagrass
   - 15-Bermudagrass
   - 16-Bermudagrass
   - 17-Bermudagrass
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   - 29-Bermudagrass

4. Number of Holes (check one):
   - 3-9 Holes
   - 4-18 Holes
   - 5-27 Holes
   - 6-36 Holes
   - 7-Over 90 Holes

5. Total Annual Maintenance Budget:
   - 1-Less than $50,000
   - 2-$50,000-$99,999
   - 3-$100,000-$249,999
   - 4-$250,000-$499,999
   - 5-$500,000-$749,999
   - 6-$750,000-$1,000,000
   - 7-$1,000,000+

6. Course Renovation Plans for the Next 12 Months
   - 1-Full Reconstruction
   - 2-Partial Reconstruction
   - 3-Greens
   - 4-Tees
   - 5-Fairways
   - 6-Irrigation System
   - 7-No Renovations Planned

7. If Only a Partial Reconstruction Is Planned, Please Indicate the Number of Notes
   - 1-Resort Chain
   - 2-Golf Course Management Company
   - 3-Municipal Course System

8. What is the name of the Architect who Designed the Course?
   - 1-Bentgrass
   - 2-Bermudagrass
   - 3-Bermudagrass

9. If Only a Partial Reconstruction is Planned, Please
   - 1-Resort Chain
   - 2-Golf Course Management Company
   - 3-Municipal Course System

10. What is the name of the Architect who Designed the Course?
    - 1-Bentgrass
    - 2-Bermudagrass
    - 3-Bermudagrass

11. What Year was the Course Built?
    - 1990
    - 1991
    - 1992
    - 1993
    - 1994
    - 1995
    - 1996
    - 1997
    - 1998
    - 1999

12. In this course part of a
    - 1-Resort Chain
    - 2-Golf Course Management Company
    - 3-Municipal Course System

13. What is the name of the Resort Chain, Golf Course Management Company, or Municipal Course System?
    - 1-Resort Chain
    - 2-Golf Course Management Company
    - 3-Municipal Course System

14. What turf do you maintain on fairways?
    - 1-Bermudagrass
    - 2-Poa annua
    - 3-Bermudagrass

15. What turf do you maintain on greens?
    - 1-Bermudagrass
    - 2-Poa annua
    - 3-Bermudagrass

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was a decent one, although it lacked an adequate practice facility, Hardy says. The only place to practice was a small, narrow parcel where players were restricted to using irons. The architects rerouted many holes, allowing the facility to accommodate a full-size driving range.

"Having a range is very important, particularly in a resort location," Hardy says. "Many resort guests love to just come hit balls for a few hours."

Finding enough additional course width and length, while squeezing in a full-sized practice facility, required 50 or more proposed routing plans, Hardy says. Developing a concept that yielded better golf in terms of length, width and linkage, while addressing the Army Corps of Engineers' environmental concerns, were also difficult tasks.

The development team was fortunate the Army Corps of Engineers' regional office is located in Galveston. The team checked each new set of proposed plans with the nearby government office. When the team submitted a formal proposal using the regulators' feedback, they were fairly certain it would be approved.

The sandy seaside location coupled with an ever-present wind, which generally blows from 10 to 20 miles per hour, made the site ideal for a links-style layout with jagged-edge bunkering surrounded by native grasses, reeds and fescues. These characteristics, coupled with the high dunes Jacobsen Hardy designed into the layout, are reminiscent of windswept Scottish and Irish links.

The greens are a bit more bold than the usual Jacobsen Hardy style but still are characterized as a links style.

"They’re more undulating and have more contour than we usually put in, but they’re still very playable," VanHoose says. "As for approach shots, we left an open entryway into every green to encourage bump-and-run play. And there’s usually a bail-out area to help the higher handicapper."

The design team did a fantastic job, especially within environmentally sensitive areas, Herz says. The team reversed the first five holes and changed the first six considerably. It tweaked holes seven through nine, significantly tweaked holes 10 through 16, and substantially changed holes 17 and 18.

"We could not have been happier with the final layout," Herz says.

THE CHOICE OF PASPALUM

The development team started designing the course in August 2006. Construction began in March 2007 and was completed in October 2007. The facility has been growing in through the fall, winter and spring months and is on schedule to open in June.

With the constant threat of hurricanes driving seawater onto the fairways and a city requirement to irrigate the course with effluent water, the problems involving salt build-up within the soil profile weren’t about to vanish. Jacobsen Hardy opted to replace the existing Tifdwarf 419 and common Bermudagrass mix with salt-tolerant paspalum, with Sea Isle Supreme on the putting surfaces. Plans were to sprig the grass and sod 20 acres of sloped areas during the summer, but a complication arose when the sod farmer reported the sprigs and sod weren’t going to be ready until September.

"We needed to start grassing in June and July, so we regrouped and hit upon a seeded variety of
paspalum called Sea Spray produced by Scotts,” VanHoose says. “We used a hydroseeder and sprayed the entire course except the greens. It worked wonderfully, leaving a seamless transition between fairways and roughs. We double sprigged the putting surfaces with Sea Isle Supreme.”

Developers believe this is the first golf course in the continental United States that, other than the greens, has been seeded completely with paspalum.

One of the ongoing maintenance issues golf

With a constant threat of hurricanes driving seawater onto the fairways and a city requirement to irrigate the course with effluent water, problems involving salt build-up within the soil profile aren’t going to vanish.

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course superintendent Steve Yarotsky will face is weed control. Being situated in an environmentally sensitive area, few products are available to control weeds, particularly the original common and coastal Bermudagrass that will inevitably try to reestablish itself.

"Steve is considering using just straight saltwater to control weeds," VanHoose says. Related to killing weeds, killing the common and coastal Bermudagrass for the paspalum to thrive is difficult.

"We'll figure that out as we go," VanHoose says. "Using salt might be the best solution. It might knock back the paspalum somewhat but not kill it. It will kill the Bermudagrass. Steve can spray a high-salt solution or actually put salt granules on the turf."

Seashore paspalum expert Ronnie Duncan is working on a program that will help control the return of Bermudagrass to paspalum playing surfaces.

"There's definitely a learning curve involved with paspalum," Yarotsky says. Unexpectedly heavy rains caused by a brush with a major hurricane that dropped eight inches of precipitation in a single day, plus a wetter-than-normal year overall, resulted in a total precipitation that was 15 inches above average in 2007, Yarotsky says. The construction team used matting in the bunkers and other areas to prevent sand and seed from washing away.

Because the existing site was flat, cut-and-fills, new lakes and undulating greens were built to give the course more character. To complete the facelift, landscapers moved 400 existing palm trees throughout the course and added another 300 queen palms. Moody Gardens spent a total of $500,000 on landscaping.

A COMMUNITY ASSET
The $15.5-million complex breaks down like this: $10 million for the golf course, $2 million for renovating the clubhouse, $1.5 million for a steel maintenance building on an elevated location that will withstand winds of 140 miles per hour, and $2 million to expand an existing desalination plant that cleanses the city-generated effluent water piped from two miles away for use at Moody Gardens and the golf course even more. During the summer, the course will use as much as one million gallons of irrigation water daily.

The Moody Foundation's willingness to provide an enhanced community asset and absorb any potential losses means Galveston residents will continue to pay green fees of $25 to $30 while visitors will be charged $50 to $75. And, just as important, the natural environment will continue to thrive.

"The entire course, but particularly the back nine, is environmentally pristine," Herz says. "Several environmentalists have toured it and loved it."

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Quality control is paramount when conducting pesticide runoff experiments

Surface runoff is one of the largest loss mechanisms for pesticides applied to turfgrasses (Smith and Bridges, 1996; Lee et al., 2000). Considering the importance of turfgrass to urban environments and the need to protect water quality, there's an ongoing need to perform turf runoff experiments to assess the behaviors of new chemicals or products, refine best management practices and calibrate/validate runoff prediction models for turfgrass.

Field studies indicate surface runoff from creeping bentgrass (Carroll, 2007) and Bermudagrass (Massey, 2007) is scalable across a range of plot areas. Thus, there's solid scientific justification for using plot-scale experiments to study the surface runoff of turf chemicals.

Conceptually, conducting a turf runoff experiment is simple. A chemical is applied to grass, and runoff, generated by natural or simulated rainfall, is collected and analyzed for the chemical. In practice, a runoff study involves a number of steps that must be performed carefully to ensure scientifically valid, representative data are produced. Seemingly small oversights in study design or conduct might compromise data from a scientific or regulatory perspective.

The goal of the experiment is to assist researchers, and perhaps those charged with evaluating/interpreting runoff study designs/results, by highlighting certain quality control considerations important to the conduct of a plot-scale turf runoff experiment. The experiment isn't comprehensive, but it presents
At Mississippi State University, Joe Massy, Ph.D., presents quality control approaches that have proven helpful when conducting runoff studies.

For a review of technical considerations important to the conduct of a runoff study, review Wauchope et al. (1995). The experiment phases addressed are:

- Study planning,
- Plot construction and maintenance,
- Rainfall simulator verification,
- Application monitoring, and
- Sample handling.

STUDY PLANNING

Quality control principle. A detailed study protocol that addresses all aspects of study conduct is critical to the success of any study. Moreover, an approved protocol is required for a study to be submitted to support pesticide registration. A well-designed protocol serves as an invaluable reference throughout a study as many construction and study conduct activities build on one another.

Basis of concern. There are certain study details that shouldn’t be left to chance or addressed as an afterthought once the study is under way. Particular attention should be paid to methods used to control and account for water movement in test plots and methods used to account for pesticide application and rate in the turf system. Some pesticides present special considerations, such as those with a propensity to adsorb to plastic and other surfaces strongly (water solubility equals 1 milligram per liter at 25 Celcius), rapidly degraded (soil $T_{1/2}$ equals two days), or those that are relatively volatile (vapor pressure greater than $10^{-4}$ millimeters of mercury at 25 Celcius). Thus, the researcher must take into account the properties and environmental behavior of the pesticide during protocol development. Sample handling and storage practices also are critical and often compound-dependent.

Approach. A thorough literature review is an appropriate place to begin a study of this scale. Unfortunately, quality control programs aren’t always explicitly reported in published works. Consultation with the chemical manufacturer, other researchers and the targeted end-user of the information generated by the study can help address important aspects of study design. In the end, attempting to account for as much of the rainwater and applied pesticide as possible is a good guiding practice in study design and conduct.

TURF PLOT CONSTRUCTION, MAINTENANCE

Quality control principle. The runoff plot should be constructed to capture no more and no less than the actual runoff occurring from the treated plot. Water external to the plot boarders shouldn’t be allowed to run onto the treated plot just as the runoff collection apparatus must capture all surface runoff and not leak.

Basis of concern. If water external to the treated plot is allowed to run onto the plot, pesticide concentrations in runoff will be diluted. Runoff that completely bypasses or leaks from the runoff collection apparatus before measurement will reduce the total runoff volume and pesticide load measured during the study. Both of these scenarios won’t accurately reflect the
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actual amount of runoff that occurred.

**Approach.** To prevent extraneous water from entering the plot, the plot must be isolated hydrologically from the surrounding area using metal dykes (Wauchope et al., 1990), landscape timbers (Smith and Bridges 1996; Hong and Smith 1997) or flexible plastic discharge hoses filled with masonry sand (Cole et al., 1997). However, for multiple plots, it might be better to use permanent turf-covered soil berms because they are easy to maintain by mowing when less than two inches high.

Plot spacing also is important and dependent on overall experimental design and configuration of the spray equipment and rainfall simulator to be used. Wide plot spacing prevents overspray during pesticide application and rainfall simulation and allows movement of equipment between multiple plots. Knowledge of the distance of throw of the rainfall simulator is needed to determine appropriate plot spacing.

One of the most important considerations in plot construction and maintenance is the interface that exists between the down-slope edge of the plot and the runoff collection apparatus. This interface between the runoff diverter and turf is critical because it represents a potential point of loss for surface runoff. Wauchope et al. (1995) note construction of the diverter-turf interface requires creativity and skill. Several approaches might be used, but in each case, the system must ensure against runoff bypass and potential leaks.

At Mississippi State, we thought it was best to minimize the transition between the sod and diverter by minimizing the thickness of the diverter. Our diverter consisted of 20-gauge aluminum metal bent to a 140-degree angle. The diverter was designed so that it extended into the plot about two inches and into the runoff collection trough about three inches. The soil underneath the diverter was sieved, carefully leveled and tamped so no air space existed under the diverter. Next, the diverter was attached to a wooden box lining the collection trench using silicone sealant and screws with rubber grommets. Before installing the diverter, sod close to the interface was removed using a sod cutter. Once the diverter was installed, the original sod was placed so that it overlapped the diverter about one inch. The diverter-sod interface was allowed to heal for six to eight weeks before conducting runoff studies, the performance of the rainfall simulator must be verified.
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RAINFALL APPLICATION RATE VERIFICATION

Quality control principle. The delivery rate and uniformity of the rainfall simulator must be verified under field conditions.

Basis of concern. Rainfall application rates significantly less or greater than the target rate and/or lacking in uniformity might cause nonrepresentative and/or highly variable results that complicate interpretation.

Approach. Before conducting runoff studies, the performance of the rainfall simulator must be verified. This is accomplished using a formal audit procedure (Wauchope et al., 1995). For example, Carroll (2005) used paper cups spaced on 12-inch centers. Plastic tarps placed over the entire plot area might be used to determine total rainfall delivery. This approach provides a visual assessment of uniformity but doesn’t yield a quantitative measure of rainfall uniformity.

The operating pressure of the simulator should be noted during audits and checked periodically during study conduct to ensure the system is operating properly. During runoff events, pan-type rain gauges should be used to record rainfall amounts and uniformity. Note that tall, narrow-top rain gauges might not measure rainfall accurately, causing the steep descent of the artificial raindrops.

PESTICIDE APPLICATION MONITORING

Quality control principle. One must know the amount of pesticide ap-

Catwalks are used to collect application monitors to minimize plot disturbances after a pesticide application (left). The runoff plot should be constructed to capture no more and no less than the actual runoff occurring from the treated plot.
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plied to turf rather than assuming the nominal rate was applied to accurately calculate the percentage of chemical that occurs in runoff and ensure the pesticide concentrations measured in runoff reflect those that would occur with labeled applications.

**Basis of concern.** In field experiments involving pesticide application, it’s not uncommon for application rates to differ by plus or minus 15 percent or more from nominal rates, even after careful calculation, calibration of spray equipment and application by experienced people (ACPA, 1996; Mojasevic and Helling, 1998). In an analysis of more than 1,600 pesticide applications, improper boom height (60 percent of errors), miscalculation of application rate (26 percent) and variation in pass time (14 percent) were most responsible for inaccurate application rates (Braverman et al., 2001).

**Approach.** Three main approaches are used to verify pesticide application rates (Massey et al., 2002). Two indirect measures are the catch-back method and the pass-time method. The catch-back method involves measuring the spray solution volume before and after application to determine if the desired volume of test solution was applied to the test plots. The pass-time method involves measuring the time it takes the applicator to pass over the test plot having known length and comparing this time to the speed used in calculation.

Experienced applicators are able to apply within plus or minus 2 percent of the targeted spray volume or pass time. Making several practice runs before each pesticide application improves overall accuracy.

Field protocols written for regulatory purposes typically require the application to be within plus or minus 5 percent of the target spray volume or pass-time value. Variances exceeding these criteria should be scrutinized closely, and the cause of the misapplication determined before proceeding with additional applications.

A direct measure of deposited residues uses application verification monitors, which are paper discs, polyurethane foam plugs, Petri dishes, etc., placed in the test plot to collect spray deposition that occurs during application. The application verification monitors are collected and analyzed chemically for the test chemical(s) being applied. Pre-labeled monitors are positioned before application in an arrangement spanning the length and width of the plot to allow a representative sample of the spray pattern. We used about one application verification monitor per 100 square feet of plot area.

Immediately after application, the monitors are collected and handled carefully so as to not lose pesticide content, wrapped in aluminum foil and immediately frozen until analyzed. Care also must be taken to not walk on or otherwise disturb treated turf surfaces after application. A catwalk might be helpful to prevent plot disturbance when retrieving the monitors.

If, after analysis, the pesticide contents of the individual application verification monitors are found to vary by more than 20 percent within an application, the source(s) of the variability should be determined and reduced to ensure uniform pesticide treatment in future studies (Massey and Lenoir, 2003).

**SAMPLE HANDLING, STORAGE**

**Quality control principle.** The application monitors and runoff samples must be labeled, handled, and stored properly to preserve the scientific integrity of study results.

**Basis of concern.** Improper handling and storage of samples can result in unacceptable degradation losses and compromise the integrity of the samples and, thus, the scientific validity of the overall study.

**Approach.** The collection of application monitors should begin immediately after application and the samples stored frozen to stabilize residues and solidify liquid spray droplets to prevent spills. Provisions should be made to have ample help to collect the application monitors, recognizing labor requirements rise with plot size and the number of monitors used.

A ‘dry run’ collecting the application verification monitors helps assess the time needed to collect, wrap and store the monitors. Runoff samples should be placed on ice during or immediately after collection and transported on ice back to the laboratory. Ideally, a robust, sensitive analytical method would be in place before initiating the field-conduct phase of a runoff study as this assures timely analysis of samples. However, if the samples can’t be analyzed soon after collection, it’s best to analyze at least a subset of the initial runoff samples. These samples then would be frozen along with the remaining unanalyzed samples and reanalyzed when the remainder of samples is analyzed. By comparing the initial and final analyses of these samples, the storage stability of pesticide residues in the later-analyzed samples can be determined.

**ACCOUNT FOR RAINWATER**

Much planning, effort and expense are associated with the conduct of a pesticide runoff experiment. While all aspects of the study are important, several are of critical importance to
overall outcome of the study. Perhaps the best way to summarize the approach encouraged is to strive to account for as much of the rainwater and applied pesticide as possible. GCI

Joe Massey, Ph.D., is associate professor in the department of plant and soil sciences at Mississippi State University. Credit USGA Turfgrass and Environmental Research Online (ISSN 1541-0277), Volume 7, Number 5.

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During runoff events, pan-type rain gauges should be used to record rainfall amounts and uniformity.
NOTEWORTHY SHOW PRODUCTS

The Golf Industry Show in Orlando, Fla., was, as usual, the place to meet, greet and get a leg up on your golf course preparation planning. In the more than 20 years of attending the annual event, I’ve had the opportunity to refresh my friendships, start the year’s championship planning in the right direction, and investigate new equipment and products available to make preparations for upcoming major events a little less stressful.

Now that I can finally feel my feet again after miles of traversing the show floor, there are several products that might be beneficial and warrant consideration for inside-the-ropes golf course operations.

During events, a primary objective is to produce a quality and precision cut for putting surfaces. Walk-behind greensmowers are at the forefront in this crucial area. Because 50 percent of the game – at any level – is played on putting greens, this is often where your reputation as a golf course superintendent is made.

There are plenty of quality mower choices for the superintendent, but one unit caught my attention this year - the Jacobsen pedestrian Eclipse model. I was intrigued by:

• Mowing head widths available from 18 inches to 26 inches and available as floating or fixed heads. These varying widths are essential for a quality and consistent cut whether the surfaces are smooth, pitched or undulating.

• Adjustable settings for ground speed, reel speed and frequency of cut. These adjustments are important when you employ volunteers at an event who might be unfamiliar with your putting greens.

• The option of hybrid or battery power, which equates to fuel savings. Also, the battery-powered units allow for early morning starts without impacting any neighborhood noise ordinances at classic golf courses such as Winged Foot or Pebble Beach.

• Improved floating-head capabilities that would reduce surface scalping at lower heights of cut on the most undulated turf surfaces.

The Rules of Golf state a bunker is a hazard consisting of a prepared area of ground from which turf or soil has been removed and replaced with sand. But, many major events are contested during the summer months, which can mean thunderstorms with heavy downpours resulting in bunker damage. To repair a bunker quickly and return it to play, you need a quality, rapid drainage system. And, like it or not, an inordinate amount of work is dedicated to the perfect ball lie within the hazard.

Pfafftown, N.C.-based Atlantic Installations created an innovative golf course drainage technology called the Quickplay 46 chamber unit for efficient bunker drainage. Benefits of the product include:

• A chamber engineered to provide more efficient drainage, a larger filtration surface area, and a greater water-storage capacity resulting in fewer washouts by replacing the tile and stone system of bunker drainage.

• By eliminating the gravel within a trench, there are no stones or rocks migrating to the surface to become a rules issue or impact play.

• The outlet pipe has a 4-inch capacity that can tie into the fairway drainage system and is adapted and fitted easily.

• The quick removal of standing water reduces the contamination of a white sand material with silt. The reduction of silt eliminates the need to constantly replace or refresh bunker sand that might vary playing conditions.

• A chamber engineered to provide more efficient drainage, a larger filtration surface area, and a greater water-storage capacity resulting in fewer washouts by replacing the tile and stone system of bunker drainage.

During championship play, removing water quickly from an integral playing surface allows you to return the golf course to the officials and competitors.

The new bentgrasses and ultradwarf Bermudagrasses require constant surface maintenance to produce the quality playing surfaces amateurs and professionals have come to expect. With these expectations come daily surface grooming and turf management requirements. Advanced Turf Technology created a versatile turf management system of interchangeable “easy in, easy out” reel attachments for surface turf issues. Its benefits include:

• For final surface preparations for an event, you might wish to vertical mow lightly, brush or groom the surface lightly, and spike and roll depending on conditions. With this system, you can change quickly from one operation to solve your needs.

• Meeting the requirements for quality putting surface maintenance. Whether you’re controlling organic matter or horizontal leaf blade orientation (grain), especially in ultradwarf species, Advanced Turf’s four-step process provides 10 surface grooming options.

• The brushing and spiking attachments would solve surface moisture and leaf layover problems.

• The vibratory roller cassette would be an ideal method to smooth footprinting at round’s end to smooth surface before an evening mowing. The weight of each attachment varies between 25 to 70 pounds.

Major tournaments require firm, fast putting surfaces to challenge competitors. Precise water management promotes healthy turf, but receptive greens necessitate a keen eye and a delicate irrigating touch. Two products that might be the next generation of water management tools come from Advanced Sensor Technology and TRW Enterprises/Precision USA.

Advanced Sensor uses a wireless device to monitor soil temperature and moisture content. At a championship venue, the sensors have demonstrated the coolest time to roll greens isn’t between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m., but earlier, thus, reducing stress to the turf during championship play when adding water might become problematic.

Precision’s handheld moisture content meter eliminates the guesswork involved with spot-watering greens. It will assist superintendents in establishing benchmark numbers for moisture content and allow them to determine when, where and how much water to apply. These meters received their championship experience at the 2007 PGA Championship at Southern Hills Country Club in Oklahoma. SCF
Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He's a 38-year, life member of the GCSAA. He can be reached at terrybuchen@earthlink.net.

**Weigh it down**

Ryan Renovaire pull-type fairway aerifiers/slicers have built-in weight trays so additional weight can be added in order for the blades to penetrate more effectively into heavy soils. Tom Athy, CGCS, at Omaha Country Club in Nebraska, uses concrete cylinders for added weight while aerifying/sliting heavy soils. Each cylinder measures 12-inches long and 6-inches in diameter and weighs about 28 pounds. Four cylinders per weight tray equals about 112 pounds. The concrete cylinders were acquired free of charge from a local concrete-strength, quality-control testing company. The original weight-tray sides were extended by welding used fairway mower bedknifes on the three outer sides. The original inner sides were cut off with an acetylene torch so the cylinders can lay end to end. The cylinders are kept in place with quarter-inch-thick steel strappings, which are positioned over the top of the cylinders extending the full length of each weight tray. Half-inch-diameter holes were drilled on either end of the strappings so they can slide over the vertically placed rebar. The strappings are wired to the rebar on each end to keep them in place.

**Sweep it in**

The Toro 5020 Sand Pro is equipped with an optional factory spiker attachment, which is about 60-inches wide. Adolfo Garcia, superintendent at the Chileno Bay Club in Cabo San Lucas, BCS, Mexico, added brushes to it for sweeping topdressing into the spiker holes and turf surface. He purchased two large, stiff industrial brushes that are slightly wider than the spiker attachment. Both brushes are mounted to a metal frame using quarter-inch-thick flat steel bolted to 1.5-inch angle iron, which is spot-welded onto two pieces of 1.5-inch square tubing. The other end of the square tubing has a 1-inch diameter piece of steel pipe welded to it. It's mounted to the Sand Pro in such a way that allows the brushes to be placed in a raised position for transportation. Garcia topdresses the greens and then uses the spiker attachment and brushes to sweep the topdressing into the spiker holes and turf surface. The brushes cost about $75 each. The steel materials cost about $35, and the mechanic's labor took about 2.5 hours.
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REINVENTING YOURSELF

Last month, I dragged my wife to a rock concert for the first time in years. It was a retro show featuring a bunch of gray-haired artists from the '60s like B.J. Thomas, the Fifth Dimension, Peter and Gordon, Ronnie Spector (and, of course, the Ronettes) and The Rascals. I loved every minute of it. My wife sat by my side patiently through the whole thing, but barely tolerated it.

The truth is my wife has abandoned the '60s (as well as the '70s, '80s and '90s) in favor of keeping up with our children. As opposed to her Ludlum husband, she has an iPod filled with music from the 21st century. While I can recite every lyric of every song ever written by Lennon and McCartney, she can sing along with tunes from Korn, the Black Eyed Peas and rap groups whose names can't even be printed in a family magazine like this one. I just asked her what her current favorite band was and she replied "Flogging Molly." Apparently, it's an Irish punk group. I kid you not.

In short, she's hip, and I'm not. It makes me fearful for our future. As McCartney wrote, "Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I'm 64?"

Yet, despite the fact I'm sneaking up on being an old fogey, and she's a hot young thing, she seems to still care for me. Perhaps she'll even change my bedpans in a few years.

So, on the cultural radio dial, my tuner is stuck on the "oldies" station. My tastes in music, clothing, books, movies and pretty much everything else were set in concrete by the time I was 25. In a nutshell, I'm a happy dinosaur.

That said, from a business standpoint, I've tried to keep up. I'm pretty competent on computers, I read all the business books I can get and I try to challenge myself constantly to get better at what I do. That's what led me to what I'm doing now. As most of you know, I had a pretty good gig as the publisher of another magazine three years ago. We built the publication from scratch to success. But success had its price tag. I found that I missed the fun of struggling to do new things, and I wasn't particularly happy pushing paper around my desk. So, I reinvented myself. I sat down and made a written list of the things I loved to do and the things I hated. At the top of the love list was:

- being with my family;
- writing;
- speaking and teaching;
- working with great folks; and
- helping superintendents.

At the top of the hate list was:

- managing other people;
- traveling 180 days a year;
- corporate B.S.);
- meetings; and
- did I mention corporate B.S.?

Start now and begin to reinvent yourself. It's all about being happy and satisfying the needs of yourself and, if you have one, your family.

Through that exercise, I came to the conclusion that it was time for me to do my own thing. Thus, I started my little company. The only corporate B.S. I deal with now is scooping up the doggie doo out of the backyard of Flagstick LLC's global headquarters. (I guess that's corporate D.S.)

So, here's the point of this rambling: I want to challenge each of you to do exactly what I did. Sometime in the next two days I want you to clear your schedule, make sure no one bothers you, get a piece of paper in front of you and write down the answers to the following questions:

- What do I really love to do? What honestly makes me happy?
- What do I genuinely hate about what I'm doing now?
- If I could create my perfect life, what would it realistically be like?
- When I go to sleep at night, what nice thought will I have in my head?
- Conversely, what keeps me up at night and how can I get rid of that pain?

When you complete this exercise, you'll have a piece of paper that can change your life. That's exactly what I did, and I'm pretty happy these days. You can be too.

If you're good at what you do (and I know you are), you need to take control of your life and reinvent yourself. You can and should manage your life rather than letting others do it for you. Think about it: Why are you doing what you're doing, and does it make you happy?

So, here's my challenge to you: take one hour, just an hour, and reinvent yourself. What do I mean by reinvent? I mean you need to take stock of your life, decide what's good and what's bad and make a plan to become the person you want to be.

I know that sounds like new-age gibberish, but I'm serious. Set a time and go through the process. I don't care if you're 19 or 91. It's a healthy thing to do. You need to have a plan for your professional and personal life.

To put it another way, if you were going to do a project on your course - let's say rebuilding tees or installing a new pump station - wouldn't you make a plan? Wouldn't you specifically map out every step of the process and know, in advance, what resources, time and effort you'd need to get the job done? Wouldn't you have a specific goal in your mind before you even start?

Your career and your life are no different. In fact, they're higher priorities. Don't wait. Start now and begin to reinvent yourself. It's all about being happy and satisfying the needs of yourself and, if you have one, your family. Almost every superintendent I've met is a perfectionist at heart. Just for once, be a perfectionist about yourself. GCI
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