The Top Management Companies List

Our list of the top management and contract maintenance companies in the golf business. p. 18

Chambers Bay in University Place, Wash., is managed by KemperSports, which ranks No. 4 on the list with 99 facilities.

INSIDE:
- Golfer confidence p. 16
- Overseeding cutbacks p. 24
- Dollar spot research p. 32
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Do the Math.
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Early-season treatments may delay the onset of dollar spot symptoms and save turf managers an application or two.
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Assistant's view
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GCBA summer meeting interviews
Visit golfcourseindustry.tv to view videos about the state of the golf course construction market featuring Landscapes Unlimited's Bill Kubly, GCBA's Paul Foley, Global Golf Advisors' Henry DeLozier and Professional Turf Products' Craig Porovne.

Perfect timing
Great article on the price of irrigation installation ("The Price Is Right," July, page 40). Perfect timing since I'm trying to get one through. I even gave the article to our board of directors so hopefully it helps me out.

Chad Miller
Superintendent
Hillcrest Golf & Country Club
Batesville, Ind.

What golfers want
I'd like to compliment Jeff Brauer on the article "What Do Golfers Want Most?" (July issue, page 28). I found the article interesting and on point. Also, as a panelist for Golf Magazine, it's always a pleasure to play his golf courses. Giant's Ridge (Quarry) and Wilderness at Fortune Bay are two of my favorites.

J. J. Keegan
Managing principal
Golf Convergence
Castle Rock, Colo.

CORRECTION
Two figures were mistakenly omitted from the July 2009 research article "Down and dirty with white grubs," by Eric J. Rebek and Tom A. Royer of Oklahoma State University. The figures are located at golfcourseindustry.com/files/pdf/julyresearchfigures.pdf.

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FIVE THINGS...

I t's the start of fall and I've got a lot of things about our industry on my mind.
So with all due respect to Sports Illustrated columnist Peter King, here are "Five Things I Think I Think" about the state of our industry.

1. WE WILL BUILD AGAIN.
I recently attended the GCBAA's summer meeting in Minneapolis and I had the opportunity to talk with a number of the industry's top builders and architects. Nearly everyone believes, when addressing the state of the economy, that the worst is over and that we hit rock bottom about mid-summer. The real challenge now is the long long road to recovery. How long that will take is anyone's guess. However, while new work has not been booked, phones have begun ringing with inquiries. That's a good sign.

Will it ever be like it once was? No, those days are long over. Outside of the U.S., builders and architects are looking at emerging economies like India, Brazil, China, Indonesia and Korea as locations for future course growth. These promising markets will need know-how, and there's an opportunity for the industry to become an exporter of knowledge. Inside the U.S. and North American market, opportunity for the next two to three years will be in the "re's" — re-engineering, rethinking, recalibration.

2. WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE.
Water management and smart water issues are major issues every superintendent will need to face going forward, whether it's from their members or the general public who don't understand the whole story. I spoke recently with Deborah Hamlin from the Irrigation Association, who says many municipalities and organizations are looking to the golf course industry as examples of how water management is done right. In fact, The New York Times recently featured an article on this very notion and it's getting a lot of mileage throughout the industry. (To read a copy of the story, type ow.ly/nqN4 into your Web browser.)

3. BOTTOM LINE.
In talking with superintendents, many mentioned taking as high as a 30-percent cut in their maintenance budgets entering this past season. Many are bracing for another 10-percent hit going into next year. I've said this before: The industry will suffer due to its bare-bones operations over the past year. A temporary hardship can not only be overcome, but it can actually strengthen an organization. Over the long term, though, it will only lead to diminished customer satisfaction. The challenge for superintendents come budget time is to create a convincing argument for sustained staffing levels going into 2010.

4. PLAY THE GAME.
Need I say more?

5. BE LOUD, BE PROUD.
Lastly, the golf industry — from owner to superintendent and on through to club member — needs to do a better job with staying on point about the issues that are important to golf. Again, the New York Times water management article is a good example, but golf courses need to do a better job communicating the positive impact they have on their communities. Not only are they wildlife refuges, but they’re local-level economic generators. Too often considered just a sport, the industry needs to better hone its skills at communicating not only the benefits of the game, but its multi-billion dollar impact on the overall U.S. economy. You are the experts in your industry; therefore you need to be its ambassadors, as well.
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Routing a golf course

A few weeks after securing the design commission, I went on yet another site walk to finalize the routing, this time in subzero weather. Both the cold and the knowledge that I would be embarking on a new golf course design were exhilarating. While I had prepared a routing for the sales presentation, this time I knew the routing was for real and I was armed with the knowledge I needed to meet federal environmental requirements of "zero wetland impacts" for construction to proceed immediately. This fact forced some changes.

Locating the clubhouse site was the first step, as it required room for parking, cart storage and staging and practice areas. Our site is an L shape, comprised of six 40-acre quarter sections with three prominent ridges, including one in the center, and a large creek valley running to the southeast corner. One logical clubhouse location was across the road from the casino, right on the highway. But, using the center ridge near the crotch of the L provided a centralized clubhouse that allowed returning nines and avoided opening and closing holes to play into a low sun. I had to move the range from the sales plan because it crossed a creek. I found that placing the range on that main ridge, which didn't look promising on the plan, actually looked great on the ground, and it didn't require any creek impacts or tree removal.

Eventually, we used that upper portion of that ridge for tee and green sites, moving the clubhouse halfway back down the hill to a tree-lined meadow to create its own internal views. The clubhouse is far enough off the road for serenity, but is close enough to reduce entry road and utility connection costs. It could have better visual control of opening and closing holes.

With that set, I began the final routing of the course, using many holes I had considered in earlier versions of the sales routing. My first rule of routing is simply fit the best and natural 18 holes on the property. My second rule is that if a routing works out well after just one try, it probably has 17 or 19 holes, rather than the required 18. In fact, I found natural holes in abundance and actually had more trouble connecting good holes than I did finding them.

Routing sets an eternal footprint, creating the most charming golf holes and efficient circulation (i.e., easy walking) while minimizing earthmoving. We have moved less than 100,000 cubic yards of earth (about 1/10 to 1/3 of typical modern courses). Only holes 3, 4 and 11 required cutting through ridges for visibility, and I reduced the cut on 4 by accepting a blind tee shot over a deep hazard, reminiscent of the famous 4th at Royal St. George in England. I had always wanted to build a hole like that.

Our site has three distinct visual zones — agriculture to the west, heavy trees in the center and a mixture of pastures with random tree lines to the east. Our routing starts in the trees to create a good impression, runs through the agriculture land and then weaves back into the treed areas on the back nine, giving golfers a mixture of experiences — and building to a strong finish.

While I consider what holes will look like in the routing plan, it's only after we finish a routing that I detail out each hole's design, which we will cover next month. GCI
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THE CRICKETS ARE CRYING AUTUMN

We have had a summer here in the upper Midwest I used to dream about. It was cool and a little on the dry side with only a few severe storms. In terms of managing a golf course, it will be remembered as one of those "easy years." It's a good thing they come along every once in a while to make up for seasons that are extremely stressful.

Colleagues in other parts of the country haven't been so lucky. It rained constantly during periods in the Northeast, as witnessed by the heroic efforts required of Craig Currier for the U.S. Open at Bethpage. In the Northwest it was hot in July and the drought in Texas is downright scary. They won't remember this summer as fondly as we will in the Great Lakes area.

A few golf courses experienced some winter injury, but most profited from the heavy snow that came at Thanksgiving and didn't leave until the birds had returned in early spring.

We were worried all summer about the millions of folks losing their jobs to the poor economy, hoping there would be a recovery soon enough to save them. Some of us, however, aren't so sure that Obama's spending of borrowed money is the answer to all that ails us. It has to be paid back, with interest, someday.

In our state, manure was a big topic of discussion, led by the Midwest Manure Summit held at Lambeau Field in Green Bay. I hope that doesn't mean the Packers are going to stink this fall. We enjoyed the International Cow Chip Throwing Contest in Sauk City, only a few miles from my home. We watched with interest as the U.S. senators from Iowa tried to justify sneaking big money earmarks into the federal budget to study the smell of hog manure. Closer to home, the issue took a twist when we learned dairy cattle are a major contributor to greenhouse gases and global warming. Genetic scientists are at work creating a cow that produces less methane. I wonder if they were able to get an earmark in the budget for that project.

And in my home county, Vice President Joe Biden called the county executive to get the latest on Dane County's manure digester. This was right after he said flying was dangerous because of swine flu. Given his performance so far as veep, if anyone could use a manure digester, it's probably Joe!

For the first time ever I hated to see summer go... But all good things come to an end.

Minnesota had an interesting early summer season as they watched the vote counting for a U.S. senator come to a close. Al Franken was sworn in, a nice complement, some say, to their choice of Jesse Ventura as governor a few years back. Just south of here in Illinois the politics were even more interesting with Governor Blagojevich and Senator Burris. There's never a dull moment in the upper Midwest.

The summer was so pleasant people were actually enjoying their front porches and backyard decks. The mosquito population never really got started, which was a plus for outdoor activities including golf. Oh, I grumbled a little bit about how long it was taking for my garden to mature - I wondered if I was going to have to cultivate a taste for green tomatoes. But, summer annuals, which start to look pretty weak by summer's end, were in full color and robust health.

Cheryl and I are Army Lt. Ryan Norton's godparents, and he is never very far from our thoughts. His father, Pat, is a golf course superintendent west of Chicago, and his mom, Sue, sent us the temperature forecast for the week of July 24-July 30 at his duty station in Iraq. For that week, the daily high averaged to 120 degrees F. and the low averaged to 92 degrees F. That data, coupled with photos of Army and Marine soldiers dressed in their full uniform and gear, made me embarrassed that I ever complained about a summer in Wisconsin.

That confession notwithstanding, for the first time ever I hated to see summer go. The pleasant weather, day after day for weeks on end, was a dream come true for this former golf course superintendent. But all good things come to an end and we're on the threshold of autumn. The local and club tournaments are over, the club champions have been determined, golf course crews have shrunk in numbers as kids return to school, and soon the workday will have to begin later and the workday will have to begin later as daylight disappears. Soon enough, many of our golfers and club members will head South and West, leaving before the snow and cold arrive. Our colleagues in those regions will be gearing up as we slowly wind down.

Nature tells us summer is over, too. There is a tangy, almost spicy aroma to the air. The sumac are turning red, the birch are showing some yellow color in their canopies, and the Queen Anne's lace is fully flowered. The crickets and locust are crying autumn, in a way substituting for the songbirds that greeted us in the early morning hours for all these months just past.

By and large, this first summer of my retirement as a golf course superintendent has been everything I imagined it would be. If this continues for the other seasons as they come and go, I will consider myself a very lucky man.
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Preventive maintenance programs have come a long way in the last 10 years. Think back when records were kept on index cards; now everything is becoming automated and computer driven. No matter which method you employ, having a program in place is more vital now than it has ever been before.

Preventive maintenance programs not only track when maintenance is due, they provide information for equipment purchases, budgets and labor to justify spending. Utilizing programs such as Trimrix, Toro's My Turf, TurfCentric, Avior or others will help you run annual expenditure reports. These systems allow you to monitor your costs for each piece of equipment and identify when a piece of equipment needs excessive repairs that may outweigh the purchase of a new one.

You also can use these systems to identify previous parts costs. Many times it’s easy to glance over price in pursuit of a part, and this feature identifies when part prices fluctuate. The system tracks what you last paid for a part, which provides a reference point that alerts you when you may be paying too much.

Another great feature of preventive maintenance programs is they can monitor labor costs — whether to justify a budget or the need for an assistant technician. You also can monitor your budget in these programs to help you with your monthly planning of maintenance practices. This will ensure that you can properly plan so you do not exceed your budget or that you’re aware before it happens. In these economic times being able to plan and be prepared is half the battle.

Some of these systems are tied into dealers and allow you to purchase parts online, which alleviates the long wait times and gives you a method of tracking when your parts were ordered.

There’s a big price range for these systems — from free to $2,500-plus — but you can’t put a price on proper management of your facility’s fleet. Once you have all the data in front of you, how would you ever be able to properly manage without it?

Select a preventive maintenance system based on the data you want to track and how much work you’re willing to do to get it. Some systems have tiers based on the amount of information you wish to record and others have devices that are attached to machines that will send the information from the machine to your computer.

A baseline system would just track your equipment fleet and the preventive maintenance done and not necessarily the actual repairs or parts inventory. The more expensive systems track everything from labor and budgets to parts inventory and create reports for items such as hours' usage, repair costs, labor reports and equipment inventory.

The challenge in implementing a preventive maintenance system is making the time to sit down to do it.

Also, knowing your way around the computer is a huge help and will reduce the time you spend learning the program’s basic functions. Basic systems may take only a day to set up, while more detailed systems could take a week of off-and-on work to complete.

Most program manufacturers offer some sort of training. For example, some will come to your work site for a nominal fee while others provide online or telephone training. Most of them have step-by-step instructional videos.

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CONSUMER RESEARCH
A glimpse of how golfers' behavior affects the business of golf facility maintenance and management.

TAKING CUES FROM CONFIDENCE

Just as consumer confidence is a key indicator for the greater economy, golfer confidence is an important metric for the golf industry.

The National Golf Foundation has been tracking golf consumer confidence during the recession that began in December 2007 by periodically surveying core golfers about their rounds and spending habits.

As the chart at right shows, after worsening in 2008, golfer confidence has stabilized recently. As a comparison, consumer confidence information is included below.

CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

Source: The Conference Board Leading Economic Index for the United States

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Gearing Up for GROWTH

Despite a historically shaky collective reputation, management and contract maintenance companies are positioned to grow.

BY MARISA PALMIERI

You could say that golf course management companies’ reputations precede them. Whether it's based on personal experience or hearsay, many industry members—especially golf course superintendents—have made up their minds about the third-party firms that manage entire golf operations or single departments, such as maintenance.

Regardless of their collective reputation, management companies serve a niche in the industry. With a down golf market and a recession in the U.S. economy over the last 20 months making the operating environment even more challenging, these firms are poised to grow, according to data provided to Golf Course Industry for the Top Management Companies List.

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

Anecdotally, many say that the negative perceptions about management companies are tales from the past and peoples’ opinions about them are improving.

“Management companies’ reputations have improved,” says Terry Buchen, CGCS, president of Golf Agronomy International. “There was a lot of anxiety when they first became prominent on the scene, but it has subsided and there is a more positive attitude about them in recent years.”

GCI research shows that half of superintendents’ perceptions of management companies has not changed over the last 20 years. Twenty-eight percent say their perceptions have improved; 22 percent say they’ve gotten worse (see page 22).

Steve Gano, vice president of operations for Championsgate, Fla.-based International Golf Maintenance, says good companies have been able to dispel negative perceptions through proven track records.

“We’ve made some significant headway,” he says, adding that it helped that 2008 GCSAA president Dave Downing, CGCS, is an executive in a management company. Plus, high-profile superintendent and past GCSAA president Bruce Williams, former director of golf courses and grounds at Los Angeles Country Club, this month started in a development role with ValleyCrest Golf Course Maintenance.

Greg Pieschala, president of ValleyCrest Golf Course Maintenance, Calabasas, Calif., says battling stereotypes is not an issue for his company, though that wasn’t the case five years ago.

“At that time we were encountering ambivalence among superintendents, but that’s a thing of the past,” he says. “Today when we have an opening, we’re blessed with a lot of very high quality people who want to work with us.”

Pieschala attributes ValleyCrest’s ability to overcome the perception obstacle to several internal programs, including training it conducts through the GCSAA and structuring an incentive program that rewards superintendents for actively participating in the GCSAA and achieving and maintaining certification. He also believes that ValleyCrest benefits from being a contract maintenance firm vs. a traditional management company.

“If you’re a superintendent, that makes all the difference in the world,” Pieschala says. However, GCI research shows that 50 percent of superintendents don’t differentiate between the two types of companies and, in fact, 36 percent have a more favorable perception of traditional management companies than contract maintenance companies (see page 22).

Critics of third-party operators say they don’t always do what’s best for the golf course and take away the superintendent’s autonomy. Upon the arrival of management companies they see their operating and capital improvement budgets shrink and feel pressure to deliver the same conditions with a reduced budget while answering to someone who may be off site.

“I can only really speak for KemperSports, but when superintendents become part of our system, there’s a lot of tools and support,” says Steve Skinner, CEO for Northbrook, Ill.-based KemperSports. “From peers, to regional support personnel and from a technical and agronomic basis.”

As for autonomy, Skinner says KemperSports believes in the brand of the individual golf course and the local staff’s expertise.

“They’re the ones who understand the desires of the local golfers and our customers,” he says. “We give them the tools and support to rely on, but we don’t look to tell them how to do their jobs. They’re high qualified and well trained and they have the authority and responsibility for producing a quality product.”

Gano shares a similar philosophy.

“There are a hundred ways to get the job done, and we’re all for guys doing it their own way, but when we know a job can be done more efficiently, we absolutely provide that idea to the superintendent,” he says. “All of our ideas come from our superintendents and we share that idea with the rest of our clubs.”

One assumption is the belief that when management or contract maintenance companies come in, the existing staff will be fired.

“Too often we hear about that negative perception, but in reality we’ve saved guys’ jobs,” Gano says. “There are superintendents who haven’t been given the right tools, the budget isn’t what it needs to be and we can convince the board that they’re not providing superintendents with the right resources. The superintendent on a property knows the history. That’s a huge piece of the puzzle, so we’d be crazy to automatically get rid of the superintendent.”

Unfortunately, some clubs have used management or maintenance companies to make changes at the superintendent level so they don’t appear to be the bad guys, Gano says.

“And that gives us all a black eye,” he says. “If we have the sense that they’re only talking to us to change the superintendent, we won’t allow a club to use us to do that because it doesn’t translate into a long-term relationship.”

KemperSports doesn’t systematically fire superintendents or other managers when it brings on a new facility.

“We look to retain and retrain as much as possible,” Skinner says. “We go in and interview
The Top Management Companies List

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<th>HEADQUARTERS</th>
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<td>Scottsdale, Ariz.</td>
<td>troongolf.com</td>
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<td>Sandra Simonson, 480-477-0455</td>
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<td>billycaspergolf.com</td>
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<td>Doug Wayne, 703-761-1444</td>
<td>Bryan Bielecki, 703-761-1444</td>
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<td>Susan Somers-Evans, 847-850-4875</td>
<td>Adrienne Flentge, 847-850-4885</td>
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<td>Dallas</td>
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<td>Laura Komegay, 727-243-6191</td>
<td>Doug Miller, CGCS, 927-888-7580</td>
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<td>Betho Fox, 479-521-6686</td>
<td>Dennis Collins, 479-521-6686</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>Brandon Caltham, 480-948-1300</td>
<td>Tom Christy, 425-891-8551</td>
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<td>Susan French, 704-882-4899</td>
<td>Larry Benson, 704-882-4899</td>
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<td>Landscape Co.</td>
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<td>Rhonda McDaniel, 402-423-6553</td>
<td>Tom Everett, 402-423-6553</td>
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<td>Michael Shapiro, 707-783-0335</td>
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<td>Bobby Heath, 849-900-8241</td>
<td>Rob Berd, 904-900-8246</td>
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<td>Ti Nguyen, 626-825-4322</td>
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<td>Deborah Waite, 636-532-8833</td>
<td>Dennis Bamm, 636-532-8833</td>
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<td>Michael Sharpe, 205-298-0001</td>
<td>Jim Drenesh, 205-298-0001</td>
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<td>Karen Green, 205-769-1330</td>
<td>Kevin Smith, 205-942-0444</td>
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<td>In Celebration of Golf</td>
<td>Scottsdale, Ariz.</td>
<td>incollectionofgolf.com</td>
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<td>Tracey Malmsine, 480-951-5771</td>
<td>Randy Rich, 480-951-5771</td>
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<td>jggolf.com</td>
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<td>Tami Shotted, 858-785-8500</td>
<td>Bob Dobek, 706-591-3151</td>
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<td>Tracey Snyder, 512-347-1244</td>
<td>Jim Papa, 512-347-1244</td>
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<td>David Locke, 480-245-3673</td>
<td>Dave Downing, 480-245-3673</td>
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<td>traditionalclubs.com</td>
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<td>Paul Mason, 480-787-4139</td>
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<td>Billy Saber, 239-415-1110</td>
<td>Joe Ferrai, 239-561-1444</td>
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<td>Wilson Golf Group</td>
<td>Stillwater, Minn.</td>
<td>wilsongolfgroup.com</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Greg Stang, 651-439-6981</td>
<td>Greg Stang, 651-439-6981</td>
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**THE TOP 35 MANAGEMENT COMPANIES**

**THE TOP 5 CONTRACT MAINTENANCE COMPANIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>COMPANY</th>
<th>HEADQUARTERS</th>
<th>WEB SITE</th>
<th>LOCATIONS</th>
<th>% GROWTH '09 vs. '08</th>
<th>% GROWTH FOR 2010 (EXPECTED)</th>
<th>HR CONTACT</th>
<th>MAINTENANCE PURCHASING CONTACT</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>ValleyCrest Golf Course Maintenance</td>
<td>Caleasas, Calif.</td>
<td>valleycrest.com</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>Raul Diaz de Leon, 818-223-8500</td>
<td>Mark Crouch, 818-223-8500</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>International Golf Maintenance, a Meadowbrook Golf Company</td>
<td>Caleasas, Calif.</td>
<td>igmgolf.com</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Melissa Howe, 800-413-5500</td>
<td>Tyler Minum, 800-413-5500</td>
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**METHODOLOGY**

In June, July and August of 2009 we solicited data from management and contract maintenance companies in the golf course industry. We received responses from 52 firms that manage or provide maintenance services for more than one golf course. In addition to contact information for key personnel, we asked for the number of locations they manage, how much they've grown since 2008 and what their growth projections are for 2010. Some companies that manage eight or more facilities do not appear on the list because they declined to participate.
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turf roots and improves turf density. Of course new Reserve is Backed by Bayer, which means all of our research and support is at your fingertips to help you create the healthiest, thickest, greenest turf possible. Because when it comes to your course, good enough isn’t good enough. To learn more, go to www.BackedbyBayer.com/Reserve.
each of them, discuss their goals and evaluate their past."

On the flipside, management companies may provide better career ladders for superintendents than standalone courses. At a management company, there’s the potential to be promoted to a regional superintendent position and oversee several golf courses.

Jason Bonneville, superintendent at The Links at Tuscaloosa (Ala.) Golf & Country Club, is employed by Lindsey Management Co., based in Fayetteville, Ark. He’s been with the company, which he says is somewhat different from a traditional management company because it only manages the courses it develops, since 1999. He’s benefitted from the opportunity to do grow-in and construction.

"It would have been much harder for me to get those opportunities on my own," he says. "I proved myself and within a year they said, ‘Hey, do you want to do construction?’ And then it ballooned from there. I’ve done three constructions and I’ve always had the opportunity to stay at the course."

Bonneville also debunks another management company myth: that they pay poorly. Though he says he can’t speak for other superintendents or other companies, he says his salary is higher than the national average, which is $78,898 for GCSAA members, according to the association’s 2009 Compensation, Benefits and Operations report.

Pay and benefits were an issue for Dan Nagy, superintendent at Jonesboro (Ark.) Country Club. He’s worked for several management and maintenance companies over the years.

"In my opinion, there are too many midlevel and upper management people in these companies, and superintendents work for pay that’s usually lower than the national averages," he says. At one point he says he was making $60,000 at a 36-hole Milwaukee course. If the facility weren’t a management-company run, Nagy says, his salary would have been six figures.

"They have to support so many different entities within the organization so the benefits they offer aren’t great," Nagy says. "And I don’t agree with the way many of them treat superintendents once they get too well compensated. In my opinion, they turn their backs on them."

But Nagy asserts that management companies aren’t all bad.

"I don’t want to be anti-management company, but there are just certain ones I wouldn’t even look at," he says, adding he recommends others considering taking jobs with them do their research.

"If you’re choosing that path, make sure you’re doing it for the right reasons," he says. "It can be a good way to get started in the industry or to get your first head superintendent job. I think it benefits young people today to learn the business side of the profession and management companies are good at that – writing reports and budgeting – instead of just going out and mowing grass."

**GROWTH PROSPECTS**

Regardless of anyone’s opinion, management and contract maintenance companies are currently positioned for growth. When the market is difficult, there’s a greater potential that owners will consider working with a third-party operator.

"When there’s stress in the industry – not just the current recession, but the golf industry’s overcapacity, rounds being down, all of that – it results in stress for operators," Pieschala says. "When things are tough, a larger fraction of people will be open to doing something different. Golf is a traditional game in a traditional industry. If everybody were fat and happy, they would see no need to change."

Fat and happy, golf facilities are not. "There’s been a lot of activity this year, and as the industry gets tougher there will be more opportunities," Skinner says.

If the companies on the Top Management Company List grow in the way they expect, the number of golf facilities working with management companies could increase by more than 21 percent (based on the projections provided by 28 of the 35 companies on the list) to more than 1,300 facilities. There are 1,099 facilities managed by the 35 traditional golf course management companies that appear on GCI’s list.

The number of facilities enlisting contract maintenance companies could grow by nearly 14 percent (based on the projections provided by four of the five companies on the list) to about 173 facilities. There are currently 152 golf facilities affiliated with the five contract maintenance firms that appear on GCI’s list.

"We’re definitely getting more calls from clubs wanting a miracle," Gano says. IGM didn’t provide specific growth projections, but Gano says the company expects to add facilities this year.

"We expect growth because we’ve had more leads in this last year than we’ve had in a long time." GCI

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**Superintendents’ perceptions**

In August, 159 golf course superintendents, assistant golf course superintendents and directors of golf responded to a survey about their perceptions of management companies via an online survey program. Here are some of the results:

1. I have a more favorable perception of contract maintenance companies. 10%
2. I have a more favorable perception of traditional management companies. 36%
3. It’s improved over time. 28%
4. It’s stayed the same. 50%
5. It’s gotten worse over time. 22%

---

**Which of the following do you believe to be true about management/contract maintenance companies?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They are too bottom-line driven and don’t have the best interest of the golf course in mind.</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They’re too “corporate,” requiring a lot of paperwork and offering little autonomy to the superintendent.</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a management/contract maintenance company comes in to run the golf course, the superintendent will probably get fired.</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They provide career paths and good management opportunities for superintendents.</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They provide better learning opportunities than stand-alone courses in terms of in-house project management experience and/or learning the business side of the golf industry.</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They provide a good working environment because they’re organized and process-based.</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
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It's well known that golfers who play down South during the winter like lush, green grass. To provide colorful aesthetics, some clubs choose to overseed their courses. However, for some superintendents that annual chore is becoming smaller in scope, if not vanishing altogether.

**A FINANCIAL DECISION**

From the late 1970s until 1997, Pinehurst Resort overseeded tees and fairways only, says Bob Farren, CGCS, director of grounds and golf course management. Then in 1997, it started wall-to-wall overseeding, adding the rough.

"We never bought into overseeding the rough because it was detrimental to the turf," Farren says. "It was a battle with the trees for water and nutrients. And besides, the benefit of overseeding the rough only lasts eight weeks."

Farren and his staff used the depressed economy as the basis to cut costs and eliminate overseeding in the 419 bermudagrass rough on all eight golf courses at the resort this coming winter. The decision, ultimately made by the executive committee with recommendations by the maintenance staff, was the first of several cost-cutting measures.

"We would always evaluate overseeding in the summer over the years," Farren says. "Revenue is down this year, and we needed to cut costs. This is one way to return the golf course to a more traditional and historic appearance. There might be a few people who question the look, but we probably won't have too much pushback."

Pinehurst will save seed, fuel, labor, water and transition costs (sod is needed in some shaded areas where the bermuda doesn’t grow) by not overseeding, which equals $250,000 to $300,000.

The Country Club of North Carolina, just down the road from Pinehurst, doesn't overseed anything, Farren says.

"The members decided that," he says. "They don't have as much play. Overseeding for us in the fairway is a must because of resort play."

**NO MORE WALL-TO-WALL**

When superintendent Bill Kistler arrived at Tampa (Fla.) Palms Golf & Country Club, seven years ago, the club was overseeding the course wall to wall. That soon changed, as Kistler eliminated overseeding the 419 bermudagrass in the rough first, then the fairways.

"We also had to go back and clean up the rough because of the rye that was coming back," he says. "After we eliminated overseeding in the fairways, playability got better. We had no complaints from members about the aesthetics of not overseeding the fairway and rough. Players are getting a nice roll and lie in the fairways."

There was never a need to overseed the TifEagle bermudagrass greens because they pretty much held their color all year, Kistler says. Now, he just overseeds the tee tops.

"We get quite fast on our greens in the winter - 11.5 to 12 on the Stimpmeter," he says.

Kistler talked with others who don't overseed before making the decision to eliminate overseeding the fairways and rough.

"One guy in the area told me he hadn't overseeded fairways in 25 years," Kistler says.

Some members needed to be educated about the decision to reduce overseeding. In fact, the golf and green committee made the decision without a member vote. Influential members spread the word and explained the benefits of not overseeding fairways and rough. Controlling costs, being in a drought, and wear and tear on equipment all factored into the decision.

"We didn't advertise that we weren't going to overseed," Kistler says. "Some members couldn't tell. Our fairways still stripe nicely. We looked at the playability for golfers. There's no sticky rye, and the golfers are getting tight lies and better ball roll."

Since Kistler has reduced overseeding he has saved money on seed and mowing. He doesn't have to inconvenience golfers by keeping them off the fairways for seven to 10 days, like when the ryegrass was germinating, or when he watered the cool-season grass during the day.

When Tampa Palms - a private, 18-hole facility with a maintenance budget of about $700,000 - was being overseeded wall to wall,
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it cost about $25,000 a year. Now, overseeding just the tee tops costs about $4,000. Some of that savings went to the bottom line; some is spent on detail work, such as drainage and tree trimming. Some went to an increased herbicide budget for weed control.

Plus, nonoverseeded turf looks better than overseeded turf in the spring, Kistler says. "We had the best conditions around because we had no transition issues," he says. "It didn't look patchy and rough."

Many years of overseeding were detrimental to the playability of the course, Kistler says. ClubCorp, which manages Tampa Palms, wasn't a part of the decision to cut back on overseeding; but now, the company is more involved in such decisions at other facilities in its portfolio because it's looking for savings.

WEIGHING THE OPTIONS
Craig Weyandt, golf course superintendent at The Moorings Club in Vero Beach, Fla., manages TifEagle greens and 419/common bermudagrass everywhere else on the course. Weyandt, who has been at the private, 18-hole club for eight years, started reducing overseeding in 2003 when the club renovated its 25-year-old, push-up Tifdwarf/328 greens to USGA spec greens with TifEagle, so they wouldn't have to be overseeded.

"Transition was always an issue," Weyandt says. "And the old greens didn't provide the quality members wanted year round."

Weyandt overseeded the rest of the golf course every year since he has been there except for last winter, when the only area he overseeded was the driving range tee because he thought divot recovery would be a problem.

The green committee made the decision not to overseed, and the board accepted the decision, which was primarily a financial one. Environmental reasons didn't factor into the decision, Weyandt says.

"I waffled back and forth about the decision not to overseed and didn't give the members a definitive yes or no because it's not my course," he says. "I'm just the professional hired to maintain it. I did put together a pros and cons list about not overseeding for them. It was a roll of the dice at first."

"It turned out to be a good decision so much so that I don't see us overseeding in the near future," he adds. "It's pretty tough to justify overseeding here. In the past, it was done primarily for aesthetics. We used Poa trivialis, which striped nicely. The bermuda doesn't stripe as nicely as the Poa, but it stripes better than expected."

Comments from members were positive. "Although the turf isn't as lush or green, members should be able to get an extra five or 10 yards of ball roll," Weyandt says. "It should improve their game. That was our selling point anyway."

Weyandt is saving $22,000 from the seed cost, as well as fuel, labor and irrigation costs related to overseeding. Now labor is freed up to work on divot repair, trimming and edging.

"The course is more groomed this year than in any year past," he says.

The fuel savings is considerable. Weyandt was spending $200 to $300 on diesel fuel every...
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two weeks from November through March. Now he’s spending $60 a month. As far as mowing, it depends on the temperature. This past winter, Weyandt didn’t mow for three weeks.

Another benefit of not overseeding is better weed control. Weyandt can use a broader range of herbicides for broadleaf and grassy weeds.

Overseeding is a hassle in spring and fall, so in some ways, not overseeding is less stressful for Weyandt; but he still deals with stress, it’s just a different kind.

“T get nervous when a cold front comes though and think about how much cart traffic will damage the turf,” he says.

Because not overseeding went well, the committee agreed not to overseed for a while. But decisions such as these are influenced by what other clubs in the area are doing.

“A lot of superintendents talked before the fall,” Weyandt says. “And a couple high-end clubs in the area chose not to overseed, so others followed suit. Members of this club are members at two or three other clubs in the area. It has to be a conscious decision between the board and committee to evaluate each year.”

Yet, a benefit of overseeding can be increased membership.

“If I overseed and nobody else in the area does, the course will look better,” Weyandt says. “When you look at the cost to overseed ($20,000 to $30,000), which can help attract new members, it’s cheap.”

TRENDSETTING

Reducing overseeding is related to the general trend of reducing highly maintained areas.

“We’re reducing those areas 10 or 12 percent,” Farren says. “We’ll be mowing far less areas around the tees to help return the course to a more natural looking environment, which will be a visual impact.

“It’s a difficult sell to some,” Farren says. “But the decision might be easier if Pinehurst is used as an example.”

In central Florida, it’s not necessary to overseed, says Kistler, adding that there have been no severe winters the past several years, just a few frosts.

“Not overseeding is becoming the norm,” he says. “It’s more cost-driven than anything. But I don’t see myself changing our practices even when the economy gets better. Once you go down this road and get members accustomed to this, you stay on this path.”

John Walsh is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.
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A perfect fit

A new aerifier helps improve fairway conditions at Stockton Golf & Country Club. By Alissa Curtis

Stockton Golf & Country Club, an 18-hole private club located in Stockton, Calif., experiences difficulties properly aerating the course’s bermudagrass and perennial ryegrass playing surfaces because of the heavy clay soil.

Stockton’s superintendent Jim Alwine says until June the club was using a borrowed, 10-year-old Soil Reliever. The machine was unable to withstand the facility’s harsh soil conditions; the aerifier’s tines would remove an excessive amount of soil from the ground.

“With our old machine, I was only able to aerate a couple of holes before it would break down,” says Alwine, who has an $840,000 to $950,000 budget. “The tines would go into the ground and when they pulled out, they’d pull out a chunk of ground the size of a baseball. We were basically ruining the course.”

In addition, many members complained about the rough fairway conditions after aeration. Golfers’ balls would settle in large divots created by the aerifier, making the fairways difficult to play.

Alwine knew the club needed a new aerifier, but he struggled to find a machine that could remove the tightly compacted soil from the ground without tearing up the fairways.

After doing some research, Alwine became interested in the Wiedenmann Terra Spike XF. Impressed by the machine’s updated features, strong structure and crank dial that allows users to set the tines at their exact desired height, he asked Wiedenmann to bring the aerifier to Stockton for a test run. Alwine tested the aerifier against the club’s old machine, placing small flags in the holes made by both aerifiers to compare their performances.

In the spring, Stockton purchased a Terra Spike XF and received two sets of free tines for about $29,000. Since first using the aerifier in June, Alwine has seen the fairways conditions improve.

“Now, the fairways are so clean,” Alwine says. “They’re able to heal quickly, they’re very playable, no one complains and it’s much easier on the membership. Members who once complained are now applauding the process, saying, ’This is going to be so good for our fairways.’”

Before purchasing the Terra Spike XF, Stockton limited the number of times it aerified its fairways because of the damage the fairways endured. Now, the club is able to aerate the course twice a year without hesitation. Each June, Alwine will use hollow tines to remove plugs to open the turf for the summer golf season. He’ll hollow-tine aerify again each September, in addition to pulling cores and overseeding. Plus, the club will use solid tines on the fairways each Monday the course is closed.

“Aerifying is the most important cultural practice that takes place on greens, tees or fairways,” Alwine says. “I am very excited to finally give these fairways what they need.”

The quickness of the Wiedenmann aerifier allows the club to complete aeration in half the time it used to take, allowing the course to remain open during periods of aeration. Alwine also says he has seen a 50 percent decrease in the number of dry spots on the fairways now that water is able to penetrate into the ground.

Alissa Curtis is a freelance writer based in Columbus, Ohio.
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DOLLARS AND CENTS

Early-season treatments may delay the onset of dollar spot symptoms and save turf managers an application or two.

Diseases are arguably the most important pest problem golf course superintendents' face. Among those diseases, dollar spot is the most economically important disease of high amenity turfgrass. It's interesting to speak with golf course superintendents who started their careers in the 1970s because they always say, "It looks like dollar spot but it doesn't act like the dollar spot I remember." There are a number of reasons that statement is true.

Fertilization practices on golf courses in the 1970s were quite different than they are today. There was an arsenal of nasty fungicides that killed everything under the sun, not to mention we had no documentation of fungicide resistance. Now we have a completely different story. Golf course superintendents feel forced to limit fertilizer to maximize green speed. Heavy metal-based fungicides that were highly effective and highly toxic are no longer in use. The fungicides still available are very effective, but diseases have developed resistance to many common fungicides at an alarming rate. Fungicides, such as chlorothalonil, that are effective weapons against a fungicide-resistant dollar spot population are under intense scrutiny from governmental regulatory agencies. As icing on the cake, we're experiencing the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. With all of this, golf course superintendents are looking for alternatives to control dollar spot effectively and economically.

There are options for controlling dollar spot besides a calendar-based spray program. A superintendent could do intensive scouting to determine when very small infection centers of dollar spot begin to develop before initiating his first fungicide application. Some golf courses have invested in a sprayer with more capacity to limit fuel costs, while still maintaining their old dollar spot fungicide programs. There are probably other very creative ideas out there, but there is a fundamental problem with dollar spot management. We still do not have a good handle on the biology and epidemiology of dollar spot.

For example, turfgrass pathologists tackled a very tough disease in the late 1980s called take-all patch. Research focused on the biology and epidemiology of take-all patch, which I'm sure was criticized because the work did not immediately address control. However, from this work we now know that fungicide applications should be applied when soil temperatures are between 55 and 65°F. Work conducted by Dr. Kerns and Lane Tredway at North Carolina State University demonstrated that understanding the biology and epidemiology of pythium root dysfunction also led to successful control of the disease. This is a common element in the discipline of plant pathology - the more we know about the details of the disease, the more effective and precise control recommendations are.

Although dollar spot was described in the early 1900s, turfgrass pathologists focused their attentions on diseases that were more...
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Fact is, this used to be an easy answer. There were only a few choices in irrigation system controllers, and more or less they performed roughly the same. Well, that has changed quite a bit. The demand for increased water conservation, more flexibility, and better efficiency has led to dramatic breakthrough technologies, and many new options. So what used to be a routine decision isn't. (And, of course, irrigation controller technology isn't something most of us stay as up-to-date on as say who's at the top of the leaderboard at a PGA TOUR event, or who was just voted off the island last night.)

So where to go from here? That's the million-dollar question. Literally — the right controller system can have that much of an effect. First off, don't just consider the brand. Instead, look at capabilities too. If you do, you'll discover your choice is simpler than you might think. Because there are significant differences. For instance, there's a control system that can offer much greater precision (to the second instead of the minute) in setting rotor run times. Why is this important? Because shaving seconds of program run time can save hundreds of thousands of gallons of water over a year. Sometimes as much as 40% in total power and water costs. This same system also allows any controller to act as a central control for all the rest. Why does this matter? It's a huge time saver if you operate without a central, or during a renovation. Instead of having to visit each and every standalone controller on the course, you can just go to one. (Or simply hook one up to a maintenance radio and control them all. Or even better, connect one to the internet with a modem, and manage the whole irrigation system from anywhere you can access the internet, like the clubhouse—or perhaps the couch in front of your TV at home.) Then, there's the question of how easy the controller is to upgrade in the future—as more and more sensor and web-based technology comes online. Here again, the answer is simpler than you might expect. Only one control system is totally software-based. Which means upgrading is just a matter of connecting the controller to a laptop and taking only a few minutes to upload the latest software. What is this advanced system? It's the John Deere Aurora Control Series. Sure it might not be the first name you consider in irrigation, but when you look at everything it offers, it might be just the right one to fill the position. Like to learn more? Call your local John Deere Golf distributor or visit www.JohnDeere.com/Aurora.
Research

prevalent and more difficult to control. Thus, the basic research focusing on dollar spot never happened. However, current turfgrass pathologists from around the country have formed a cooperative to pick apart all the nitty-gritty details surrounding dollar spot. This group is focusing on giving the causal agent (Sclerotinia homoeocarpa) the correct name, the mechanisms that allow the fungus to attack turfgrasses, management and mechanisms of fungicide resistance and of course dollar spot epidemiology and management.

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, in collaboration with Damon Smith, Ph.d., at Oklahoma State University, we have initiated projects to investigate novel control methods and the epidemiology of dollar spot. With respect to novel control methods, we have examined how a single early-season fungicide application can significantly delay the onset of dollar spot symptoms. The majority of the article will focus on that research. However, we also have started a major effort to understand dollar spot epidemiology and this article will touch briefly on our efforts in dollar spot epidemiology.

In Wisconsin, dollar spot fungicide programs traditionally start around June 1 and continue every 14 to 21 days until October 1. Typically, seven to 10 fungicide applications are made each year to control dollar spot, which includes greens, tees and fairways. With the recent economic downturn, many golf course superintendents have been searching for more economical means of controlling dollar spot on their fairways, which usually make up the largest acreage of highly maintained turf on the course. A possibility is using an early-season dollar spot program.

What is an early-season dollar spot program? Essentially a fungicide is applied well before the onset of dollar spot symptoms, in Wisconsin that would usually be in early May. The theory behind the program is the initial inoculum level of the dollar spot fungus is reduced before the disease can really start to infect, therefore development of the symptoms are delayed.

EARLY-SEASON EXPERIMENT

The study was conducted at Milwaukee Country Club in River Hills, Wls., on a mature Penncross creeping bentgrass practice fairway. Plots measured 3 feet by 5 feet and were arranged in a randomized complete block design with four replications. All treatments were applied with a backpack CO2-pressurized boom sprayer at 40 psi. The boom was equipped with two XR Teejet 8004 VS nozzles. All fungicides were agitated by shaking and were applied in the equivalent of 2 gallons of water per 1,000 square feet.

Early-season treatments included Chipco 26GT, Bayleton, Tartan (Bayer Crop Science), Emerald, Curalan EG (BASF), Banner Maxx, Daconil Ultrex (Syngenta Crop Protection) and 3336 Plus (Cleary Chemical Corp.). These treatments were applied on May 3, 2006, and May 2, 2007, which corresponds to 140 growing degree-days or when soil temperatures reach 55 to 60 F. For specific rates, consult Figure 2 (on page 32).

A non-treated control was included to determine when dollar spot symptoms initially develop and a conventional dollar spot
fungicide program was included in 2007 as a positive control. The conventional program consisted of an application of a tank mixture of Banner Maxx (0.5 ounces per 1,000 square feet) and Daconil Ultrex (1.8 ounces per 1,000 square feet) applied every 21 days starting on June 1 of each year. The experimental area did not receive fertility or other pesticide inputs except for one application of PCNB combined with chlorothalonil in late November in 2006 and 2007 for preventive control of snow molds.

Disease severity (0 to 100 percent) was visually estimated for each treatment by the golf course superintendent at weekly intervals until early August when all early-season treatments no longer provided adequate control (greater than 10 percent diseased turfgrass). Data from 2006 and 2007 were similar, therefore only data from 2007 is presented in this article.

RESULTS
All of the early-season treatments delayed the onset of dollar spot symptoms compared to the untreated control. Dollar spot symptoms initially appeared in the non-treated controls on June 8 (Figure 1). In contrast, dollar spot symptoms did not begin to develop in many of the early-season treatments until July 6 (Figure 1). These results indicate that early-season applications do limit the amount of initial inoculum or adversely affect inoculum efficiency enough to delay the onset of disease symptoms.

A caveat of the experiment is a single early-season application did not provide season-long control. However, a golf course superintendent could save at least one application a season by enacting an early-season dollar spot program.

Some of the early-season treatments were more effective than others. Banner Maxx and Bayleton slowed dollar spot progression more than all of the other early-season applications (Figure 2). Emerald, Chipco 26GT and Tartan did significantly slow dollar spot progress when compared to the non-treated control, but did have disease develop earlier than in plots treated with Banner Maxx and Bayleton (Figure 1).

CONCLUSIONS
Early-season fungicide treatments can delay the onset of dollar spot in the summer months by up to 30 days. Utilizing an early-season application can save at least one application if the manager is on a 21-day interval or possibly two applications if the grower is on a 14-day interval. No single early-season fungicide application provided acceptable levels of control throughout the growing season. Banner Maxx and Bayleton provided the longest suppression of dollar spot symptoms. These results are especially promising, since the timing for early-season applications are similar to timings for preventive fairy ring and take-all patch applications. Many questions still remain regarding early-season applications. For example, are applications more effective when applied during the fall and/or spring, can intervals be extended after an early-season application and how does watering in early-season application affect efficacy?
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Research

FUTURE DIRECTIONS WITH DOLLAR SPOT
Although our early-season applications did not totally prevent dollar spot symptoms during the summer, we are not giving up on this application timing. Currently, we’re focusing on expanded early-season dollar spot programs. Basically, we make a single early-season application just like in the aforementioned study, but now we’re making follow-up applications to see if we can use less active ingredient or extend application intervals and achieve dollar spot control that’s comparable to the conventional program. We also have added an economic component to this project. Four golf courses, consisting of a municipal course, high-end public, mid-level private and an exclusive private course, have given access to their entire budgets. From this data we will calculate the cost savings that occurs when an early-season dollar spot program is used.

As mentioned previously, we’re collaborating with Oklahoma State University to examine the environmental parameters that are responsible for dollar spot development in the field and in controlled growth chamber conditions. Although our results are preliminary, they are very promising. We have determined that the minimum temperature for dollar spot development is 57 F. This threshold was determined through growth chamber assays where we grew the dollar spot fungus on soil or sand with grass debris on the soil surface. We imposed a variety of temperature treatments and found that the dollar spot fungus does not grow well when temperatures are above 95 F and below 57 F. This work is ongoing and expanding to examine the effects of temperature on pathogenicity of the dollar spot fungus.

In field experiments, we have determined that dollar spot symptoms develop exponentially when five-day average air temperatures are above 57 F and when five-day average relative humidity values are above 70 percent. We established plots in Oklahoma and Wisconsin with weather stations immediately next to the plots. The weather stations were calibrated to collect soil temperature, air temperature, relative humidity, wind speed, solar radiation and soil moisture every hour. Once dollar spot infection centers started to develop they were counted daily and painted to ensure that we did not count the same infection centers. Using regression analysis, we constructed a model that could potentially predict dollar spot development.

Dr. Smith initiated this work last year in Oklahoma and has had excellent success with the model predicting dollar spot epidemics. We are using his model to time fungicide applications on one of our plots in Wisconsin and so far it has been successful. Again, these results are preliminary and will require two field seasons before we can make definitive conclusions about the success of the model. Stay tuned.

Jim Kerns, Ph.d., and Paul Koch are with the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Department of Plant Pathology and Damon Smith, Ph.d., is with the Oklahoma State University Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology.

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Living on the edge

An increase in dollar spot pressure created some challenges at Statesville (N.C.) Country Club. BY MARISA PALMIERI

Statesville (N.C.) Country Club's superintendent Fenn Clarke has been dealing with dollar spot on bentgrass greens for the last year. Above average rainfall and cooler temperatures are partly to blame. The area received 40 inches of rain from January to May - an amount equivalent to the typical annual rainfall.

Clarke, who's been at the 18-hole, private club for 17 years, has never had much trouble controlling dollar spot in the past, but over the last year it's been tough and he worries about resistance.

Starting last year, he was spraying in two- to three-week intervals, but only saw 10 days of control before dollar spot would reappear.

"Most fungicide labels say the control lasts 14 to 28 days depending on the rate," he says.

The 18th green was in horrible condition, Clarke says. That resulted in the need for frequent monitoring, increased fungicide use and some concern by the membership.

After winter came and the bentgrass never grew vigorously enough to fill in the dollar spot damage, Clarke planned to begin applying fungicides preventively early in the spring.

Beginning in March, Clarke sprayed propiconazole.

"It's a powerful fungicide - superintendents are sometimes hesitant to spray it in the middle of the summer," he says. "But I was told it's what I need to control dollar spot. We sprayed the max rate on the label, and in less than 10 days I had active dollar spot again."

"Then I started getting worried about resistance," he says.

After researching various chemicals and trying a few more fungicides, Clarke discovered Tourney (metconazole) and received a free sample of about $900 worth of product, or about an application and a half.

"We applied it and immediately stopped the dollar spot," he says. "At 10 days I still had good control. To be honest, I didn't truly test the Tourney because I never even gave the dollar spot a chance to come back."

After the Tourney, Clarke began a rotation including chlorothalonil and Curalan (vinclozolin).

"I'm spending more because I've had to go on a 10- to 14-day schedule when I planned to go on a 14- to 21-day schedule," he says. "I budgeted $30,000, but I'm probably going to spend close to $40,000."

The biggest relief of all for Clarke was discovering that resistance isn't his problem.

"I found out that my dollar spot isn't resistant, it's just that once I got it, it was hard to eradicate so I had to increase my program." GCI

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SPONGE BOB WEED KILLER

Frank Dobie, superintendent/general manager, conceived this idea at The Sharon Golf Club in Sharon Center, Ohio. Gary Bogdanski, equipment manager, modified kitchen tongs to selectively apply herbicides to kill unwanted weeds and weedgrasses in ground cover landscape beds without touching the desirable plants. Bogdanski recommends using 18-inch long kitchen tongs (or as long as possible). First, flatten each end. Then glue a 3-inch by 3-inch by 1-inch square sponge to a 3-inch by 3-inch by 1/8-inch hard rubber square and attach it to the flattened tong ends by drilling holes on each tong end and using 1/8-inch diameter stainless steel bolts and wing nuts. Spray the sponge with glyphosate herbicide or broadleaf herbicide until the sponge fully expands. Squeeze off any excess liquid so the sponges do not drip. Close the tongs on the weedgrass or weed and pull upwards. The materials cost less than $25 and the labor time is approximately 30 minutes.

TOP UP

The Saadiyat Beach Golf Club is being built in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE), by MultiGolf Middle East, a Portugal-based full-service contractor where Benjamin Silva, president, designed the protective cover for the John Deere 1200A Bunker Rake. The framework is made of 1/2-inch diameter smooth steel rods that are bent and shaped after being heating with an acetylene torch. Quarter-inch diameter smooth steel rods are welded to the main frame for added support and to help keep the fabrics taut. The framework is attached to the front and rear with 1/4-inch thick flat steel brackets that are welded to both ends of the rods, which are then bolted to the bunker rake with 3/8-inch diameter bolts, lockwashers and nuts. The translucent green fabric is manufactured by Tildenet and then a non-translucent geotextile liner is placed underneath the canopy to keep the direct sunlight and desert heat off of the operator. Black zip strips hold the fabrics, both of which are removable, in place. The fabrics and zip strips cost about $50; the framework and metal brackets cost about $25 and it took about two and half hours labor to build.
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BEING YOUR OWN BOSS

Over the course of my three decades in this business, plenty of things have changed.

First, the technology has obviously evolved. Second, the business has definitely grown – probably too much. Third – and many of you might not believe this – recognition of what you do has improved dramatically.

The number of articles about superintendents (or greenkeepers or conditioning or the environment or whatever) written by local papers or stories done by TV stations has jumped. I’m not sure GCSAA or anyone else is doing the metrics, but my gut tells me that many more golfers actually understand who you are and what you do.

I’m guessing it’s getting easier to introduce yourself to a stranger at a conference or someplace and they’ll eventually – and usually sheepishly – ask: “So, Jonesy, I know you write these columns that piss people off, but just what in the hell else is it that you do anyway?” Ack!

So, for the record, I’m a consultant. What does that mean? If you look in the “Modern Business Dictionary” under the word “consultant,” there’s a picture of me wearing a pair of ratty gym shorts and a Kansas basketball T-shirt, barefoot, Marlboro hanging from my mouth and pounding away on my outdated, beat-up laptop in my “home office” in the garage. Not a pretty picture, huh?

The real definition of a consultant is someone who learned a lot of stuff from one or more serious jobs, left/get fired and decided to peddle knowledge or connections for a living instead of actually working. That’s pretty much me.

Of course, I also do a lot of speeches and seminars where I get to see you guys and hear what’s on your mind. That’s just about my favorite thing in the world, because you always teach me more than I teach you.

So, I have clients ranging from small non-profit associations to humongous companies. I fill in the blanks in their industry knowledge or marketing capabilities. It’s interesting, it’s different and it’s a chance to be my own boss.

I run into superintendents all the time who tell me how much they envy the fact that I do my own thing. They adore the notion of not having a GM, a green chairman or an owner giving them bad direction, distracting them from their priorities or otherwise messing with their heads. I’ll bet you’re no different. “Hey,” you probably think every once in a while, “I could bag this job, go out on my own and be a consultant!”

Before that idea worms its way to far into your head, consider the positives and the negatives of working for yourself:

**Positive:** It’s terrific not having anyone looking over your shoulder. Your choices are your own and you can name your own schedule for the most part.

**Negative:** There’s no one to blame when you screw up royally.

**Positive:** You can agressively build your own business.

**Negative:** You have to do that while also keeping the clients you already have... and you will occasionally lose one, particularly in an economy like this one.

**Positive:** You get to work with a diverse set of clients - many of whom are facing challenging circumstances - and see how they function from the inside out.

**Negative:** As Ron White, one of my favorite comedians, says, “You can’t fix stupid.”

**Positive:** You get to keep what you earn.

**Negative:** Except the enormous pile of greenbacks Uncle Sam wants every three months.

**Positive:** You get to work in a home office and wear your pajamas and slippers all day.

**Negative:** There’s a lot to be said for showering before noon, shaving daily and actually interacting face-to-face with the occasional human besides the UPS guy.

**Positive:** You are recognized and paid for being an expert.

**Negative:** You are regularly forced to humbly admit you don’t know everything.

**Positive:** More time with your family and time for what you love.

**Negative:** No downside to that.

As I write this, I’m a few minutes late to tie on my old football cleats and head out to coach a bunch of fifth- and sixth-graders who know me only as Coach Jones. I started doing it years ago when my sons (now 17 and 13) were in the program and I stuck with it. Even though my kids are now in high school and middle school (and still both playing ball), I’ve stuck with the little league coaching. Why? Because I love being part of those kids’ lives... and because I can.

The reality of being your own boss is a mixed bag at best. But, if it’s feasible and you accept the realities, the rewards are tremendous. That said, it’s still nearly impossible to explain what you do at a cocktail party. Oh well... 601
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