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The Green Industry May Be Greener . . .
Disenchanted superintendents may want to consider a career in lawn care.
By Phil Fogarty

He's the Real Deal
You know what you get with Hazeltine National superintendent Jim Nicol.
By Larry Aylward

Seeds of Struggle
Lessons learned from problems seeding the back nine smoothed the way for a flawless front nine seeding at Firestone CC's West Course.
By Frank H. Andorka Jr.
In a Word, Resourceful
Superintendents put spreaders to many uses.
By Peter Blais

Cover Story
By Frank H. Andorka Jr.
They're older, but so what? Turning 50 doesn't mean superintendents have to turn the page on their golf course maintenance careers.

About the cover
Art Director Lisa Lehman designed the innovative "Over the Hill" concept.

Getting It Straight
We had a case of mistaken identity in the July issue, and it's time to set the record straight. Jennifer Mongeluzo, an intern at the Sunningdale CC who was profiled in a story, is from New York. In the cover story on "How the Other Half Lives," Don Brown is certified superintendent of White Manor CC. In the Local Heroes ad, it should have said Gary Carls is from Sunnyvale GC in Sunnyvale, Calif.

In the June issue, the caption on page 64 of the "Process Makes Perfect" article should have read, "The fifth hole before the restoration. MacKenzie's original sketch for the green was available, making it one of the better-documented greens on the course."

Also in June, the phone number for the Syngenta Green Partners program item in Company Line should have read 800-334-9481, ext. 6379.
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You Forgot About Us

I must compliment you on your article "Possibilities in the Palm of your Hand" (March).

The article was quite factual and timely. However, I am disappointed my company, GroundLinkx, was not contacted for contribution to your article. If you type "golf course maintenance gis" into the major Internet search engines, we are No. 8 in Google, No. 3 in Alta Vista and Nos. 5, 7 and 8 in Yahoo. In addition, GroundLinkx is the GIS program that is used by superintendent Kevin West at Olympia Fields (Ill.) CC.

David L. Mikesh, President
GroundLinkx LLC
Littleton, Colo.

Need for Green Our Own Fault

Superintendents have a lot of people to blame about the perception that completely green turf is better than having some brown, but superintendents are also to blame (Pin High, May). For example, how many of us enjoy seeing things turn brown in the summer? Part of it is that many of us have been trained to provide perfect conditions all the time. It also stems from the fact that many of us are perfectionists and cannot tolerate off-color turf ourselves.

In order for things to change, a movement needs to begin somewhere so that totally green turf is not the norm, and a little brown can be acceptable to golfers.

Jeff Johnson, Superintendent
The Minikahda Club
Minneapolis

Etchells Is a Gem

I really enjoyed the article on Ed Etchells (Jack's Right-Hand Agronomic Man," May). I had the pleasure of working with Ed on a Nicklaus project in Monroe, N.Y., a few years ago and I learned a lot from him. Etchells is a great source of knowledge and experience, and he's more than willing to share all he knows.

Ed Walsh, CGCS
The Golf Club at Wending Creek Farm
Couadersport, Pa.

Battle Over Organics Continues

In reference to your organics article ("Do They or Don't They?", May), we just submitted a manuscript to Crop Science in which we found that some organic products actually increased dollar spot. We also evaluated the potential for biostimulants to reduce disease, and none of them were better than low amounts of nitrogen applied every two weeks.

Jack Fry
Professor, Division of Horticulture
Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kan.

Feel like going postal? We want to hear from you. You can e-mail your letters to Frank Andorka at fandorka@advanstar.com, fax to 440-891-2675 or send them via snail-mail to: 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130. Make sure to include your name and phone number for verification. Letters may be edited for length or relevance.
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This Turf Disease Can Affect You

By Pat Jones

Once golfers become infected with the Miller Virus (or a related malady called the “I-Just-Played-Somewhere-Else-And-This-Place-Looks-Like-A-Goat-Track-By-Comparison” Virus), superintendents are exposed to unrealistic expectations and wacky amateur agronomic theories. (“We should put out food to attract more geese. The droppings are great fertilizer, and it’s free!”)

Immune systems already weakened by the usual summertime mix of heavy play, hot temperatures, labor problems, disease and self-induced pressure are easy prey for the virus. Many superintendents develop full-blown CSGS by the end of June.

Treatment — Although there is no known cure for CSGS (except for chucking the whole thing and taking a cushy sales job), there are several effective treatments:

• Get a daily kiss on your nose from your spouse, child or other loved one to remind you of your real priorities in life.

• Attend a summertime chapter meeting for commiseration with colleagues. (Note: CSGS sufferers should never host meetings ... their heads will literally explode from the stress.)

• Practice primal scream therapy in the privacy of your home (if you remember where it is).

• Sit down for an occasional soothing chat with your pal Bud Weiser or his cousin from Scotland, Glen Fiddich.

• Learn to smile and nod patiently while Joe Golfer tells you a better way to do your job — then stroll to the parking lot to enjoy the satisfying hiss of the air accidentally being let out of the tires on his new BMW.

If all other treatments fail, try repeating the following mantra several hundred times daily: “I can make it through Labor Day, I can make it through Labor Day, I can make it...”

Pat Jones can be reached at 440-891-3126 or pjones@advanstar.com.
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It's been five months since he retired, but Gordon "Gordie" Crockett can't sleep in. He still gets up at five — the same time he rose nearly every day for more than 40 years. "I don't know," Crockett replies, when asked why he doesn't cut himself some slack and sleep until seven or eight. "I just can't do it yet."

Crockett called it a day for good in early March after a 41-year-career, including 39 years as superintendent, at Purple Sage and Fairview Municipal golf courses in Caldwell, Idaho, a small town located about 30 miles from Boise. Needless to say, his body clock is set to rise with the roosters.

Don't think for a minute, however, that you can take the man out of the superintendent, but you can't take the superintendent out of the man. Crockett may not be catching up on years of lost sleep, but he's catching plenty of rainbow trout. Translation: He's digging retirement.

"I'm lovin' it," Crockett says convincingly in his friendly twang. "I've been busy. I'm doin' a lot of fishin' and playin' a lot of golf." More importantly, he's not doing a lot of dwelling on what it's like not to be a superintendent anymore.

"It was time to do something else," Crockett says. "It's nice to get up and not have to worry about the greens and the fairways."

There are things to ponder — and learn — from Crockett's lengthy career. First, it's all right to work at the same course for four decades and not have to apologize for it. Too many superintendents these days feel like they have to move around the country every five years to move up in their careers. Crockett should be proud of working at the same place for that long.

"I'm kind of surprised myself," the humble Crockett says of his longevity. "I don't know. I guess I was just dumb enough to stay here."

He laughs at his comment. Crockett is proud to have spent so many years at Purple Sage and Fairview. He loved his job. Like many of his peers, golf course maintenance was his passion.

And he loves Caldwell, Idaho, the only town he's known. Crockett's like the character from the John Mellencamp song, "Small Town."

I was born in a small town;
And I live in a small town;
Prohib' die in a small town;
Oh, those small communities.

You'd think that after 41 years, Crockett would have a hard time letting go of his job — but he doesn't even miss it. Heck, it doesn't even sound like Crockett had to ease into retirement. "It was kinda nice to get up that first morning and think, 'Man, I don't have to do a darn thing today,'" he says.

That's the way it should be when the time comes — for all of us.

Perhaps Crockett's legacy is his son, T.J., who became a superintendent because he wanted to be like his dad. T.J., the superintendent of Meridian GC near Boise, said he's happy his dad decided to hang up his work boots.

But T.J. will miss his father. After all, Gordie wasn't just his dad; he was his mentor and ally. "We relied on each other," T.J. says.

T.J. will miss moments he may have taken for granted — like when he'd pick up the phone and call Gordie at his course to talk turf maintenance. "I'd ask him, 'What are you doing to get rid of the green moss or the black algae?'" T.J. says.

There's a hint of sadness in his voice when T.J. realizes there will be no more dialing up his dad for advice.

"Oh, he can still call me on the phone to talk," Gordie says, when told of T.J.'s sentiment. "If I'm home."

Gordie cackles. Chances are he won't be home. He'll be casting his line into the lake or studying his line to the hole on the green.

"I'm just enjoyin' doin' nothin'," he declares.

After more than 40 years in the business, he deserves to enjoy "doin' nothin'".

Golfdom Editor Larry Aylward can be reached at 440-891-2770 or laylward@advanstar.com.