Tough Crowd
Budgets aren't rising at the same level as golfers' great expectations for outstanding turf. What are superintendents to do?
By Anthony Pioppi

Money 'Talks'
It's vital for superintendents to communicate effectively as they negotiate their budgets.
By Larry Aylward

Gaining Ground
Three simple precepts can keep superintendents on track when creating maintenance budgets for areas outside the golf course.
By Frank. H. Andorka Jr.

'Bread' and Water
An irrigation upgrade could save your course money in the long run.
By Curt Harler
This month, Golfdom's practical research digest for turf managers discusses snow mold solutions in the Northwest and more. See pages 63-80.

**Sizzling**
If you're planning your 2005 budget, you might be able to use these products. Check them out starting on page 95.

**cover story**
Are you caught up in the numbers game? Golfdom hopes to offer you some financial direction in its second-annual Budget Guide.

**About the cover**
Lisa Lehman and Kim Traum came up with this image to help hammer home our cover theme.

**Foreign Aid**
They came from distant lands to volunteer on Shinnecock's golf course maintenance crew for the U.S. Open. They left with intimate memories.
By Larry Aylward

**Drainage Done Right**
New technology allows superintendents to do system renovations without disrupting play.
By Frank H. Andorka Jr.

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**TurfGrass Trends**
This month, Golfdom's practical research digest for turf managers discusses snow mold solutions in the Northwest and more. See pages 63-80.
Can Talk About Reel Technology Until He’s Blue In The Face.

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Guoping Yang, Ph.D.
Research & Development
Flagstick

A FEW WORDS FROM THE PUBLISHER

I heard another one of those rotten “superintendent gets fired unfairly” stories the other day during a visit to a Northern Ohio GCSCA chapter meeting. The facts may appall you, but you certainly won’t be surprised by them.

A veteran superintendent was at the same Cleveland-area club for 30 years. He was adored by his members and respected by his local colleagues. But dues and revenues at his place started to slip, and the remaining members decided to sell to another club owner in the area.

The sale of the club was essentially contingent on keeping the superintendent and a few other key employees. The superintendent, who planned to retire within a few years, thought it was a decent deal.

You probably won’t be shocked to learn that the new owner quickly found a reason to terminate the veteran superintendent’s employment. It was claimed that some tree trimming done by a worker was “botched” while the superintendent was on vacation. Hmmmm ... now there’s a great reason to pink-slip someone who’s been doing a great job in the same position for three decades.

At any rate, the thing has now turned into a tangled mess of allegations, suits and enough animosity to keep the lawyers busy for a couple of years. I honestly hope the superintendent wins or gets a decent settlement. Employers, particularly private club operators, need to know there are repercussions for unfair terminations.

All that said, it was a comment made by another veteran after hearing this all-too-common tale of woe that spurred me to start banging away at the keyboard.

A Refined Plan For a Raw Deal

BY PAT JONES

IT’S CALLED A SEVERANCE PACKAGE, AND YOU SHOULD CONSIDER IT

should consider asking for it as a condition of employment. In fact, it’s not a bad idea to consider for anyone starting a big, new job. That’s actually the best time to do it — when everything’s fresh and the nasty trail of problems that lead to a parting of the ways hasn’t started yet.

It’s almost like a prenuptial agreement for your next job. If you can’t set it up at the outset, then try for it after three to five years of successful employment. There’s really never a bad time to anticipate the worst.

In a nutshell, here’s what you should consider:

• Set up an understanding about what you and your employer will do if you’re employment ends for any reason. Have it reviewed by your lawyer and club’s lawyer.
• Spell out clearly how much compensation you’ll get if you’re terminated. One month of salary per each year worked is a good starting point.
• Nail down extras and benefits, such as health and life coverage, and a lump-sum 401(k) contribution.
• Agree that the termination will be announced in positive terms. Avoid the famed “pursuing other opportunities” or “we decided to go a different direction” clichés.
• If you have a bonus structure or other performance-based compensation, agree how that will be prorated or paid depending on how far into the performance period you’ve worked.

Let’s face it: Bad things happen to good superintendents. It’s a volatile and unpredictable business and, like the Cleveland-area veteran, you too could find yourself on the wrong end of a raw deal.

Plan for it, and you’ll be better the next time you leave a job.

Jones, publisher of Golfdom, can be reached at 440-891-3126 or pjones@advanstar.com
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Beechtree Golf Club, Aberdeen, Maryland ~ Hole #2, Par 3
Back at work after a week of vacation, Mark Michaud sounded refreshed and re-energized while speaking on the phone. Lord knows Michaud, the superintendent of Shinnecock Hills Golf Club, needed some time to chill. After all, people were still talking about what happened at the U.S. Open when Michaud left for vacation — nearly a month after the controversial tournament ended. In fact, they’re still talking about it.

Michaud, who’s divorced, traveled to his hometown of Rochester, N.Y., to spend time with his two sons, Mark and Jordan.

“We had a great time,” Michaud said. “They loved the Open. They said, ‘Dad, you made the ball roll really far.’ ”

Michaud laughed his distinctive raspy cackle after repeating what his sons had said. Yes, the golf balls were brakeless at Shinnecock. Michaud’s crew rolled and cut the greens to the point that putting on them was akin to driving on the Ohio Turnpike in February after a few inches of wet snow.

Many players moaned and groaned about the conditions. Hence, all of the hoopla surrounding the lickety-split greens ended up overshadowing the tournament — which was a shame.

“I think they’re ruining the game,” said golfer Jerry Kelly, blasting the USGA after the tournament.

Indeed, Shinnecock’s greens (and fairways) were as stony and inflexible as some of the nuns that taught me in grade school 30 years ago. The critics who said the greens had a negative impact on the tournament had a point. But it could also be argued that the people who said, “Well, that’s the U.S. Open for you,” had a point, too.

In light of all the problems facing professional sports today, however, the USGA’s obsession to stage the most grueling golf tournament of the year may be misguided — but it’s not a crime.

Nobody was injured at the U.S. Open, except Tiger Woods’ ego. Nobody was infringed upon. All of the players who made the cut walked away with pretty pennies in their pockets.

Professional sports has far-worse troubles than ridiculously fast greens at the U.S. Open.