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Reckless Op?
The push to increase green speed hasn't slowed down, which could mean there's an accident waiting to happen.
By Thomas Skernivitz

Prevent Defense
The best way to control dollar spot on greens is to not let it surface in the first place. technical experts say.
By Larry Aylward

Poa Shakedown
Clemson professor Bert McCarty offers 10 tips on how to disarm annual bluegrass.
By Thomas Skernivitz

Accessory City
More superintendents seek sleek add-ons for greens mowers to improve cutting and overall performance.
By Pete Blais

Real-Life Solutions
A Healthy Injection for the Greens — and the ...
Machine uses a high-speed, water-based system that's dramatically changing the way superintendents handle routine aeration.
By Shane Sharp
cover story

This month Golfdom offers its annual guide on green maintenance. Our report hits on everything from the problems of green speed to dealing with Poa annua.

About the cover
Check out this cool view from the top of a lush-looking green and a golf hole. Art direction by Carrie Parkhill. (Flag by Image100, putting green image by Mike Kleinme.)

Sweet Home Chicago
Superintendent Jon Jennings thanks the golf course gods for guiding him to this golden oldie of a club.
By Larry Aylward

Black Mesa
Developers, architect and an Indian tribe work together to produce an award-winning golf experience in New Mexico for a mere $3.5 million.
By Bruce Allar

TurfGrass Trends
This month Golfdom's practical research digest for turf managers discusses annual perennial ryegrasses used in overseeding, among other topics. See pages 65-81.
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We’ve Got Mail

It’s 5 a.m. Where Is Your Golf Pro?

I was quite amused by the article "What’s in Store (and What’s Not in Store) 10 Years Down the Road" by Craig F. Zellers (January, page 21).

However, there was one comment I found to be untrue and a perfect example as to one of the problems that has always faced the golf industry. Zellers states that one of the things you won’t see is "a golf pro showing up at 5:30 a.m. to go out with the crew to see what changing a cup is all about."

First of all, I am a golf pro. And I have changed cups, but it was not at 5:30 a.m.; it was 5 a.m. — so I could return to the shop to greet the guests in our tournament and work all day making rulings, doing scores, loading golf cars, shaking hands, putting ice out, managing the range, etc., etc., etc. And on the same day I left at 10 p.m. after doing scoring and Pairings for the next day. Meanwhile, the superintendent was home by 2:30 p.m. because he had nothing to do while the tournament was going on. And I was again there at 5 a.m. to do it all over again. That was not the first time I changed cups, nor will it be the last.

The statement by Zeller is a prime example of Golf Pro vs. Superintendent, and a publication such as Golfdom should strive to have parties both work together to provide the best product for the golfer. Otherwise, how about, "A superintendent who will not have an excuse when the club chair wants an answer about anything that is wrong."

Or, "A sales rep who doesn’t promise the world but delivers a small town in West Virginia." Mike Fields
Director of Golf, PGA Pro
Kearney Hill Golf Links, Lexington, Ky.

Does Craig Zellers think that golf professionals don’t read Golfdom? Or that PGA professionals don’t read Golfdom? And if he does think that we read the magazine, why would he suggest such a preposterous thing like, “A golf pro would not be likely to show up at 5:30 and go out with the grounds crew to change cups.”

I cannot say that I get up at 5 in the morning to go out with the crew at my club, but I do go out on the golf course with them as often as possible, as does our director of golf, to learn some of the many things that they have to teach about agronomy (probably didn’t think I knew that word), horticulture and overall golf course maintenance. We, the PGA Professionals, respect our superintendents and their crews, to the highest degree. I’m not sure what Zellers was suggesting, but I took exception to the fact that he thinks we don’t care. Anytime my superintendent invites me on the golf course, I jump at the chance to learn.

Tony J. Gill, Head Golf Professional
The Quarry At La Quinta (Calif.)

Big Brother = Bigger Misconception

Maybe I’m just accustomed to upbeat articles in the opening pages of Golfdom that promote the high professional standards and work ethic of superintendents, but I must take issue with your Pin High column (“Welcome to the Show — and 1984,” January, page 10). The tone of your commentary is that for years superintendents have been sneaking around during conferences and not attending the trade show and educational sessions. This is just not true. The numbers of superintendents walking the show floor and sitting in educational sessions are the facts.

In the past I had a club president attend the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America show several times as an exhibitor. He came away impressed with the hard work and attention superintendents showed during the show. He attended numerous other trade shows through the years and commented that nothing compared.

Conversely, boys will be boys and some superintendents and maybe even an owner or two may cut a class to take in what in the area has to offer, be it golf or gators. But they will be in a vast minority. Many will head down a couple of days early or hang around a day or two after for a little time away from the frozen tundra. Isn’t that why the Golf Industry Show (GIS) has fallen into a rotation of attractive weather sites and won’t be held in Cleveland?

Golf course owners (even before the National Golf Course Owners Association, club officials and maybe even a few Club Managers Association of America members have been attending the superintendents’ show for years. Whether they attend the GIS or not, they need not be concerned with what’s going on as your commentary may lead them to believe.

Rod Johnson, Certified Superintendent
Pine Hills Country Club
Sheboygan, Wis.

Editor’s response: Hey Rod, I didn’t mean to insinuate that ALL superintendents are sneaking around. Believe me, I know they’re walking the floors and attending educational sessions. My point in the column had more to do with proper communication between superintendents and owners than anything. But I do have a bone to pick with you. Why couldn’t Cleveland host the Golf Industry Show?

It’s beautiful here in February. Just bring your parka.

Banned the Book?

The article "The Book on Bunkers" by Jon Scott (November 2004, page 72) is significantly contrary to the article "Bunkers: Hazards or Havens," by Robert Vavrek, in the March 2004 USGA Green Section Record.

Personally, I prefer the USGA approach. I really prefer it. The PGA article says four things that bothered me enough to take this time:

• “It could be argued that bunker maintenance should be as important as greens.” If the goal is to make golf even more expensive, that’s a good idea.

• "Players who hit their ball in bunkers should have a reasonable opportunity to make par." Yikes. Did he not watch the PGA Championship from Whistling Straits or the U.S. Open at Shinnecock? A reasonable chance for par from ANY and ALL bunkers? I’m hiding this article.

• "If bunkers are supposed to be more of a penalty to an errant shot, why not use water?" Maybe it’s tough to put water on the side of a hill is one "why not."

• He says that the "reason bunkers fail to perform (whatever perform means) is because of poor maintenance." Where are my nitroglycerin pills?

How about in the name of fair play, you print the Vavrek article as a rebuttal? I circulated it to my membership, and it was well-received.

Walt Goeder, Superintendent
Country Hills Golf Club
Calgary, Canada

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the column is just what the happy-go-lucky Mike Veeck wanted — more ink to promote his wacky ways. Forgive me, but I've succumbed to Veeck's media magnetism. But I make no apologies for this column because Veeck is worth writing about.

Veeck spoke in December at the Ohio Turf Federation's annual conference in Columbus, Ohio. While Veeck didn't talk about turf, he was informative and entertaining. He had people roaring with laughter one minute and reflecting in their thoughts the next. Here's betting that word gets out about Veeck's talk and he shows up more often on the golf turf show circuit.

Veeck is the owner of several minor-league baseball teams and the master of many zany baseball promotions (he holds disco demolition night to his credit, among others). Unlike some, such as the brash and bratty Randy Johnson, you can stick a camera in Veeck's face and he'll happily ham it up for you.

"I'm a media pimp," the goateed and bushy-haired Veeck said with a toothy smile, noting that it's a rule of his to never say "no comment" or talk off the record to the media. (By the way, if you "Google" Veeck, you'll find item after item of stories in magazines and newspapers about him.)

Veeck is the son of former Major League baseball team owner, the late Bill Veeck, a dynamic baseball owner and promoter and obvious mentor to his son. Mike is not your typical keynote speaker. Let's just say he's a bit unorthodox in style and substance — but refreshingly so.

There was Veeck, mugging for photographers at the outset of his speech. "I'm having a very bad chin day," he quipped.

Don't get me wrong. Veeck, who counts Bill Murray and Jimmy Buffett as his pals, isn't all schtick. He has some influential thoughts, and he shared them with attendees of his talk.

It's not that what Veeck said contains insightful philosophy that we haven't heard before. But hearing these things from a guy who has tried more things in his life than 10 of us put together seemed to hit home a little harder.

"Do you remember when you were 3 years old and so many things were possible?" Veeck asked in his low, husky voice. "And now you're 33 and not many things are possible."

Veck's point was that while we say we aren't afraid of taking risks, deep down we are terrified. "Why is it we're so afraid of change?" Veeck asked. "Because we don't know how to deal with failure."

Veck doesn't hide the fact that he's failed — he's been fired four times by Major League Baseball teams for trying promotions that went awry. For instance, while disco demolition night at Chicago's Comiskey Park in 1979 was a rousing success in terms of razing disco records, a near riot broke out at the park and the second game of the doubleheader had to be canceled. Hence, Veeck was fired from his promotion's post the next day. But Veeck didn't hang his head after the firing because he knew he used his brain as best he could to try something original.

"Behind our eyes is the greatest machine ever known to mankind," Veeck says. "And we shouldn't squelch it."

I've never seen a someone laugh more at himself than Veeck did during his talk. It's not that he likes to hear himself laugh — he just likes to laugh. Laughter, it seems, is Veeck's medicine when tough times occur. Veeck told a story about his small daughter, who's as happy-go-lucky as her old man. While she suffers from an incurable eye disease and is going blind, Veeck says "She reminds me that the only cure is laughter," he adds.

If there was a theme to his speech, it was the importance of laughter. In fact, Veeck could start billing this speech as Jollity 101: The Art and Importance of Laughter.

"Be outrageous, be irreverent and have some fun," Veeck said before departing the stage. "What are we going to remember about our trip through this wonderful life? We're going to remember a little bit of laughter."

Here's to a hearty hoot and howl from the deepest part of your tummy.

You can reach Aylward at laylward@advantstar.com.