A Stimulus Plan that Will Pay Off

No one knows how the stimulus plan will turn out, but here’s a plan we know works. To crowd out *Poa annua* and get dense, more diverse greens, interseed with the Penn bents. Superintendents say it’s a small investment that pays big dividends, and who couldn’t use that kind of confidence today?

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The Big Three on Growing the Game

BY LARRY AYLWARD

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Four years after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, a New Orleans golf course and its superintendent are feeling rejuvenated.
By Larry Aylward

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New technology makes golf course watering a lot less complex.
By Larry Aylward

57 Bunker Mentality
Check out our bunker product roundup, where you’ll find everything from rakes to linings.

About the cover
Gary Player, Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus walk down the fairway at Augusta National Golf Club. Photograph courtesy of the Augusta Chronicle and design by Carrie Pinkhill.

Turfgrass Trends
This month, Golfdom’s practical research digest for turfgrass managers discusses the great rake debate. Should rakes be placed in or outside bunkers? Or partially out? Also, interseeding of two bent-grass varieties proves an effective tool in the battle against Poa annua. See pages 49-56.

Online Exclusive
Watch this video podcast only at www.golfdom.com:
Happy Graduation, Sort Of – At Jacobsen’s Future Turf Managers meeting recently, recent college graduates talked about embarking on their promising careers … in one of the worst economic climates ever. Check out what they have to say about their futures.

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Last year, Matt Henkel watched the U.S. Open on TV from a hospital bed while undergoing presurgery tests for a brain tumor. This year, Henkel not only watched the U.S. Open live from Bethpage Black Golf Course, he worked on the grounds crew as a volunteer.

What a difference a year makes. And in this case, thankfully, that year has been nothing but good news for Henkel, the assistant golf course superintendent at Prairie View Golf Club in Byron, Ill., and one of the nicest guys you’ll ever meet.

Henkel was my roommate at the Farmingdale State College dormitory, where the U.S. Open volunteers stayed during the tournament. I was on assignment and also stayed at the dorm. About five minutes after meeting Henkel, I was whining about forgetting a blanket for my tiny bed. But Henkel had two blankets, and didn’t think twice about offering me one.

We were up the next morning (the middle of the night in my book) at 3 a.m. to get to work. I spoke with Henkel more as the day went on and got to know him better — 30 years old, married to Cammie, two young children, from a small town, polite, humble. And a cancer survivor. When Henkel told me the latter, I was taken by surprise considering his youth. But that’s the thing about cancer — it doesn’t care how old you are.

Last summer, 10 in the morning would come at work, and Henkel would be exhausted. Then there were the headaches and neck pain. After two weeks of this, Henkel headed to the doctor, who told him he was stressed. The symptoms continued and Henkel checked into the local hospital’s emergency room. When the ER doc told him he was OK, Henkel wanted factual information to be sure. So he underwent a CAT scan, which revealed a slow-growing brain tumor.

Henkel was 29, in his prime physically and with dreams of living out his career as a superintendent, not to mention as a father and a husband. He was stunned.

Fortunately, Henkel was able to have surgery and had the tumor removed last August at University of Wisconsin Hospital, Madison. While he received a solid prognosis, Henkel took off several weeks from work.

Back to the blanket Henkel gave me. I have a feeling plenty of others have been on the receiving end of his generosity because a lot of people wanted to help him. Henkel’s friends organized a benefit and raised thousands of dollars to help him pay the medical bills. Henkel also received a generous donation from the Wee One Foundation, a charitable organization founded on behalf of Wayne Otto, the popular Wisconsin superintendent who died of cancer in 2004. In addition, Henkel’s co-workers donated their sick time so Henkel could get paid for the time he had to take off. They donated enough time that Henkel could’ve taken off a year.

Henkel began the new year feeling strong and ready for the 10-hour (or longer) workdays that accompany the golf season. And then he received the invite to volunteer on the grounds crew at Bethpage, which he called an honor. Henkel busted his tail for a week on little sleep and loved every minute of it.

A year ago, when he watched the U.S. Open from a hospital bed, Henkel never dreamed he’d be at the tournament a year later — and in the middle of the action, at that. Back then, Henkel just wanted to be alive come June 2009.

During the tournament, much was made of Phil Mickelson trying to win the trophy for his wife, Amy, who had been diagnosed with breast cancer only weeks before. It was a cool story and everybody was pulling for Phil.

Nothing was made in the media about the lesser-known Henkel and his plight. But in my book, and to those who knew of it, it was one of the best stories at this year’s U.S. Open.

Aylward can be reached at laylward@questex.com.
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Off The Fringe

Business briefs

PBI/Gordon, Mitsui Team Up
Kansas City-based PBI/Gordon made an agreement with Mitsui Chemicals Agro Inc. of Tokyo that gives PBI/Gordon marketing rights to dinotefuran in the United States golf market, as well as certain rights in other professional turf and ornamental markets. Mitsui Chemicals Agro is a subsidiary of Mitsui Chemicals. Dinotefuran is a neonicotinoid insecticide that will be marketed by PBI/Gordon in two formulations, a 20SG (soluble granule) for turf and a 10SL (soluble liquid) for ornamental insect pests. Product availability is expected in 2010. The trade name and pricing of the product will soon be announced. “As a United States marketing partner with Mitsui, we are excited to bring dinotefuran to the U.S. golf and professional turf and ornamental markets,” said Tom Hoffman, vice president of product development for PBI/Gordon.

Valent Appoints Blome as EVP, COO
Jim Blome was named executive vice president and chief operating officer of Walnut Creek, Calif.-based Valent U.S.A. In his new role, Blome will oversee all day-to-day operations of the company’s agricultural, professional and consumer products business units in the United States and Canada. In his new position, Blome will work closely with Valent’s leadership team to continue the company’s growth, which in recent years has included several introductions of new products and active ingredients.

Industry Will Miss Mike Daly
Mike Daly, whose industry career spanned more than 20 years, passed away in April. Daly was a well-known figure in the industry, and his loss will be deeply felt. He will be missed by many.

A Privilege and an Honor

LEBANONTURF’S MIKE SISTI MOVED BY PARTICIPATING IN RENEWAL & REMEMBRANCE EVENT AT ARLINGTON NATIONAL

By Mike Sisti

There are more than 330,000 men and women — veterans and military casualties from every war our nation has fought since the Civil War — buried on the 624 acres of Arlington National Cemetery. One day each year the green industry has the unique privilege of rolling up its collective sleeves and paying its respects. This was the first year I participated in the event. I thought I was prepared for the emotion I would experience, but I was wrong.

My work group, which included several veterans, was assigned the liming detail for 255 acres of turf. Other groups were deployed to different parts of the cemetery to aerate, plant and prune, as well as cable and brace trees and install lightning protection. We had been working for only a short time when we heard the sounds of a funeral procession. First the band members; then the caisson team of seven white horses, one with a soldier’s boots turned backward in the stirrups; and a horse-drawn carriage holding a casket draped with an American flag.

We stopped our work, turned off our machines and removed our caps. We stood in silence for several minutes as one of 29 funeral processions passed by. It was a humbling experience, and I felt united with others from the industry.

Continued on page 16

Editor’s note: Mike Sisti, marketing manager for Lebanon Turf, was among more than 400 members of the green industry who spent July 13 in Washington helping maintain the grounds at Arlington National Cemetery as part of the 13th annual Renewal & Remembrance event conducted by the Professional Landcare Network. Many of the landscape and lawn-care professionals also visited lawmakers on Capitol Hill on July 14 to discuss issues facing the industry.
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Off The Fringe

Genuine Jim

NICOL HOSTS A SECOND PGA CHAMPIONSHIP, BUT, NO, HE’S NOT MORE RELAXED ABOUT IT

It seems like just yesterday we profiled Jim Nicol in *Golfdom* as a preview for the 84th PGA Championship at Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minn. But it was seven years ago! The 57-year-old Nicol and Hazeltine are back this year to host another PGA Championship, set for Aug. 10-16, at the Robert Trent Jones Sr.-designed track. Nicol is a Minnesota boy, who grew up in St. Cloud, about 75 miles northwest of the Twin Cities. He began his golf course maintenance career when he was 14, mowing greens part-time at St. Cloud Country Club. Nicol joined the course’s maintenance crew full-time soon afterward. He enjoyed the job and loved working outside. He began to entertain thoughts of a career in the field when he graduated from high school.

“Every year [after the season], I watched the [St. Cloud] superintendent get in his car and drive to Florida for the winter,” Nicol said. “I thought to myself, ‘This guy has it figured out.’”

Are you a little more relaxed preparing for the tournament this time around? Not really. There is always some new challenge, and one should never relax under these circumstances.

What’s the key to preparing for a tournament like this? Surrounding yourself with good people, which I believe I have.

What’s your biggest agronomic challenge on the golf course in getting ready for the tournament? Making sure the course will be able to handle the intensity for seven days in August.

Last time the PGA Championship was held here, you had an uncooperative and cold spring to grow grass. How was the spring this year for growing grass? Not good. We have winter damage that is slow to recover due to the cold, dry spring. We have been too dry as Beth page was too wet.

In 2002, the course played 7,350 yards. What will it play this year, and what changes have occurred to the course? The course

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