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Keeping up with The Jones — Seth Jones
At the Turn — Mark Woodward
Assistant Living — Matt Neff
The Turf Doc — Karl Danneberger
Clark Talks Turf — Clark Throssell

COLUMNS

Primed for the PGA
Corcoran and crew have Oak Hill rough and ready for the 2013 PGA Championship

Bye, Bye Rye
As ryegrass availability declines and cost increases, superintendents overseed less

When the maintenance crew is asked to further an initiative, a forward-thinking superintendent steps up.

DEPARTMENTS

Improving shade resistance in bermudagrass
Annual bluegrass control in golf turf

The Spirit of Streamsong

BY SETH JONES
At Streamsong, superintendent Rusty Mercer manipulates sand from a reclaimed phosphate mine to maintain a 36-hole masterpiece.

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Six courses. 200 employees. To put it mildly, Shawn Emerson, Director of Agronomy at Desert Mountain, has a lot on his plate. Which is why he counts on John Deere to keep this collection of Jack Nicklaus courses in perfect shape. From our hybrid fairway and greens mowers to our heavy-duty utility vehicles, Shawn and his crew use only John Deere equipment, sun up to sundown. Says Shawn, “There’s a lot of things I worry about. But John Deere isn’t one of them.”

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The title of this column may be “Keeping up with the Jones,” but sometimes, I can’t keep up with myself. Take this issue, for example. I’m finishing off the month’s cover story at 35,000 feet as I fly over the Atlantic Ocean en route to England. Cover stories are typically written weeks in advance. I’m the guy finishing mine hours before deadline, before I touch down for a week overseas. Oof!

I really couldn’t wait to get this cover story out. When I made a trek through Florida earlier in the year, several superintendents asked me if I had visited Streamsong yet. I attempted to arrange a last-minute tour, but it didn’t work out.

I returned to Florida a few weeks later, and this time I was prepared. I contacted my friends at KemperSports and they set up my visit.

The drive was as discouraging as could be. My GPS couldn’t help me, and after an hour of being lost (I hate being lost) I swallowed my pride and called course superintendent Rusty Mercer. “I’m lost,” I groaned. “I know,” Mercer responded. “Everyone gets lost trying to find us. But I’m going to get you here.”

Mercer gave me step-by-step directions, concise and accurate. There were moments I thought I was lost again, based on how deep I was in the backwoods of Florida, but then a landmark would pop up telling me I was on the right path.

But here’s a hint: If you are driving to visit the maintenance building, don’t bother driving up to the clubhouse to ask directions. It’s a long, windy road, and they’ll just tell you to turn around and go back the way you came. Plus, you’ll get a sneak peek at the course from the clubhouse, and it’ll kill you to see the course and not get out. So close, yet so far away.

Mercer greeted me at his shop and we chatted briefly. Rain was threatening, and he asked me what I wanted to do. Of course I wanted to see the two courses: the Red, designed by Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore, and the Blue, designed by Tom Doak. We grabbed our rain gear, hopped on his Gator, and headed out.

The superintendents who tipped me off to the course were right. Streamsong is a special place you have to see to believe. I tweeted and blogged some photos from the course, but they certainly didn’t do the course justice. This month’s cover photo about does it justice. But nothing can take the place of standing there in person. I know there’s a lot of hyperbole surrounding the course, but it really is a sight to behold.

Come to think of it, the 2014 Golf Industry Show is in Orlando. Take my advice and schedule some time to get down there. Tell Rusty and head pro Scott Wilson that Seth from Golfdom sent you.

As nice as the course is, the crew working there is even nicer. Rusty, Scott, Kyle Harris and the crew are all great guys who want to see the course and resort do well. As Scott told me, there are no egos at Streamsong. “Everyone is just awed by the property,” he told me, “And we want to see it succeed.”

As you’ll see in my cover story, there are a lot of interesting things going on at Streamsong. I hope my story does the course some justice. Because once you find it, you’ll immediately want to figure out how quickly you can get back.

Email Jones at: sjones@northcoastmedia.net.

“These next few trips to Orlando will have the added time scheduled in so I can sneak in a round at Streamsong. I’m going to take my bosses with me, and score some points. I’d advise you to do the same.”

SETH JONES, Editor-in-Chief
Nothing clings to slopes like the new AR522™ contour rotary mower from Jacobsen. The machine’s combination of SureTrac™ four-wheel drive traction and weight transfer control allow it to climb hillsides and glide over contours with ease. You can also rely on the AR522’s five fully-floating TrimTek™ decks to provide excellent mulching results and a superior after-cut appearance. See the AR522 contour rotary for yourself – contact your local Jacobsen dealer today.
The U.S. Senate on June 27 passed bipartisan, comprehensive immigration reform that would, if signed into law, have a major impact on labor in the golf industry.

In a 68-32 vote led by Sens. John McCain, Chuck Schumer and other senators in the so-called “Gang of 8,” the Senate passed groundbreaking legislation that would create a path to citizenship for the 11 million people living in the United States illegally.

In addition to increasing security at the U.S.-Mexico border, the legislation would create a mandatory E-verify system, make minor changes to the H-2B worker visa program, which the golf industry depends on for seasonal help, and more.

Those changes to H-2B would make returning H-2B workers exempt from the program’s 66,000 annual cap through 2018, change the way H-2B worker wages are calculated and require employers to pay worker transportation costs.

The act also would create a new year-round “W-visa” program geared toward low-skilled foreign temporary workers and allow their spouses and children to work in the United States for the same temporary period.

However, it appears highly unlikely that the legislation ever will reach President Obama’s desk for a signature.

Republican leaders in the House have been slow to entertain immigration reform and have flatly refused to take up the Senate act at all, with House Speaker John Boehner telling the Washington press, “The House is not going to take up and vote on whatever the Senate passes. We’re going to do our own bill, through regular order, and it’ll be legislation that reflects the will of our majority and the will of the American people.”
//ON TOUR

Taking the Florida spring regulator tour

For the past 16 years, the Florida GCSA has partnered with the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association (FFVA) to be the first stop on its annual spring tour. On the tour, federal and state regulators of southwest Florida’s agricultural and green industries visit Tim Hier’s Old Collier Golf Club in north Naples, as well as nurseries, sod farms, cattle ranches and more.

Thanks to tighter budgets, only 20 regulators made the trip this year. And whereas superintendents on hand usually mix and mingle with the regulators and answer questions on the tour, the trip around the course was cancelled this year due to heavy rain showers. Consequently, this year’s tour was reduced to a two-hour Q & A session centered on pesticide use and safety issues.

I gave the basic breakdown of average turf acreage in terms of greens, tees, fairways and roughs, while superintendents in the room explained their insect, weed and disease programs, the products they use and their turf treatments. Kyle Sweet, who runs The Sanctuary Golf Club on Sanibel Island, talked about his programs and products, which have to be approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Dept.

George McBath, a retired ornithologist who works with area courses to install nest boxes, told regulators he was skeptical of golf courses during his early years as an ecology instructor but after doing bird counts on golf courses he realized what great habitats they are.

He also explained how the large eastern blue bird population in the Naples area allowed the Fish and Wildlife folks to harvest young bluebirds to repopulate Everglades National Park, whose own bluebird population was declining from years of inbreeding. The new influx of birds from Naples now is restoring the native population.

One of the state regulators on the tour specifically mentioned getting “numerous” complaints about spray drift. Some of it was the typical reaction when an adjacent property owner sees the spray rig at work and assumes the worst.

Fortunately, the rain stopped toward the end of the tour, and the group was able to see Old Collier’s immaculate pesticide and fertilizer storage rooms and mix/load pad. But we regretted not having the chance to show them the modern course design — complete with wildlife corridors and natural areas. As they say, “Seeing is believing.”

Joel Jackson, CGCS-Ret., is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.
This year’s U.S. Open concluded on Father’s Day. And for Robert Smith, equipment technician at Merion Golf Club, it was surely his most special Father’s Day yet.

Smith and his wife welcomed their second daughter, McKayla, on April 16. Two days later, Smith was back at the course, working on what could also be considered one of his offspring: the John Deere 180 E-Cut Hybrid Walk Greens Mower.

Both the 180E and Smith’s oldest, Annabella, might be jealous of McKayla. But Smith’s a good dad… he’s got time for all three of his babies.

Smith says he doesn’t have a favorite — at least, when it comes to equipment. “Every piece is the same,” he says. “I like working on stuff that doesn’t break.”

But the 180E should get more of his affection than the others. Because Smith, along with Merion’s director of grounds, Matt Shaffer, helped create the innovative mower.

“We were walking past a piece of equipment that had an 18-inch head on it. (Shaffer) got this idea stirring in his mind.” Smith recalls. “I brought it in the shop, reconfigured a few things… we started mowing about two weeks later.”

The John Deere 180E was born. Designed after the 220E, the 180E meets the demands of superintendents who need a tight, clean cut with an 18-inch swath. Deere says the mower is ideal for courses that need maximum control on undulating greens. Deere saw the success Merion was having with the mower and took notice. In July 2012, the 180 E-cut became available to courses around the world.

### Golfdom Wisdom

If your dog is chasing geese, great. If your dog is chasing away salesmen, that’s fine. But if he’s chasing away members, you’ll soon be chasing a new job. #golfdomwisdom

### Reader’s Letter

Seth, Thank you for your editorial recognizing Matt Shaffer as a true gentleman (“An Open mind,” June 2013). Matt and I grew up in Bedford/Blair Counties of Pennsylvania. Matt worked on the Iron Masters GC crew along with my father, and I followed him on that same crew.

Matt has never changed. His genuineness of character has stayed the course over the years. His success never went to his head. He is a class act and you can take that to the bank.

Samuel R. Snyder VII CGCS-Ret. Shreve, Ohio

### Reader’s Joke

Husband and wife, avid golfers their whole lives, were also very interested in the afterlife and specifically if there was golf in the afterworld. They agreed whoever was to die first would come back one year later and report to the other on the afterlife.

The man having passed first did contact her through a medium at a seance exactly one year later.

“It’s really very nice here!” he reported to her. “I get up in the morning, enjoy a little sex, have some breakfast, then it’s off to the golf course. Home again for lunch, a little more sex before heading back to the golf course until dinner. Then it’s a little sex before bed and I’m ready to start the next day!”

The wife, disconcerted at the amount of sex her husband is having in the afterlife without her, takes the high road and asks how his golf game is.

The husband replies, “Oh, I didn’t come back a human… I’m a rabbit somewhere in New Jersey!”