



In Bounds: Acronyms

By JOHN "JACK" MACKENZIE, CGCS
North Oaks Golf Club

BMP and IPM! A OKAY or just BS? It is the season for education and catching up on magazines piled high last summer during the heat of the battle. And over time in my studies I have noticed a dramatic increase in acronyms justifying our existence. In turn, the developers of said abbreviations have created their own niche in our society and warranted "their" professions.

BMP or Best Management Practices is a great example of management complexitis, a disease that is becoming too common in our industry today. The diagram at the right comes from the AAPG Hyper Journal. It depicts how Best Management Practices work.

I have issues with a diagram or concept which depicts a supposed and progressive idea in our industry but in reality creates complication, thereby meriting the employment of a specialist, who in turn will express the implied and perceived notions of said idea developed in an effort to make my job easier. Come on, PLEASE!

True professionals in our line of work don't need to be taught BMP's to maintain a golf course and thereby protect their employment. It is as if an industry has been created to develop a formula in which someone not cut out for the profession can follow and be successful.

Golf course superintendents are good at their craft because they have developed qualities inherent to the industry such as

observation, communication and implementation skills. Uncomplicated, quick and calculated responses are often necessary to manage a golf course especially in an every-shifting environment. A detailed flow chart won't cut it when weather changes and a surprise shotgun combine to create a challenge.

Who has



time to implement BMP's when they are implementing CYA's. "IPM is the wise use of pesticides, fungicides and insecticides to control pest threat," explains Vassar College's Jeffrey Horst, Associate Executive Director, Building and Grounds Services in the June 2004 Landscape Management article. "It's about monitoring the situation, identifying problems and taking action. Before you resort to using pesticides, you observe an area such

as a lawn [or golf course] and use water and fertilizer to deal with the pests that may be lurking there. In the old days, you managed pest problems with chemicals."

Excuse me? I have been around long enough to remember the "old days." I take it as a personal affront to think that historically, successful turf management was centered on the absent-minded use of chemicals. Quite the contrary, our industry wouldn't exist if we didn't appreciate the value of proper cultural practices. It is almost as though the acronym IPM was created by someone who thought all we did was poison the environment and "they" needed to develop a solution to our plight.

What came first, competently maintaining fine playing surfaces for our players or the implementation of an IPM?

Cultural practices needed to keep our turf healthy (then and now) weren't given a specific title. Aeration, topdressing, mowing at a healthy height of cut, feeding the turf and using pesticides when necessary were commonplace. Either you grew great grass or you were out of a job. Calling it IPM only propagated one thing, employment for an industry of specialists who develop BMP's specific to improving their livelihood, and a happy acronym for what we have been doing since sheep cut and fertilized golf courses in Scotland.

FYI, as turf management professionals we are very good at a great many things. Do we need flow charts and specialists to tell us? I think not; all we have to do is get out onto our courses and appreciate the magic of our abilities. When I look upon my acres of maintained turf I don't think about BMP's and IPM's, rather I say to myself, "damn, my staff and I do a good job."

"When I look upon my acres of maintained turf I don't think about BMP's and IPM's, rather I say to myself, damn, my staff and I do a good job."