

An Adventure in Life

By Randy Witt, CGCS

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One of the changes within myself over the years has been the development of patience. The once young, hungry, demanding, and at times intolerant individual has developed into a person that has learned patience and a good sense of humor are very important tools in the golf course business. Many aspects of this business we have no control over, no matter how hard we try to be in control. Of course weather is the single most important factor which we deal with and have no control over whatsoever. Drought, wetness, heat, humidity, storms, etc. We deal with these factors but have no control over. Over the years I've learned that the weather and Mother Nature are the eventual winners we just cope with both. Many times our ability to be patient and cope and not panic will determine if we are successful in our endeavors.

More importantly, our ability to be patient will many times dramatically affect our health and well being, which ultimately is the most important factor in the end when all is said and done.

Patience has become an important issue as I've progressed along my career path here in Hong Kong, along with the ability to laugh. Some of the problems and situations I've encountered require patience and the ability to laugh or one would probably not survive for very long here. For starters, the size of the staff, 100 plus individuals, lends itself to the law of averages of craziness to occur. Equipment getting buried in mud. Sand Pros starting on fire, delivery trucks taking a wrong turn and getting stuck in a rough area, everyday type occurrences. Without patience and seeing the humor in the situation, one would soon have a heart attaché or be overcome with stress. The

sun will rise another day.

In the case of the sand pro catching on fire, the American saying of "A Chinese Fire Drill" immediately came to mind. A Sand Pro had developed a carburetor problem; so two mechanics were trans-

finally put the fire out. This whole process covered at least 10 minutes. The end result was one barbecued and destroyed sand pro. Viewing this Chinese Fire Drill was so funny that any sense of frustration and anger never really came



Authentic Chinese fire drill.

porting the machine back to the shop facility. The machine stopped, and in the process of trying to get it restarted, a fire broke out. I came upon the scene as one mechanic was attempting to put out the fire with the use of his shirt. This only served to make a bigger fire. The next step was the Second Mechanic ripping of his shirt and soaking it in a nearby stream and trying to throw his wet shirt on the fire. This too proved useless. Step 3 was to run to a nearby bunker, get some sand, and try to bury the fire. Step 3 was also a failure. The final step was for a shirtless mechanic to drive back to the maintenance facility, get a fire extinguisher, return and

out. What good would it do. No one got hurt and it's over with. Just another tale to be told, another chapter for the book.

May through August is the rainy season in Hong Kong and many parts of Asia. Each month we have received in excess of 500 mm of rain, with 25 mm equaling 1 inch. So, 20 inches of rainfall in 30 days can make for some very wet conditions at times. Even though drainage is pretty good, many rough areas can be difficult to mow. The photo above shows what happens when the Chinese persist in trying to mow areas of turf with standing water in them.

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One could get upset and watch the blood pressure rise, or laugh at the situation. Years ago, anger would have been my emotion. As I've grown older, humor has taken over. You have to laugh if you want to survive, especially here and in the golf course business in general.

The Chinese culture is one that has very little familiarity with the game of golf and with motorized equipment. Transportation is on foot, bicycle or public transportation. Out of a staff of 106 people, only 12 staff members have or own vehicles. Hong Kong has a tremendous public transportation system, and an abundance of taxis. Both methods of transportation are very inexpensive. A half-hour first class train trip to Hong Kong costs about \$3 US. Taxi fare to Hong Kong is about \$18 US. A large obstacle to vehicle traffic is the lack of parking where ever you choose to drive to. Even with owning a vehicle, most often you will travel by public transportation or taxi.

With a lack of familiarity with golf and motorized equipment, training is very important in the golf industry here and throughout the Asian market. Again, patience is a key. With this lack of training and knowledge, I have instituted a training program. Every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday I have a training seminar for one of the course's staff members for an hour in the afternoon. The Game of Golf, cup changing, tee set-up, bunker maintenance, greens mowing, tee mowing and fertilization are just



"I thought you said back up!"

some of the session topics we have covered. This has proven to be invaluable for upgrading the level of productivity and consistency within the staffs work performance. I have found the staff members to be very receptive and appreciative of this training. There is no formal program of education in the turf industry in Hong Kong or within Asia. All my current assistants are enrolled in the Penn State online turf program. This is the one avenue they have for eventually acquiring a turf degree.

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The photos below illustrate the difference in particle size and uniformity between the Andersons small and mid-size fairway fertilizer and a competitor's product. Notice no nutrient segregation with Andersons mid-size due to uniform particle sizing versus significant nutrient segregation with competitor.

Andersons 25-3-9 + 2% Fe (150 SGN)



1 lb. of N per 1,000 = 175 lbs/acre = 3.7 particles per sq. in.

The matrix shown below demonstrates a dramatic increase in particle coverage (PPSI) by using smaller particle products versus increasing the rate (lbs.) of a larger particle product.

Particles Per Square Inch Matrix 20-3-20 Fertilizer with 65% Nutralene						
	SGN 125	SGN 150	SGN 175	SGN 215	SGN 240	SGN 300
100	3.9	2.3	1.4	0.8	0.6	0.3
125	4.9	2.9	1.8	1.0	0.7	0.4
150	5.9	3.4	2.1	1.2	0.8	0.4
175	6.9	4.0	2.5	1.4	1.0	0.5
200	7.9	4.5	2.9	1.5	1.1	0.6
225	8.9	5.1	3.2	1.7	1.2	0.6
250	9.8	5.7	3.6	1.9	1.4	0.7
300	11.8	6.8	4.3	2.3	1.7	0.9
Avg. SG (g/ml) = 1.0						

Local Competitor 15-5-10 (215 SGN)

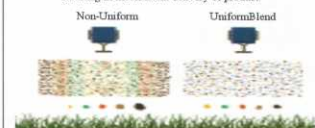


1 lb. of N per 1,000 = 290 lbs/acre = 2.0 particles per sq. in.

The illustration below shows the effect of using a non-uniform fertilizer product. Note the severe skewing and banding of different nutrients.

Uniform Particle Distribution
Spreadability : Particle Flight

Varying particle sizes and density cause irregular ballistic behavior resulting in inconsistent delivery of product

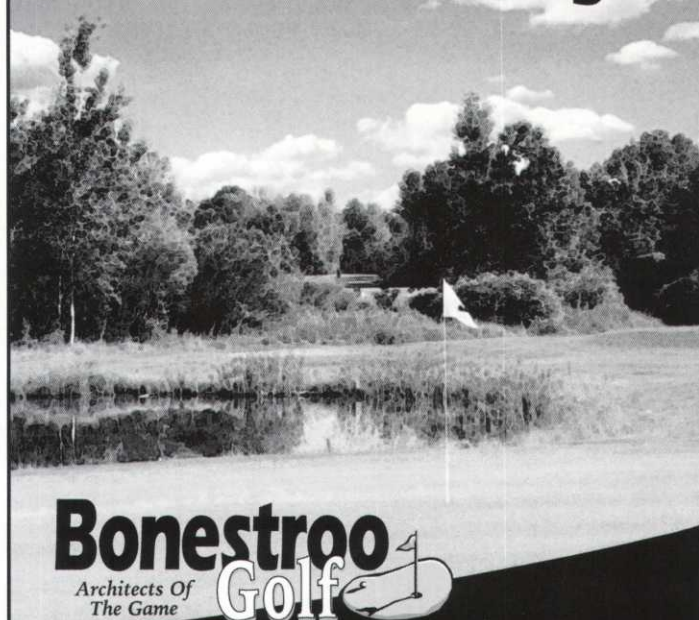


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