



# Within the Leather

by David Kazmierczak, CGCS

Science, research and invention are funny things. People spend entire careers,

heck sometimes their whole lives trying to prove a theory or invent the next great thing. Some are successful, some are not. The ones who are successful become rich, famous or at least get a pat on the back from somebody. The ones who are not, well, thanks for trying.

Which is kind of tragic in a way, because there are a lot of those people who have painstakingly tried throughout history to better mankind through science and invention only to come up with nothing.

Compounding that notion of tragedy, are the people who got “lucky”. These are men and women who stumbled upon ground-breaking revelations by accident or by failure. There are many of these kinds of accidental products we know and use on an everyday basis.

Post-it notes are one of these. The 3-M corporation was working on a super-strong glue that would virtually never break. What they came up with in early trials was virtually the weakest glue ever known to man. The only thing that it would hold together was two pieces of paper. Bingo. I will go out on a limb and say there is nobody reading this that has never used a post-it note.

Another example is Viagra. The scientists that came up with Viagra invented it with

the sole purpose of helping cure arterial blockage and increase blood flow in older males. It increased blood flow alright. When the test subjects came back and reported their, um, findings it didn't take long before Viagra turned into a gold mine that kept old men and stockholders alike smiling.

Why am I bringing all this up you may ask? Well, we all have the ability to be closet researchers and scientists. All you have to do is open your eyes. Trials and tests of every theory known to man and every conceivable invention occur on a routine basis in your very environment, especially on the golf course. If you open your eyes, you might discover something new.

Such was the case for me on Sunday July 14. But before I share what I saw on that day, let me give you some background on why what I saw that day was so interesting.

About five years ago I started noticing that we would have these very long, fast growing what looked like leaf blades on a couple of our putting greens. It would last a few days and was very sporadic, yet by the end of the day they were noticeably higher than the rest of the canopy. It lasted about five days to a week and then seemed to subside.

The next season it occurred again, and I thought it was very strange so I had a couple samples sent off for analysis and asked around if anybody had experienced anything similar. The results from the samples were fairly inconclusive and ranged from a growth regulation issue to possibly a viral or bacterial problem. I found out that indeed others had experienced a similar thing with the same inconclusiveness.

A couple more years passed and then I read an article about etiolation of bentgrass and some theories as to why this phenomenon was occurring. For some it has become quite problematic. This article stated that they thought it was clearly due to a bacterial issue. I do not recall the exact reasoning or research behind it, and the etiolation could possibly be different from what I experienced. Who knows? I hadn't seen the problem since at least three years ago and it had long slipped from the top of my concerns list.

Until last Sunday.

There in front of me on hole number 13 at Prestwick was science, research, chance, an accident and an enigma all rolled into one.

On July 2nd, roughly two weeks before my casual observance, one of my assistants was given the task of spraying fairways with an application of 4oz/M Interface and 5 oz./

acre of Primo. It was a task he completed successfully and without incident except for one minor issue. He somehow dislodged a nozzle from its rightful place, creating a wonderful green stripe down the length of the fairway until he noticed his indiscretion and corrected it, then informed me.

I figured it would fade away over time and did not give it much thought until Sunday the 14th when I observed etiolation in the volunteer bent and in the start of our bentgrass approach where he had started

the application, and only in the over-sprayed area.

Wow! I thought to myself. This pretty much confirmed my suspicion a few years back that it was a growth regulator issue, or a combination of the regulator and the fungicide on my variety of bentgrass (Penncross). My inner scientist and researcher were all abuzz thinking of the timing and conditions of the course both during the past experiences and the most recent one. My conclusion was that if you spray too much Primo on Penncross, it's going to cause it to do goofy things. Not



Photo credit Dave Kazmierczak, CGCS

exactly an earth shattering revelation, but it was at least enough to keep me amused for the rest of the morning, and gave me something of relevance for this column, which lately has seemed to border on completely irrelevant.

So now I am sharing this most accidental of findings with

our little corner of the turf world. Take it for what it is worth, but realize that everything that occurs on your course both good and bad has a story and maybe has the potential to impact others over time. Share thoughts, ideas and experiences with your peers and who knows? That inner scientist or researcher in you, like the Viagra guys, might lead to much bigger and better things!